

SHOPLIFTERS ANONYMOUS

This is a 12 Step addiction recovery program for compulsive shoplifters, stealers, thieves and kleptomaniacs.

Meetings are on Tuesdays and Thursdays, 6:00 pm -7:00 pm

We are meeting by video and telephone conference:

Join Zoom

Meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8158S0023669?pwd=VEJKcjgrZUxkbmROWE1qdjE5U0tUdz09>

To call in: 646 558 8656 (New York) Meeting ID: 815 8002 3669 Passcode: 273740

Visit our web page: www.shopliftersanonymousny.org

No need to register or call in advance - just come to the meeting. For more information contact:

By landline phone: (212) 673-0392

By email: sa514@earthlink.net

**TELEPHONE 12 STEP MEETINGS BY ANOTHER FELLOWSHIP,
SHOPLIFTERS ANONYMOUS (ShA):**

A different 12 Step fellowship, Shoplifters Anonymous-ShA, holds telephone meetings as follows:

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 7-8 pm (ET).

Call 540 792 0103. Use access code 715759#

TEN QUESTIONS

1. Do you frequently experience remorse, depression or guilt about your shoplifting or stealing activity?
2. Do you feel your shoplifting or stealing activity is getting out of control? Have you repeatedly tried to stop or reduce certain shoplifting or stealing behaviors, but inevitably you could not?
3. Do you use shoplifting or stealing to escape from uncomfortable feelings such as anxiety, fear, anger, resentment and guilt, which seem to disappear when the shoplifting or stealing obsession starts?
4. Do you spend excessive time obsessing about shoplifting or stealing or engaged in this activity?
5. Have you neglected your family, friends, spouse or relationship because of the time you spend in shoplifting or stealing activity?
6. Do your shoplifting or stealing pursuits interfere with your work or professional development?
7. Is your shoplifting or stealing life secretive, a source of shame, and not in keeping with your values? Do you lie to others to cover up your shoplifting or stealing activity?
8. Have you ever been arrested or placed yourself in legal jeopardy for your shoplifting or stealing activity?
9. Have people you trust expressed concern about your shoplifting or stealing activity?
10. Does life seem meaningless and hopeless without shoplifting or stealing?

THESE ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS MOST OF US SEEM TO HAVE IN COMMON

1. Emotional deprivation

As children we developed deep feelings of deprivation due to little emotional intimacy or trust with our families. We rarely felt that we were ever "good" enough. Stealing things compulsively has given many of us a sense of importance, fitting in or nurturing ourselves that we almost never got from the people who raised us. Often we were just trying to get someone to pay attention to us.

2. Material deprivation or overload

We almost never got new things of our own from our parents or caregivers as other children did. Even getting things we needed was difficult. We would resort to stealing to get things that we needed or thought that we always deserved to have. Those of us who got overwhelmed with new things might end up stealing only from friends and family. We were probably just trying to establish some kind of connection with them.

3. Lack of sense of identity

While growing up many of us experienced many emotional deprivations that prevented us from forming a healthy sense of self-esteem or identity. We may have been treated like the outcast of the family or our caregivers may have gotten involved with us usually only to enforce rules or to discipline us. As a result we may feel unlovable, like we are invisible or don't really exist. We may be easily mistreated or even want to be punished. We 'buy-in' to our early caregivers' attitude that we were worthless, and we now act in deeply self-destructive ways such as stealing. We punish ourselves even if our caregivers no longer can.

4. Boundaries and privacy

Most of us were brought up by people who disregarded or violated the emotional and physical boundaries and the sense of privacy between us and them. As a result we have very little sense of boundaries between what belongs to us and what doesn't.

5. Envy makes us angry and vengeful

Due to our very low opinion of ourselves, which we may not even be aware of, we may often envy or resent people and businesses that are successful. This may make us angry or vengeful and may motivate us to want to steal from them.

6. Revenge and retribution

We feel the compulsive need to seek revenge or retribution from the world for all the deprivation or unfair suffering we think we have endured. We especially target people with a lot of money or stores owned by large corporations. We feel that they can easily absorb any losses caused by our stealing. We would not usually steal from friends or family. While shopping we often want to steal merchandise to compensate for having to pay for the items that we are buying.

