

THE OUTER CIRCLE

Gifts of Recovery

**Working the Steps transforms a life
with unexpected rewards**



PLUS

When to Share the Message

To Recover, Do This, Not That

Spring Retreats Abound





International Service Organization of SAA, Inc.

TOC articles contain the experiences and opinions of individual SAA members and do not represent the official views or positions of the ISO of SAA, Inc. or the SAA fellowship as a whole.

© Copyright 2017 International Service Organization of SAA, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Except for the purpose of redistributing *The Outer Circle* as a whole, *The Outer Circle* may not be downloaded, copied, reproduced, duplicated, or conveyed in any other way without the express written permission of the International Service Organization of SAA, Inc.

* Registered Trademark Sex Addicts Anonymous and the SAA logo are registered trademarks of the International Service Organization of SAA, Inc.

The Outer Circle Mission

The mission of *The Outer Circle* is to provide information from the ISO and to share the experience, strength, and hope members have obtained from working the SAA program of recovery. As the first iteration put it in 1998, *The Outer Circle* newsletter “carries the message of hope to the sex addict who still suffers” — especially prisoners and others who don’t have the Internet.

Through *TOC*, SAA members contribute articles and poems that focus on working the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. It also communicates ISO news, regional activities, and other items of interest.

SAA meetings are encouraged to reproduce *TOC* at no charge and display it alongside other SAA literature. To keep costs down, please print out the online version.

If you have comments or suggestions, please see contact information on p. 30. To have an article considered for publication, see our Submission Guidelines on page 31.

To ensure that future issues can be offered without cost, please consider making a tax-deductible donation now to support publication of the newsletter.

May - June 2017

CONTENTS

Columns

- 4 From the Editor
- 5 From the Director
- 6 Dear Grace
- 8 Living in Sobriety
- 20 Dear Will
- 22 Stories of Service
- 23 From the Board

Departments

- 2 TOC Mission
- 25 ISO News
- 29 Calendar
- 30 Contact ISO
- 31 Submission Guidelines
- 32 Twelve Steps

Articles



10 Gifts of Recovery

Working the Steps transforms a life of acting out into unexpected rewards



14 Pattern Recognition

Step Four reveals common behaviors that feed addiction



17 Wisdom of the Mushroom

A different way to look at 'From Shame to Grace'



18 A Softer Way

What's the 'easier, softer way'? A surprising answer.

FROM THE EDITOR

Articles, On Topic

BY GARY T.

From this issue forward, I've set topics for each issue to help prompt members to write articles for the newsletter.

For me working Step Three means opening myself up to new possibilities. It's in that spirit that I want to change how I ask for story submissions. I want to thank Amy L. for her email encouraging the idea.

When I became editor of *The Outer Circle*, I did away with topic issues such as "Gratitude." My thinking was that topic issues were too limiting and people would feel more free to submit articles that weren't limited by topic.

I have begun to question the wisdom of that logic. Amy's email really drove it home for me. She wrote: "For myself, it's hard to 'think' of things to write, but if there is a prompt provided ... then I can come up with things a bit easier."

So from this issue forward, I've set topics for each issue to help prompt members like Amy to write articles for the newsletter. Although I'm doing this partly to keep an open mind, I'm also doing it because the newsletter really needs a better, more reliable flow of articles from the fellowship.

I've written this before, but it bears repeating that *The Outer Circle* is entirely written by the fellowship. Every article you read was written by someone in the spirit of service and the foundational principle that sharing our experience, strength, and hope with others is key to staying sober.

So please take a look at the writing guidelines on page 31 and see if there's a topic that piques your interest — or one that makes you think of another person whose perspective you've valued on that topic. And remember, articles on any recovery related topic are always welcome as are topic suggestions!

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Take Service to the Next Level

BY JOE H.

Is there a place for the ISO in your recovery? The new nomination process enables anyone to send in a resume for a multitude of service positions.

When I joined SAA, I did not know anything about the ISO. After two years in recovery, I still did not really know the purpose of the ISO. After 18 years, the last nine spent working at the ISO, I now know the role that the ISO has played in my recovery.

The ISO provided me meeting information, which it spends a lot of time validating. It would not help my recovery or my perception of SAA if I showed up at a nonexistent meeting. I also purchased a book and some pamphlets to help me understand the SAA program. Today, I know it took decades and many volunteer hours to create that literature.

Is there a place for the ISO in your recovery? Is service a part of your recovery? If I practice Step Twelve, I need to find a way to do service. The ISO supports a large number of service committees and local outreach efforts, which provide our members the opportunity to serve the fellowship.

If you wish to enhance your recovery, or give it a kick-start, I suggest taking your service commitments to the next level. Consider helping the ISO and the many service committees working to help sex addicts.

The new nominations process enables anyone to send in a resume for a multitude of positions. Each year, the ISO conference must fill positions for the board, the Literature Committee, the Nominations Committee, the Area Coordinating Committee, and the Conference Steering Committee. You can also join many of our other service committees without having to submit a resume.

I am grateful for all of our service volunteers over the past 30 years. These volunteers have provided a solid foundation for SAA to grow and help the still-suffering sex addict.

DEAR GRACE

How to Begin the Recovery Journey?

BY WOMEN'S
OUTREACH
SUBCOMMITTEE

**Attending
meetings, making
calls and reading
SAA literature are
all great places to
start.**

Dear Grace,

Help, please. I want to start my recovery journey as soon as possible. Not a moment to lose! I'm looking for a sponsor, but are there other things I can do right away?

Anxious to Begin

Dear Anxious to Begin,

Yes, there are several things you can do right away to begin your recovery journey.

First, attend meetings. Meetings are where you will meet other SAA members, hear their stories, discuss the program, and learn about the Twelve Steps. At the meetings, get phone numbers. Call those people. Do a "30 in 30" or even a "90 in 90"; that many meetings in that number of days. We start absorbing the program through our skin when we become that committed. Talk to people at the meetings. If there is fellowship after the meeting, go.

If face-to-face SAA meetings aren't available close by, there are many daily telemeetings including a women-only newcomers telemeeting focusing on newcomer questions. Our telemeetings are a great resource. Go to the meetings section of our website, www.saa-recovery.org. Pick up and read *The Outer Circle*. Attend a local retreat. At your meetings, ask if there is a local intergroup and if it has a website. Perhaps that website lists local events.

Once you have been to six meetings, I suggest you email our trusted servant, "Grace" who maintains a contact list of women around the world. This list, of course, is not inclusive of



all women in SAA, but does include those who choose to join the list and offer their contact information as a way to connect with other women. There are always women on that list willing to sponsor. You can contact “Grace” at grace@saa-women.org.

Another helpful resource is the SAA literature, including our book, *Sex Addicts Anonymous*. It is available for purchase at most meetings, on the SAA website, or you can read it for free on the website.

There is a wealth of experience, strength, and hope in those pages. The “Tools of Recovery” booklet is excellent. Another suggestion is to read about the three circles in the *Defining Abstinence* chapter of the *Green Book*, or get a copy of the “Three Circles” pamphlet. You might

consider asking a sober member at a meeting to help you create your three circles.

Keep coming back, keep asking questions, and keep reading the literature. Remember, we are here for you! May your Higher Power grant you serenity on your recovery journey.

Grace

*Statement of Purpose for Dear Grace: to reach out to all women with a desire to stop addictive sexual behavior through this printed medium and share with the fellowship the types of questions the Grace e-mail (grace@saa-women.org) receives. *Names have been changed to protect anonymity.*

LIVING IN SOBRIETY

Recovery Efforts Lead to Rewards

BY ANONYMOUS

I replace destructive isolation with new experiences altogether, walking briskly to my outer circle.

I have been abstinent from my inner circle behaviors for more than fourteen years. How have I achieved sobriety?

From one point of view, I haven't, exactly. All I have is today. I haven't graduated or earned something like an advanced degree, or a black belt. What I experience today is a gift. With the gift of sobriety comes a responsibility to continue to make steady effort as if my life depended on it.

I use the words "as if," but in fact, my life does depend on my sobriety. Without my sobriety being a top priority from one day to the next, I wouldn't be alive. My addiction has fatal consequences if it is not arrested.

How does my addiction show up? What behaviors do I avoid? My inner circle includes, but is not limited to: pornography, compulsive masturbation, sex outside of a committed dating relationship, and pursuit of unavailable persons

When I began recovery from sex addiction in 1996, I was already familiar with the Twelve Steps. Sexual recovery wasn't my first, or even second, program. After two years of complete abstinence from masturbation, I had a slip, and I had lots of difficulty putting together any consecutive sobriety time.

One evening I was attending a sexual recovery meeting of another fellowship, and a gentleman suggested I try a meeting for SAA newcomers. I went, and I stayed. I kept coming back. To this day, I attend meetings and have a home group. If I am ever wondering if I should attend a meeting, I put an end to my mental debate, and I go.

I have worked the Steps with a sponsor, and I

sponsor others to work the Steps. I volunteer for service positions and support business meetings. I read and study SAA literature, and encourage others to do the same. I have attended some international SAA conventions, and many annual retreats in our region. I've even had the pleasure of attending SAA while overseas for business.

After more than three years in SAA, I met with my sponsor to discuss adding healthy masturbation to my outer circle. He encouraged me to use "outside help" to clarify what that activity would look like for me. The insights from a professional sex therapist were invaluable. My healthy experience involves self-respect and prayer. The therapist also emphasized the importance of balanced self-care: rest, nutrition, exercise.