7. Stealing to give gifts

If we steal merchandise to give as gifts, especially expensive ones, it is probably because we want to impress others and somehow do not believe that friends or family will like us just for who we are and what we can afford to give. We may also steal out of anger if we feel obligated to give a gift to someone we think does not deserve it.

8. Feeling of entitlement due to "unfair suffering"

Most of us feel like we have suffered unfairly in our lives. We have convinced ourselves - without any real basis in fact - that we have suffered unfairly much more than most other people have. Many people who are poor or suffering probably never steal. In order to compensate for this apparent suffering, we feel entitled

to steal things that we have convinced ourselves we feel entitled to have.

9. Loss of a family member or someone we were close to

If we become separated from or lose a family member or someone we have been close to or emotionally dependent on, we can become deeply depressed, miserable or lost and resort to shoplifting or stealing in a desperate effort to replace our personal loss, to ease our sense of being abandoned or to somehow comfort us.

10. Career shoplifters

Some of us steal in order to sell the merchandise to make a living. We justify such "career shoplifting" by the need to gain respect from peers in our community and to counteract perceived "oppression" from business owners and political leaders. Many honest alternative ways to earn a decent living are usually available to us.

11. Can't put off stealing unaffordable or affordable things

Some of us steal because we cannot put off buying something that we have convinced ourselves that we need or want for ourselves until we have the money to pay for it. We seek instant gratification. Many times most of us have enough money to pay for the merchandise we steal or can save up the money in a short time.

12. Relief from anger, anxiety, depression & desperation

While in stores we often steal impulsively and uncontrollably to achieve some form of "relief" from our anger, anxiety, depression and desperation. Stealing gives us an opportunity to bond with a habit that regularly gives us a thrill or a "high". We can achieve this "high" by stealing even the smallest thing.

13. Regularly stealing things seems to fill a bottomless emptiness inside of us

We often feel like we continually need to steal things to fill some kind of emptiness within us. We go back to stealing because that emptiness seems to have no bottom. Many times we feel that if we steal just one last time something that we think we want or need, our problems will go away and we will never steal again. We may promise ourselves that that will be the last time but usually go back to doing it.

14. Stealing once is too many and a thousand times is never enough

We often cannot stop stealing once we start again. Stealing one item seems to awaken an uncontrollable monster within us and usually leads us to steal many more times soon after.

15. Stealing new things thrills us and gets us high

As shoplifters we impulsively wander in stores to relieve our anger, anxiety, depression and desperation. Acquiring new things thrills us and distracts us from our mental and emotional problems and gives us some relief. However the thrill of acquiring new things is usually temporary and quickly dissipates. Continually seeking this thrill or "high" becomes an unsatisfiable and addictive need. We eventually realize that acquiring things does not fulfill our real needs, which usually involve being able to share feelings of intimacy with other people in a trusting atmosphere.

16. While stealing we are usually unable to think about the possible tragic consequences

The risks of being arrested, imprisoned, having our children taken away from us or deportation usually do not prevent us from stealing. We become overwhelmed with the urge to steal and can think of little else. We are trapped in a fantasy of invincibility and entitlement and will do almost anything necessary to steal what we want. We may get more daring to achieve the same thrill and may begin to steal more expensive items. Sometimes we think that as long as we are risking getting caught, we may as well try to steal costlier items.

17. Feelings of fear, guilt and paranoia almost never leave
Because we are regularly scheming and plotting about what and how we want to steal the next time we act out, we usually live with a lot of fear, guilt and paranoia. If people we know are not aware that we steal, we may be afraid that they may suspect that we do. If people we know are aware that we steal, we fear that they will always suspect that we will continue to steal and may falsely accuse us of stealing.
18. A cry for help in living a double life
Many of us live a double life - seemingly living a normal law-abiding existence, while concealing our stealing habits from family, friends and others. No amount of humiliation or self-disgust will stop us, yet all we really want is to have a normal life. We may unconsciously wish we could get caught to be put out of our misery. Shoplifting or stealing is our "cry for help".
19. Suicidal thoughts and feelings are common both before and after we get caught
Because we are out of control, deeply miserable and repeatedly expose ourselves to arrest and imprisonment, we may feel like we no longer want to continue living, even if we have children. Such suicidal thoughts may become more intense once we get caught. Only then may we finally become aware of the tragic consequences of our actions.
20. As habitual shoplifters, we are always at risk of relapse
Unforeseen and uncontrollable urges to shoplift or steal - whether conscious or unconscious - may overcome us suddenly, when we may least expect it, despite long periods of sobriety. This may be triggered by stress and fatigue but is usually caused by some deep and perhaps unconscious emotional trauma that we might have suffered or remembered.