To this day I strive for adequate sleep at night (and quick naps at points in my active day, if they are ever an option), a nourishing diet, and cardiovascular/strength activity for my body.

For years, I've emphasized these three components of healthy living with sponsees. Working with another addict is a very rewarding experience that also strongly supports my own sobriety.

Fellowship activities with other SAA members — whether enjoying some casual dining, taking a hike, watching events, playing board games — have

all helped me live a more engaged and fulfilling social life. I replace destructive isolation with new experiences altogether, walking briskly to my outer circle.

My greatest outer-circle activity has been pursuing a life-long dream of working as a musician. Outside of my current professional career, I have outfitted a music studio space, and I continue to grow as a musician. I have Twelve Step recovery to thank, as these experiences would have been literally impossible to accomplish on my own.

My life in recovery as a musician is closely interdependent with my respect for a Power greater than myself, and the quiet time I spend daily is a fundamental piece of my sober living.

Prayer is an experience I live and breathe, and I am very attracted to it throughout my day. I am never shy to mention prayer and the abundance of the universe with my colleagues in recovery.

I continue to be amazed how any efforts we make never go unnoticed by the universe; they are always rewarded. My plan for recovery continues: keep coming back and showing up, one day at a time!

If you have five or more years of sobriety and would like to write a Living in Sobriety column, please contact toc@saa-recovery.org.

Gifts of Recovery



Working the Steps transforms a life of acting out with unexpected rewards

BY MARY H.

T

he SAA booklet “First Step to Recovery” suggests an exploration of sexuality in one’s family of origin. My first reaction was, “There wasn’t any!” The repression imposed by my mother’s church said there wasn’t supposed to be any, and attached extreme shame to the subject.

My next response was, “Yeah, right!” All that creepy stuff my mother did to me before I started talking and she turned me over to her brothers? All those creepy pictures my father took of me?

Then came puberty, and hormones, and it was the sixties, and everyone was “discovering” sex. My mother had told me, at the end of the plumbing lecture that was meant to be sex education, “...But that’s not anything you’d ever want to do.” By then, I’d had so much bad infor-

mation and outright lies from her, I wouldn't have believed her if she said the sky was blue. Not to mention the irony of what she did to me when I was too young to even know what it was.

So I set out with cheerful abandon to prove her wrong. By the time I was thirteen, I was hooked into my unholy trinity of addictions: sex, booze, and work. The work component distracted me just enough so that I didn't get into even worse trouble than I did.

At age fifteen, I was "involuntarily relocated" after being labeled a "Person In Need of Supervision," which was a euphemism for "blatantly promiscuous young female." I soon realized I could get away with much more at my parents' house, so I got myself released early (for "good behavior"), and went back there.

One condition of my release was that I attend my mother's church, which I'd managed to avoid for years. Imagine that: I was sentenced to church! And I wonder why I have so many resentments against her church, and religion in general.

I know, the usual way out for women is marriage. But I knew that I'd be trading one jail for another, with a sentence twice as long. I saw how my parents treated each other, and I said no way!

Sex didn't seem like a real part of my life: it was like going away to some dark cave where I turned into a completely different person.

I figured at least with a paying job, I'd get to go home from a boss, not be going home to yet another one. I really needed my own space, and still do.

There weren't many good jobs for women, not in small towns, so I wound up dancing in bars to support myself. I managed to avoid literally "working overtime upstairs," but traded sex for protection, information, and favors, in ways that weren't much better than prostitution.

Sexual relationships were a nightmare. Sex didn't seem like a real part of my life: it was like going away to some dark cave where I turned into a completely different person, a person who enjoyed sex, but only on a physical level.

But getting back to "real" life afterwards... I wasn't sure I could, or if I even wanted to. Because when I did, I'd felt depressed, ashamed, and couldn't get out of

bed. I would want the guy to go away, and be disappointed if he did.

My addict had it down to a science (or thought she did): I was allowed to cheat and lie about it, but my partners weren't. And, of course, I always had one waiting in the wings. Meanwhile, I railed about men and their double standards!

I was lucky to have some salable skills that didn't involve sex, although I managed to sexualize just about everything. I even had sex with my bosses, coworkers, and clients. I was no good at the traditional female jobs—nurse, teacher, secretary—because of my basically introverted nature and social anorexia. I do have good mechanical and computer skills, and so I managed to get various publishing jobs.

My adult relationships were a mess—I couldn't sustain much interpersonal contact. I got too much of that at work, then just wanted to go home and collapse, regardless of any commitments I'd made.

Work and money were my highest priorities. Money represented independence from my parents, who thought depression was a myth and that all I had to do was “pull myself up by my own bootstraps.” And I wonder why I've

always been terrified of being found out as “crazy,” and locked up or committed.

Once in recovery, I started coming to terms with my incest history. I did years of support groups and therapy, and had to leave a fairly healthy relationship (for me) in order to do the work.

The therapy aim was to keep me functional enough to work a job, but things were happening too fast, so I took a medical leave of absence and never did make it back.

Forgiveness is not something I set out to do; it's a gift I receive as a result of working the Steps. I didn't even realize I had forgiven my mother until after she was dead.

One day I was meditating when I felt her presence. If I'd anticipated that possibility, I wouldn't have dared to meditate—even dead, she was that scary. But this presence was benign, and it was her.

There were no words, but there were three things she wanted me to know (not things she would ever have said when she was alive):

- » She was glad I'd forgiven her.
- » She was glad I understood why things were the way they were in my family of origin.
- » She wanted me to do the work

I needed to do to get better.

And now, at last, the good part!
What my life is like today, in recovery. I feel blessed that:

- » I never got an STD.
- » I never got pregnant.
- » I've not been homeless.
- » I didn't have any car accidents or DUIs when I was drinking.
- » I wasn't shot when I didn't have the sense to back down from loaded guns.
- » My jumping around from one addiction to another meant I was a binge drinker; I never got to that maintenance stage with my body craving alcohol and desperate to maintain that precarious balance.
- » I have Higher Power(s!) that just won't quit:

I have the program, the Steps, and a fellowship where I feel welcome and loved. (Not enabled! Some people even call me on my stuff!)

I am privileged to have great sponsors and mentors who understand addiction and avoidance.

I got to go up the mountain for a program campout and get rained on, and feel joy, and bring some back down the mountain with me (both rain and joy)!

I get to feel the fear and do it anyway—with a lot of things

Forgiveness is not something I set out to do; it is a gift I receive as a result of working the Steps.

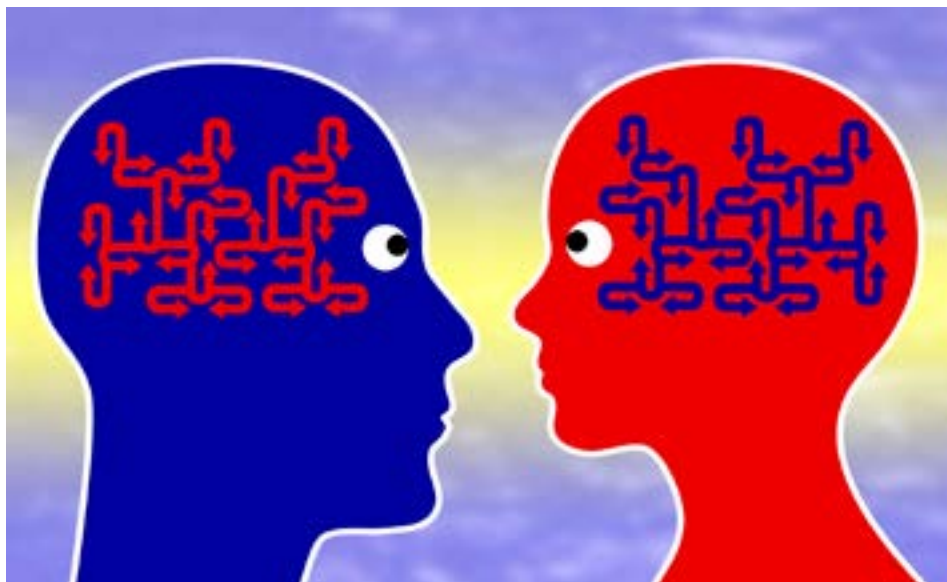
these days. I have three circles that work for me. I have both addict and avoidant behaviors all together on the same (rather large!) page, mainly because I can't separate them out—I'm a very good extremist, and I can turn on a dime. It's all too easy to "...retreat into a sham sobriety" that is really anorexia.

Determining sobriety is relatively simple (but not easy!) for my acting-out behaviors. Avoidant behaviors are a lot more slippery for me.

"Progress, not perfection" is one of my favorite slogans, probably because perfectionism is part of all my addictions and avoidances. ("If I can't do it perfectly, I won't do it at all." "If I can't be perfect, I'll be perfectly bad.")

But my Higher Power doesn't give me more than I can handle; my Higher Power gives me more than I can control! I don't "have to" do this; I get to do it!

Here's to recovery! ●



Pattern Recognition

Step Four reveals common behaviors that feed addiction

BY JON S.

I just celebrated one year of sobriety. I wish I could say I am care-free and full of joy, but I am not. As I work Step Four, I'm just beginning to see how much more recovery I need — and how my character defects undermine my joy and serenity.

If you asked me a year ago what my problem was, I would have said pornography. In reality I would never admit to anyone that I had that problem.

A year ago I convinced myself that my only problem was porn. I couldn't stop, but I could 'handle it.' No, that is not true. I literally thought: "I can't believe I'm still doing this! I will stop after this stressful project is done." Or I thought: "Man, I'm so tired, but by this summer I'll have stopped and I'll start on that business idea."