THE TOOLS THAT HELP US GET BETTER

1. Meetings are where we share our experience, strength and hope with each other to better understand our common problem and work together towards the solution.
2. The telephone is our meeting between meetings. By making contact with others, we begin to break out of the isolation that is so strongly a part of the disease.
3. Sponsorship is two people with the same problem helping each other to work the program. It can provide a framework for doing the 12 Steps and can bring emotional support at difficult times.
4. Literature is our portable program of recovery. We also make use of AA and other 12 Step programs' conference approved literature, as well as other appropriate materials.
5. The 12 Steps are a suggested program of recovery, based on the 12 Steps of AA.
6. Prayer and meditation are means of establishing conscious contact with a Power greater than ourselves.
7. A Shoplifting Recovery Plan is a predetermined way of shopping for things we need without putting ourselves in legal jeopardy, so that even when confused, we will have a written guideline to help us.
8. Abstinence: We get support in S.A. by abstaining from people, places and things that we consider harmful.
9. Socializing is a way of breaking down our isolation and getting to know other people: at fellowship after meetings, in supportive organizations and groups, and in the community at large.
10. The Slogans are simple statements that can be used in crisis situations, so that we have some basic guidelines.
11. Service is a way helping ourselves by helping others.
12. Writing provides a way to become honest with ourselves and with our Higher Power. By writing in a journal, gratitude lists, letters and emails we can measure our progress, values, motives and 12 Step work.

THE 12 STEPS OF SA

- Step 1:** We admitted we were powerless over our addiction, that our lives had become unmanageable.
- Step 2:** Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
- Step 3:** Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of a higher power as we understood it.
- Step 4:** Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
- Step 5:** Admitted to our higher power, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
- Step 6:** Were entirely ready to have our higher power remove all these defects of character.
- Step 7:** Humbly asked our higher power to remove our shortcomings.
- Step 8:** Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
- Step 9:** Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
- Step 10:** Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
- Step 11:** Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with our higher power as we understood it, praying only for knowledge of our higher power's will for us and the power to carry it out.
- Step 12:** Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other addicts, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

An Understanding of THE 12 STEPS OF SA

We were once asked what was meant by the reference to “these principles” as they are mentioned in our 12th Step. After discussing this question, it seemed to us that “These Principles” were something suggested or arrived at by working the Steps. The Steps were the tools to be used to discover the “Principles”. Of course this is a program of action and a personal thing – an individual program – so each person will probably find their own principles for themselves.

After much meditation, we have discovered the following principles have greatly helped us to understand and practice our program. When all these principles are given meaning and purpose through LOVE – LOVE OF GOD OR OF OUR HIGHER POWER, OF OUR FELLOWS, AND RESPECT FOR OURSELVES, then they truly become the heart of our program of SA. With a deep sense of gratitude and the help of a Power greater than ourselves, we can live in emotional and physical sobriety with serenity and comfort one day at a time.

In working the 1st Step, when we “admitted we were powerless over our addiction, that our lives had become unmanageable,” we had at last found the courage to face the truth and tell it; we were practicing the principle of HONESTY.

In working the 2nd Step, when we “came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity,” we were practicing the principle of HOPE.

In working the 3rd Step, when we “made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of a higher power or God, *as we understood the higher power or God*,” we were practicing the principle of FAITH.

In working the 4th Step, when we “made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves,” we were practicing the principle of COURAGE.

In working the 5th Step, when we “admitted to God or our higher power, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs,” we were practicing the principle of INTEGRITY.

In working the 6th Step, when we “were entirely ready to have God or our higher power remove all these defects of character,” we were practicing the principles of WILLINGNESS.

In working the 7th Step, when we “humbly asked God or our higher power to remove our shortcomings,” we were practicing the principle of HUMILITY.

In working the 8th Step, when we “made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all,” we were practicing the principles of **LOVE AND FORGIVENESS**.