Dreams of getting out of the oppression of porn would fill my mind and allow me to continue using porn. If porn was my only problem, and I just stopped using it, then my life would be everything I wanted it to be, right?

However, a year of sobriety — and working the steps with my sponsor — has opened my eyes. Compulsive porn use was only the tip of the proverbial iceberg. Early on, it was easy to see why porn and masturbation were in my inner circle.

Then I realized that, for me, using entertainment media while alone was another type of escapism and avoidance of reality, avoidance of my feelings, and avoidance of life. If I just put porn, masturbation, and solo entertainment media in my inner circle then my life will be great. Perfect even, right?

But no, just because I have kept sober from my inner circle activities does not automatically create enriching relationships and fulfilling life experiences. I have learned having an inner circle doesn't mean I have a functioning outer circle.

The stopping of these activities is necessary but the starting of meaningful practices to meet my needs is required. Starting meaningful practices might be even

harder than the stopping inner circle behaviors.

I have learned over these months that I couldn't start finding meaningfulness unless I was willing to see my whole self in a clear light. Working Step Four has been a slow process for me. My personal inventory seems to be unfolding. It was not a onetime event as I had expected in the beginning.

But sobriety has opened my eyes, and my true nature is being revealed in stages. Even in the past two months, I have discovered how little I know about myself and my own needs. I'm beginning to see, and the view has cut me very deeply. I have discovered how fearful I am, how dependent I am on others, especially on my wife, for validation and to be okay.

Here is a recent example. Last week I attended a swim meet to watch my daughters compete. The meet was enjoyable. My wife was with me and she seemed in good spirits.

Afterwards, she was leaving separately to get to an meeting in another city. I was happy she was going, but I was worried about traffic. I suggested that she leave earlier than she planned so that she would beat the rush hour traffic. She had not asked me my

opinion of the traffic situation. But I'm just a helpful nice guy, or so I thought.

At the time, I failed to see what I was doing. I wasn't worried about the traffic; I was worried about myself. I was worried that if she hit traffic, she would get frustrated and be upset with me. This would make me feel bad.

So I tried to manage my feelings by controlling hers. I was not helping her. I was not trusting her ability to handle things or to accept when things went bad. I was defending against an imagined future attack on my feelings.

How did it go? As you might expect she still hit traffic. And now she did have reason to resent me because she had left earlier per my strong suggestion. The "helping" backfired.

I can see now this has been a huge pattern of my addictive behavior. I never understood before, but sobriety and education have allowed me to see how often my addiction was fueled by resentment over "helping" that backfired. I would assume it was her problem, not mine.

I now see how so many of my actions and interactions are to save me pain. It's all about me.

The fear of pain and my desire to avoid it directs my constant problem solving for others. How could I live with myself if they got into trouble? I could have fixed it or warned them. I did not trust that I could be okay. I was not okay.

I have seen how I am not okay if others around me are upset. I always thought that was empathy, but it is actually rooted in self-hate.

The next day I realized that I was constantly watching my wife at the meet, trying to read her feelings, thoughts and mind so that I could be prepared for anything.

Prepared for what? Any bad feeling that might make me feel unsafe. I wanted her to be happy and content so that I could be. I couldn't be happy and content on my own.

As I've learned, just because you take out the porn and the compulsive masturbation doesn't mean everything else falls into place.

This year of sobriety has been one of the hardest things I've ever done. Stopping is only one part. I have to be willing to meet my own needs by developing a full and real outer circle. I must see a worthwhile human being in myself. I must believe that I am worthwhile. ●

Wisdom of the Mushroom



**A different way to look at 'From
Shame to Grace'**

BY ANONYMOUS

I left treatment in January 2007. I immediately began attending three SAA meetings per week. During that same time I became very much involved in my church.

One Sunday afternoon, I attended the five o'clock service. After I took communion, I was seated in the very back row and I began crying over my joy of having been saved.

I cried until everyone had left and my preacher put his arms on my shoulders and comforted me. I had six sessions with him where he helped me to understand what was happening.

In September my SAA group had a retreat in the country. On the second day, I had a one-hour break and I went wandering in the woods. I cried for more than ten minutes, because I was so much aware of how much I had screwed up my wife and our relationship.

When I stopped, I looked down and between my feet was a mushroom. How perfect! Mushrooms grow in filth but they are beautiful. "From Shame to Grace!" I took the mushroom home and mounted it into a picture frame, which is on the wall in my office directly in front of my desk. I look at it ten times every day and am reminded how incredibly fortunate I am to have my faith and SAA. ●



A Softer Way

What's the 'easier, softer way'? One addict discovers a surprising answer

BY PAUL W.

I came reluctantly to my first meeting last summer. I thought, “Just like with my other attempts to get help from outside sources, I won’t share everything. I’ll keep the real shameful stuff to myself.”

I was very anxious as I entered the building for my first meeting. I asked myself, “What if someone recognizes me? Would they ask me to share my story? What will I say?”

I started to think about what and how much I would share. Would I share the truth or make up something so I don’t sound like a creep? When the introductions started, I felt like I was having an out-of-body experience, like I was hovering over the room, watching each person say their name and saying, ‘I am a sex-addict.’ I thought, “It’s coming around to me. What am I going to say?”

I started to sweat. It was my turn. Then the words came out of my mouth. “Hi. I’m Paul, and I’m a sex-addict.” I waited for a reaction,

and there was none. No clap of thunder, no trees fell on my head. It was over, and it was just beginning.

It was suggested that I attend the Sobriety Plan class meetings in a nearby city. “A class?” I wondered, “Man, that sounds like a lot of work. Maybe I don’t have to do it all. I can wing most of it.”

As the introduction to the meeting states, “We thought we could find an easier, softer way.” That’s what I was looking for. The easy way. Something where I keep whatever dignity I had left, intact.

What I’ve come to believe is that the program itself is the easier, softer way. With each meeting, phone call, and text, the protective wall I constructed around myself started to fall away, stone by stone.

I had resisted the call to trust in a Higher Power, even though I had attended church all of my life, for more than 60 years. I still wanted to believe I could do this by myself, even though I had 50 years of failure in relying on my own will power to control my addiction.

The power of the program, the healing I saw in the fellowship gradually led me to put my trust in God, something I had not truly bought in to despite all my religious upbringing and church atten-

With each meeting, phone call, and text, the protective wall I constructed around myself started to fall away.

dance. I started seeing good things happening in my life because of that trust. For me, the fellowship is an extension of my Higher Power. It puts “skin” on God. The support, the acceptance, the hugs are freely given at every meeting, every phone call, and every text.

I have completed my First Step. I gave my disclosure to the fellowship and to my wife. My wife and I had a lot of help and support from my sponsor and our therapists to complete this difficult and painful task. I received many calls and texts of support before and after my disclosures.

I’m now at the point where I consider going to meetings to be as important as going to church. The spirituality I experience with the fellowship is as strong as anything I experience at church. The program helped me to accept my struggles and learn about myself and my addiction. The program is a way of life that I will follow with gratitude. ●

DEAR WILL

Is It Okay to Modify the Circles?

BY WILL

The short answer is yes — under a sponsor’s guidance — if it adds to your spirituality and serenity.

Dear Will:

I have a new sponsor, and he and I am taking another look at my circles. My first sponsor and I were okay with my inner and middle circles the way I had set them up, but my new sponsor wants me to move some of the behaviors around. What do you think?

Hates Change

Dear Hates,

Will presumes that you have already asked your sponsor why he wants you to make these changes to your circles. If not, now is as good a time as any to ask. In the meantime, Will would like to share with you his experience, strength and hope around modifying his circles.

Will’s sponsor finally convinced him that he couldn’t put every behavior that was in the vicinity of acting out into his inner circle. So Will set about making modifications to his circles.

When revising his circles, the question Will asked himself was, “Does this behavior put you in danger of ending up in jail, the hospital, or the morgue?” If so, it went into his inner circle. This eliminated such formerly-inner-circle behaviors as looking into passing cars. Of course, this behavior could still have put him in danger of ending up in the hospital or the morgue, or at least having his insurance premiums increase, if he was too close to the car in front of him, but Will, even in the fog he was often in, could make the distinction.

The middle circle came to include many behaviors formerly in Will’s inner circle. These behaviors — such as being in a questionable area — while

not acting out in themselves, could have led to an inner-circle behavior. By having these behaviors in his inner circle, Will could rationalize and justify, “I’ve acted out just by being here, so I may as well follow through.” With these behaviors his middle circle, Will could escape such situations with his sobriety intact.



Will must add, for what it’s worth, that he added drinking to his middle circle because drinking made it easier for Will to act out. He discovered that acting out was darn near impossible for him when he was not drinking. Nowadays, Will believes that he can’t be in recovery when he is drinking, although he acknowledges that others’ mileage may vary.

Will did have one behavior that was a big question mark in terms of the circles: masturbation. Even though it will probably not lead to jail, the hospital (in most cases), or the morgue, it can still easily be an inner-circle behavior.

In this case, Will asked himself two questions, questions he went on to ask of his sponsees as well: the first was, “Are you isolating so you can participate in this behavior when the whim strikes?” And the second was, “Is engaging in this behavior putting

you closer to actually engaging in an inner circle activity?” As it says in the SAA pamphlet, “Abstinence,” “if we continue an acting-out behavior, we run the risk of our behavior escalating to more dangerous behavior.” The answers to these questions, and the individual’s personal activities behind the need to ask the questions in the first place, helped Will to determine where to place this behavior in his circles.