In working the 9th Step, when we “made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others, we were practicing the principle of **JUSTICE**.

In working the 10th Step, when we “continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it,” we were practicing the principle of **PERSEVERENCE**.

In working the 11th Step, when we “sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God or our higher power, *as we understood God or our higher power*, praying only for knowledge of God’s or our higher power’s will for us and the power to carry it out,” we were practicing the principle of **SPIRITUAL AWARENESS**

In working the 12th Step, when “having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other shoplifting and stealing addicts, and to practice these principles in all our affairs,” we were practicing the principle of **SERVICE**.

THE 12 TRADITIONS OF S.A.

- Tradition 1:** Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon S.A.unity.
- Tradition 2:** For our group purpose there is but one authority - a loving God or higher power as may be expressed in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
- Tradition 3:** The only requirement for S.A. membership is a desire to stop shoplifting orstealing.
- Tradition 4:** Each group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting other groups or S.A. as a whole.
- Tradition 5:** Each group has but one primary purpose - to carry its message to the shoplifter or stealer who still suffers.
- Tradition 6:** An S.A. group ought never endorse, finance or lend the S.A. name to any outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
- Tradition 7:** Every S.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outsidecontributions.
- Tradition 8:** S.A. should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
- Tradition 9:** S.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
- Tradition 10:** S.A. has no opinion on outside issues; hence the S.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
- Tradition 11:** Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, television and films.
- Tradition 12:** Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

12 STEP SLOGANS

1. Just for today
2. Easy does it
3. Feelings aren't facts
4. Keep coming back
5. Don't act out - make a meeting
6. This too shall pass
7. Learn to listen; listen to learn
8. Identify with the feelings; don't compare acting out techniques or stories
9. Get a sponsor and use 'em
10. Once is too many; a thousand never enough
11. We are egomaniacs with low self-esteem
12. Some are sicker than others
13. Take what you need; leave the rest
14. Every clean day is a successful day
15. One day at a time
16. Keep coming back
17. It's about change
18. Our disease wants us dead; but it will settle for us being miserable
19. HALT - Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired
20. HOW -Honesty, Open-mindedness, Willingness
21. It works if you work it, so work it, you're worth it and live it
22. Put gratitude in your attitude
23. Principles before personality
24. No new relationships in the first year
25. We cannot afford resentments
26. Share, share, share
27. Don't quit; surrender
28. Keep the focus on yourself
29. You can't keep it unless you give it away
30. Give yourself a break; you deserve it
31. You're in the right place
32. You're right where you're supposed to be
33. Sit up front
34. Every clean day is a miracle
35. Keep the focus on yourself
36. If you've got a problem and you act out, then you've got 2 problems
37. Service keeps you sober
38. Let us love you until you learn to love yourself
39. An addict alone is in bad company
40. KNIHT (THINK backwards)
41. Don't leave 5 minutes before the miracles start
42. Surrender to your disease
43. FEAR: Face Everything And Recover
44. Let go and let God
45. GOD: Good, Orderly Direction
46. Keep it simple
47. We didn't get high acting out; we got low
48. Get humble before you get humiliated
49. Sick and tired of being sick and tired
50. Beware of People, Places and Things
51. Take the cotton out of your ears, and put it in your mouth
52. Get a phone number at every meeting
53. Stick with the winners
54. Look out for a sponsor
55. Give time time
56. Get a home group
57. Get out of your own way
58. The therapeutic value of one addict helping another is without parallel
59. You don't have to act out, no matter what
60. Dealing with life on life's terms
61. Abstinence does not equal recovery
62. There are no more excuses
63. Meeting makers make it
64. First things first
65. We have a choice
66. Dial them, don't file them
67. When you point the finger at someone else, four are pointing back at you
68. Don't should on yourself
69. This is a spiritual, not a religious program
70. Addiction is a physical, mental and spiritual disease
71. We acted out to live and lived to act out
72. Those who do not remember the past are doomed to repeat it

SUGGESTED METHODS OF OBTAINING AND MAINTAINING ABSTINENCE FROM SHOPLIFTING ADDICTION



Every Day...