The main question, Hates, is your sobriety. See if your sponsor’s suggestions make a difference. Which one adds the most to your spirituality and especially to your serenity? That is the one that Will would go with.

Will

*If you have a question for Will,
please send an email to [men4saa@
saa-recovery.org](mailto:men4saa@saa-recovery.org).*

STORIES OF SERVICE

Discovering the Jedi Council of Recovery

BY TONY M.

My sponsor encouraged me to attend an intergroup meeting, and after my first meeting, I knew the people in that room had what I wanted.

When I came in to the fellowship I was desperate. I had extremely low self-esteem and didn't believe that I was a worthwhile person. After defining my three circles with my sponsor, he told me that doing service work was going to be one of the most important parts of my recovery.

He told me to find a small way to contribute in each meeting I was attending to help me stay accountable. He encouraged me to attend an intergroup meeting to learn more about the fellowship and how it helps the addict who still suffers.

After my first meeting, I knew the people in that room had what I wanted. I was committed to keep going back. I found that the members of that meeting were like the Jedi Council of Recovery, and I have been so fortunate to be able to lean on them over the last few years as I have been going through my recovery journey.

Being of service has transformed my self-esteem and has been the primary factor in me coming to believe I am a worthy and lovable person. Being part of the intergroup has been the single most impactful action I have taken toward my recovery.

Service work saved my life. I would encourage anyone to find their service calling and take action to help the still suffering sex addict. By doing so, you'll help yourself more than you can imagine.

Stories of Service are meant to be short articles between 100 words to 300 words that inspire others to be of service in the SAA fellowship. If you have a story of service to share, please send it to toc@saa-recovery.org

FROM THE BOARD

Improving Fellowship Connections

BY JOHN J.

What can we do as a fellowship to better communicate with each other?

My name is John J and I am a sex addict. I went to my first SAA meeting on May 6, 2010. From the very beginning, communication among the members of our fellowship is what convinced me that this is where I belong.

People at that meeting were telling my story. I could identify with each share that was given. There were more than 20 people at the meeting. Many talked about challenges they were having with their addiction; but some talked about different lengths of sobriety they had achieved and how they were able to accomplish that success.

What I did not realize from attending my first meeting is I had already learned one of the most important parts of recovery: listening. I have learned over the years that I spend more time listening to my fellow sex addicts than anything else I do. My recovery has benefited immensely from what I have heard others say that help me make progress in my recovery.

When I started with my sponsor he emphasized communication. He told me to attend three meetings a week, meet with him once a week to review my progress with the steps, and on the other days be in contact with someone in the program.

I needed that daily contact/communication with someone in the fellowship to remind me that my recovery is the number one priority in my life. I was not able to achieve that goal on my own before coming to SAA, although I tried many, many, many, many times.

My sponsor also emphasized to me the importance of service in my recovery. Over time I learned that the plan my Higher Power has for my recovery is to follow a path he has laid out for me. Each step

FROM THE BOARD

of the path is another opportunity to be of service to other sex addicts.

That path has led me from starting meetings to international service on the board. I am now in my third year on the board as the trustee from southeast region. I have been able to see and learn about a lot of different activities and projects in our fellowship.

In southeast region we have a monthly telephone conference to share about any activities that are occurring in the fellowship. We provide each other with information regarding activities at the board, Literature Committee, Conference Steering Committee, and others as well. We also talk about activities in our local groups.

SAA is now on a journey from our traditional regional structure to an area concept. Discussions regarding this switch have been held at Delegate Conferences over the last 4 years. However, I do not think many in our fellowship are aware of the process to make this change.

Communicating the information about this transition in a successful manner has been difficult. The ISO has address lists with 7,000 individual email addresses of members in our fellowship. Emails about the transition have been released on many occasions,

as well as by hard copy through the mail. The ISO has contacts in 90% of the 1700 weekly meetings.

We are pursuing several initiatives to improve our external communication to the suffering addict and the professional community, such as improvements to our website, www.saa-recovery.org.

Recently the Intergroup Communications Committee (ICC) has been resurrected. The ICC has its own wiki (website) for members to post information about intergroups, especially best practices that can be shared with others.

What else can we do as a fellowship to better communicate with each other?

We are a fellowship whose main purpose is “stop our addictive sexual behavior and to help other recover from sexual addiction” (Green Book, p.1). Sharing our spiritual solution through working the twelve steps provides a message of hope. We strive to communicate our experience, strength and hope that we have gained through our recovery in order to help others with theirs.

We at the board and other committees wish to hear from you on the successes you and your groups continue to have with your recovery and how we can pass that success on to others.

ISO NEWS

Literature Committee Outlines Accomplishments, Future Projects

The ISO Literature Committee (LitCom) has made significant progress during this service year on its agenda of more than sixteen active projects, which are designed to further the ISO mission of helping member groups carry their message to the sex addict who still suffers. This year, the Literature Committee has met monthly by teleconference, as well as a three day face-to-face meeting surrounding the convention, in order to address the increasing workload resulting from the growth of the SAA fellowship and the ISO service committees.