- Most importantly, every day: Practice steps 1, 2 and 3: say out-loud “I admit I am powerless over shoplifting and my life has become unmanageable.” Ask your Higher Power/God for help, and make a **DECISION** to let God/Higher Power be in charge for today - sincerely ask for God/Higher Power’s will for you today. Say the Third Step Prayer (from the AA Big Book page 63) every morning.
- Stay focused on “JUST FOR TODAY” – stay in the moment. Continually ask your Higher Power for the willingness and strength to resist the impulse to shoplift, and pray “God/Higher Power, what is **Your** Will for me today? What is the **NEXT RIGHT ACTION?**” (It might be as simple as “brush your teeth” or “wash the dishes”, “leave this place”, or “make a phone call to another SA member”).
- Every day, focus on being of **SERVICE** to others – call other SA members to both share and listen, attend an SA meeting, do the laundry, help your community -- anything to be of service to others. Service is the 12th Step, and is a critical part of a proven **SOLUTION** to our disease problem.
- Focus on **gratitude** – every day! Regularly say prayers such as “God, please help me remember today that my health is worth more than anything I might get by stealing things.” Write a **GRATITUDE LIST** of at least 5 things you are truly grateful for right now (i.e., your eye sight, ability to walk, beloved pet, a family member or friend that makes a difference to you today, whatever makes you feel truly grateful right now).
- Work all **TOOLS** of Recovery: **Abstinence** from stealing just for today – no matter what, **Sponsorship** – find a member who has what you want and ask how it was achieved and then take their suggestions - be accountable to that person, **SA Phone Calls** in-between meetings, attend **SA Meetings** (plus other in-person 12 Step mtgs. if there are no SA mtgs. locally), **Write/Journal** about your feelings and/or situations, **Pray** and **Meditate**, practice **Anonymity** including refraining from gossip, read SA and AA **Literature**, and finally, practice being of **Service** to others – “a life of sane and happy usefulness is what we are promised from working the 12 steps – Service fulfills that promise”.

Before You Go Shopping...

- Check-in with yourself: Ask your HP for the willingness to stay abstinent. If stressed or feeling impulsive, do not go shopping; ask a friend to go with you or for you.
- Use “Book-Ending” – call a SA member right before you go shopping and immediately after leaving the store.
- Make up a shopping list and buy only the items listed.
- Shop “on-line” or through catalogs; check ads or catalogs prior to shopping to avoid impulsive buying.
- Create or recycle gifts at home for yourself or others.
- Go to yard sales or flea markets where you are less likely to steal from individuals.
- Go through your house and rediscover what you can still use and/or appreciate.
- Learn to barter with others for services.
- Only shop when you have the money to pay for what you want/need.
- Take only your wallet, credit cards, and cell phone into the store: leave purse, backpack and any other bags in the car or at home.
- Call stores and have them prepare goods for pick-up, if possible.
- Don’t wear baggy clothes or coats that make it possible for you to conceal items.
- Commit to avoid stores from which you have been told “not to return” or have been caught.

While You Are Shopping...

- Use the phone - call an SA friend for help while you shop at a store.
- Carry picture of loved one or something meaningful in your hand to remind yourself not to shoplift.
- Keep hands in your pockets to refrain from picking up extraneous items.
- Build a relationship with employees; make your presence known.
- Shop with a specific purpose and do NOT browse.
- Do NOT put any item in your pocket, purse or bag before you have paid for it.
- Do not carry bag(s) from store to store; return bag(s) to your car first.
- Video security cameras – remember they're always watching/recording - and more sophisticated than ever!
- STOP and THINK of the consequences.....before you act! PRAY for the desire to stay abstinent – ask God/Higher Power for help! Remember the “a,b,c’s” of “How It Works” (pg. 60, AA Big Book), “God **could** and **would** if He were **sought**.”
- Pause when agitated. Listen to your conscience. Many of us have felt that God speaks to us in a “still, small voice”.

As You Go Forward in Recovery...

- Learn what “triggers” you to shoplift (uncomfortable feelings, thoughts). As you discover them, write them down and make phone calls to SA members to discuss them.
- Accept responsibility for your behavior – what you do DOES have an impact on you and other people.
- Save your receipts....bring them with you to return items.
- Learn to substitute new activities for shoplifting preventing loneliness and boredom. For example: start a fun hobby, volunteer, do a neglected task, get a part-time job, start reading and/or exercising. Behaving honestly and having integrity will grow your self-esteem.
- Find an abstinent SA member and ask him/her how he/she got abstinence, ask them to be your Sponsor and let that person guide you. A sponsor helps us work the 12 steps and guides us up to the level of their own recovery. Also, find a “SA buddy” and commit daily to each other.
- Join a SA group and contribute by attending regularly and doing service (reading, sharing, leading, etc.). Also, join an in-person 12 Step meeting (DA, GA, AA, NA, FA, OA, etc.) to develop in-person support. A minimum of 3 committed meetings a week (combined) is recommended.
- Keep your day count of abstinence and share with others.
- Remember: the 12 Step PROMISES of the program occur only when we keep in FIT SPIRITUAL CONDITION (see pages 83, 84, and 85 in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous). Continue to practice prayer, meditation, gratitude and service every day.
- Here are some helpful slogans: *(for more, see handout ‘SA 12 Step Slogans’)*

♥ One Day At A Time	♥ HALT: Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired
♥ Let Go And Let God	♥ E.G.O.: Edging God Out
♥ This Too Shall Pass	♥ G.O.D.: Good Orderly Direction
♥ First Things First	♥ Keep Coming Back
♥ Keep It Simple	♥ You are never alone again!
♥ H.O.W.: Honesty, Open-mindedness, Willingness	♥ It Works If You Work It! So Work It – You’re Worth It!



RIGOROUS HONESTY

What does this mean for those in recovery from shoplifting and stealing?

As addicts, many of us have a tendency to minimize or deny the extent of our shoplifting and stealing behaviors. We may even justify certain behaviors that we do not consider illegal or where we think we will not get caught. However, if we are to fully recover from our addictive and destructive behaviors, we have to be willing to go to all extents to improve ourselves. As we know, “half measures availed us nothing.”

This document outlines some of the areas that many of us in this fellowship used to gloss over, overlook, minimize, deny or state that these are called “grey areas”. Rigorous honesty involves uncovering it all. As we work through the steps of our program, we do indeed uncover areas that need examination. Many of us realize we had to include new things to our inventory of addictive behavior patterns and that we have to hold ourselves accountable to a higher standard, as we commit to live a life of rigorous honesty and spiritual wholeness.

1. Taking more than our fair share of things

This could be taking home extra condiments or refreshments from restaurants or eateries, refilling sodas that actually should be paid refills, taking too many samples or taking silverware. It is the idea of stocking up, getting something for free, and taking advantage of a situation.

2. Taking advantage of complimentary goods or services

This may involve dishonestly procuring discounts, credits or freebies. This can be from a business, a church or service organization, an individual, the government, or other. These actions may be small like picking up a glossy magazine in a waiting room to take home for our personal pleasure. Or, on the other hand, they may be big like getting a grant from a social service organization when we don't need it or are not eligible. There are many examples that would come under this category.

3. Stealing from work or volunteer activities.

This category can range from picking up office supplies, bathroom supplies, or other items to use at home all the way to stealing petty cash or cheating, committing fraud or embezzlement, or to stealing and reselling items of value.

4. Using work/volunteer organization equipment for personal use

This is not the same as stealing from work but includes using the company car to go on personal outings or vacations, using your work phone for private purposes, or using your work computer to start another business or shop on eBay or do anything other than work.

5. Spending time at work doing non-work instead of work

This can look like a lot of different behaviors that we often justify by saying “everyone else does it.” For example, making personal calls from work, doing your personal finances at work, shopping online, surfing the web for anything other than work purposes, doing your personal email, and so forth.

6. Cheating on disability

Some people take advantage of disability benefits when in fact they are capable of working to support themselves. This sort of dishonesty raises the cost of social programs for everyone; it can make it difficult for people who really need the benefits to receive them.

7. Cheating on taxes

This category is pretty much self-explanatory. It particularly comes up for people who get paid in cash. As recovering SHA members, we need to ask ourselves what the most honest thing to do is in every given situation, including on our tax returns.

8. Dishonest behaviors around returns – “Bogus Returns”

Bogus returns run a whole gamut of dishonest behaviors including but not limited to:

- Returning items that we've stolen, broken, worn, or used
- Purchasing clothes or accessories that we intend to wear and return
- Buying an item and shoplifting the same item and later on returning the stolen item. This is a double hit as we have stolen AND made a bogus return
- Buying something that has parts or pieces, taking out the parts we want and return the rest for full value return
- Returning items with which we have received a gift with purchase and keeping the gift
- Falsifying coupons
- Returning partly used items or partly consumed items as in the case of food
- Using other customers' receipts to steal an item

9. Switching price tags

This can be done in the process of returning things but can also happen in stores where we take advantage of sale prices or lower priced items, switching tags to pay less on a non-sale or higher priced item. This activity includes using the wrong code number when buying bulk foods or fresh produce.

10. Ordering items and claiming they never arrived

Even though UPS or FedEx or USPO have tracking methods, some of us have ordered items and received them but claim they never arrived to get a refund for our purchase.

11. Dishonest behaviors at the movies or theaters

This can involve finding a way to enter without paying or staying to watch a second movie when we only paid for one movie or taking snacks and drinks into movies where there are signs that state: "No outside Food or Drink".

12. Keeping extra change if given an overage or if the cash register charges a lower price

Getting extra change back when paying cash is quite frequent. The cashier's scanner records, or the cashier sometimes punches in, a dollar amount for an item that we know is below what the shelf price is. In our old behaviors, we would've viewed this as a little windfall, a mistake that we benefited from. In recovery, we should set things right as soon as we are aware of the error.

13. Lying for personal gain and/or aggrandizement

The example #10 is a reflection of this kind of behavior. In recovery, we need to be particularly aware of how we manipulate the truth or other people to our own advantage. This can show up when dealing with people who are disabled or handicapped or very elderly; when we take advantage of or lie to anyone, we are violating another's trust.

14. Cruising stores or spending excessive time in stores or on line

If we are a recovering alcoholic, would we spend excessive time sitting at the bar in a restaurant? Checking out the wine selection in a store just to see what they have? Same logic applies to being a shoplifter hanging out in any establishment that has things for sale that we can steal. Surfing the web endlessly to shop can also strengthen our compulsive neediness.

15. Taking packages/plants/outside decorations that don't belong to you from porches, yards, a building's common areas or in public areas

You see a neighbor has several packages on their porch or outside their apartment or the building's common areas and you help yourself. You take plants or lawn ornaments from porches or yards or public areas.

16. Insurance fraud or supplemental assistance

This can include letting the service provider or contractor absorb your deductible by overbilling the insurance company to include your deductible amount so you do not have to pay it or claiming damages from a past accident or damage with a current claim. Same logic would apply to medical issues. On supplemental assistance, no receiving heat assistance or medical care or food help with incorrect reporting.

17. Stealing or "borrowing" without returning or letting a "loan" go without repayment from friends and relatives

Hopefully, this is self-explanatory. Basically, any behavior from the above list that involves people known to you.

18. Stealing from tip jars, tip money left on tables, church collection plates

19. Picking up lost wallets, purses and not turning them over immediately to authorities

This could also involve taking money or other valuables out of these items and then turning them in.

20. Not signing the merchant copy of a credit card receipt to avoid paying

You dispute a charge on your credit card bill for purchases that you deliberately did not sign for in the hope that the merchant will not follow up or fight with the credit card company.

Some final comments

There are many others dishonest behaviors. We must ask our Higher Power to show us where we are still dishonest in our lives and ask for help. As more dishonest behaviors are revealed to us, we come out of denial and become accountable for our behavior, making amends as needed. As we turn over

our lives to the will and care of God as we know God, we gain the strength required to be honest with ourselves and others. We become able to overcome feelings of guilt and shame about our behaviors. And, one day at a time, we learn to live a clean life, free of lies and deceit. A whole new sense of honesty unfolds within us, where we learn to put the greater good ahead of personal gain and where we respect ourselves, others, and Higher Power in equal measure.

GRAY AREAS

Gray Areas are areas where dishonesty is present and our shoplifting disease will tell us that they are minor and don't matter. Although these things may be ok for some people, for most of us they are dangerous and could lead to relapse if not treated and dealt with using the 12 steps. Some of these gray areas do not cause an arrest, however, some can cause an arrest. All are embarrassing if we are caught.

A sponsor or other ShA friend can be a sounding board for us when we are trying to become more honest and make a new way for ourselves in recovery.

Examples that may be gray areas are:

TAKING MORE THAN OUR SHARE OF FREE THINGS

Taking more condiments or refreshments than are offered at a place of business that we frequent. This is usually more than what would normally be used with the meal we have purchased or during the time that we may be waiting in their reception area. Are we trying to stock up and get something for nothing? Are we really using the supplies and foodstuffs that are there for what they were intended for; or are we taking advantage?

OVER SAMPLING

Sometimes stores provide samples of things. Do we take a sample to decide if we want to purchase, or do we take a few samples with the intention of not purchasing or just to have a free lunch?

LYING TO GET COMPLIMENTARY GOODS OR SERVICES

BEING DISHONEST IN ORDER TO GET DISCOUNTS OR CREDITS WE DON'T TRULY DESERVE.

WE OBTAIN THINGS BY LIES OF OMISSION. Sometimes these things may be offered but we must be careful that we are not allowing someone to assume that we deserve to receive this free item. For example, I would accept free magazine subscriptions meant for my office waiting room but continued to receive them for my own personal use, long after I had a business with clients in a reception room.

BOGUS RETURNS

- Something breaks, we may re-buy the item, put the old broken item in the package and/ or to go with the receipt and return it
- Getting clothes or accessories that we intend to return AFTER we have worn them
- Buying something that has parts or pieces, and then taking out the parts we want and return the rest for full value return
- Returning items with which we have received a gift and keeping the gift

MISCELLANEOUS GRAY AREAS.

Refilling sodas or coffee that actually should be paid for.

Sneaking into a second or third movie when we only paid for one movie.

Taking snacks and drinks into movies where there are signs that state: "No outside Food or Drink".

Cheating on tax returns.

Lying on forms in order to get services which we are really not entitled to have.

Keeping wrong change if given an overage.

Ordering items and claiming they never arrived.

Price tag switching.

Taking other peoples' deliveries.

Sneaking food at a "free Continental Breakfast" to take with you for future consumption.

Going thru donation boxes to take what we want without paying for it.

Taking items from a cabinet while you are alone in the room. (This can be really embarrassing if caught.)

Some guiding questions we might ask ourselves are :

Am I taking something that is offered that I really don't have a need for or a right to obtain?

- Would I be embarrassed if certain people saw or knew that I did this?
- Do I feel guilty about taking or receiving this under the given circumstances? If so, why?
- Am I planning and scheming about how to get possession of this thing or things?
- Does receiving or accepting these things seem uncomfortable or somehow wrong?

And there are many others, if you ask your Higher Power to help you to be honest and come out of denial they will be revealed to you. Because it is easy for us to go back into denial, a major characteristic of theft addiction, it is helpful to journal about these thoughts or discuss them with another recovering person or someone who understands our recovery goal to be completely honest.

As we get further in our recovery these feelings of guilt or conscience become more evident. Our Higher Power can help us turn away immediately from such acting out in these gray areas. We then begin to see them as full black areas. If we haven't done the right thing, we can pray for the willingness to correct them as best we can, at the first opportunity. We can embrace these times when we are tempted, as reminders of how we are truly powerless over this disease and all of its manifestations.

ACCOUNTABILITY QUESTIONS

Am I taking something that is offered that I really don't have a need for or a right to obtain?

- Would I be embarrassed if certain people saw or knew that I did this?
- Do I feel guilty about taking or receiving this under the given circumstances? If so, why?
- Am I planning and scheming about how to get possession of this thing or things?
- Does receiving or accepting these things seem uncomfortable or somehow wrong?

Consequences [keep copy in wallet]

Legal & financial

Getting arrested

Finding bail money to stay out of jail

Going to jail

Lawyers' fees

Paying court fines and fees

Paying compensation to the store or paying back victims

Losing your job or prevents you from getting one because of background checks

Prevented from earning income for yourself and your family

Losing your home and being unable to get another one

Losing Green Card and/or being deported

Mental & emotional

Self-esteem is lowered even if not arrested

Shame is suffered even if no one else finds out

Not seeing your children and family right away or for a long time

Possibly losing your children

Humiliation as a result of apprehension

Family and friends may judge you unfavorably because you are a thief

May destroy family and personal relationships