Most Literature Committee projects are assigned to specific subcommittees, chaired by Literature Committee members, which also meet regularly by teleconference. All concerned group members are welcomed to attend and participate in many of the on-going Literature Committee projects.

Our mission and our process is to develop (by our own energy, or by supporting others), edit, and secure approval for literature that is of service to our community, in that it informs and/or inspires recovery from sex addiction. Our main criteria are anonymity, clarity, adherence to the Twelve Traditions, and appropriateness.

Accomplishments in 2016:

- » Completed reviewing all thirty-two 2016 convention recordings for potential sale on ISO outreach website
- » Created and/or filled positions for nine Literature Committee subcommittees
- » Approved 67 additional meditations for the SAA meditation book (current total is 320)
- » Conducted 11 meditation writing tele-workshops
- » Approved “Speaker’s Manual” and submitted to ISO office for publications
- » Approved and submitted “Intimacy and Sexual Avoidance First Step Guide” to ISO office for publication
- » Approved and submitted “Intergroup Guide” to ISO for publication
- » Reviewed and returned “Back to Basics” to original authors with recommendations

ISO NEWS

- » Reviewed and returned “Sponsor’s Guide for Service” to original authors with recommendations
- » Reviewed and returned “4th and 5th Step Guide” to original authors with recommendations
- » Provided liaison to the following committees:
 - » Collaboration with Professional Community
 - » Conference Steering Committee
- » Elected two voting members and an alternate to serve on the Information Systems and Online Presence Committee (ISOPCom)
- » Elected representative to ISO Nominating Committee
- » Elected representative to ISO Transition Committee
- » Reviewed and provided feedback for all articles published in *The Outer Circle*
- » Updated Literature Committee handbook to provide guidance on changes that Literature Committee can make to conference-approved literature as well as policy on approval of translated literature
- » Began working with ISO on an audio version of *Sex Addicts Anonymous* (Green Book)

Active or Future Projects:

- » Actively reviewing and editing newly submitted “Welcome to Atheists” pamphlet
 - » Continuing to review, edit, and approve meditations for the meditation book
 - » Continuing to review workshops presented at past ISO conventions
 - » Continue work on audio version of *Sex Addicts Anonymous* (Green Book)
 - » Review and process results from the assessment of fellowship literature needs survey
 - » Review and provide feedback on upcoming articles for *The Outer Circle*
 - » Reviewing all current literature for possible updating
-

ISO NEWS

SAA Board Takes Action to Extend Green Book Distribution

The SAA Board of Trustees took major actions to extend distribution of the Third Edition of the Green Book in print and audio versions. Here's a look at the Board's actions:

February

- » Approved the following change to the contract between Health Communication Inc., and the ISO of SAA, Inc. for distribution of our 3rd Edition of SAA Green Book.
 - » Change contract from a 3 year contract to a 2-year contract.
 - » Start the distribution of printed version of the 3rd edition of the Spanish SAA Green Book.
 - » Start the distribution of the English and Spanish eBook version of the 3rd Edition of the SAA Green Book.
 - » Start the distribution of the English and Spanish audio version of the 3rd Edition of the SAA Green Book.
 - » Start the distribution of the SAA Pocket version of the Green Book.
- » Approved opening a new bank account at a new banking institution (different from the institution where we already hold accounts).
- » Approved spending up to \$10,000 from the LitCom Projects & Translations Reserves for the creation of the English-language audiobooks.
- » Approved the 2018 SAA Convention Logo and Theme.

March

- » Approved a policy on the functioning of Board Committees.

Expenses Down; Reserves Funded

In the month of March we had a deficit of \$7,045.53. We had budgeted for a deficit of \$6,600.

Our gross sales revenue for the SAA Green Book was below our estimate by \$1,418.30 in March. For the year we are at 95 percent of our estimated SAA Green Book sales.

ISO NEWS

Our pamphlet and booklet sales were below our estimate by \$718.98 for March. For the year we are at 97.7 percent of our estimated pamphlet and booklet sales.

Our bronze medallion sales exceeded our estimate by \$1,020.73 in March. For the year we are at 134 percent of our estimated bronze medallion sales.

Our total sales for March were below our estimate by \$757.32. For the year we are at 101.5 percent of our estimated sales.

Individual donations were below our estimate by \$538.75 for March. For the year we are at 104.5 percent of our estimated individual donations.

Group donations were below our estimate by \$2,695.68 in March. For the year we are at 107.1 percent of our estimated group donations.

Our product inventory is valued at \$37,578.92.

Our expenses were below our estimate by \$3,276.4 in March. For the year we are at 100.3 percent of our estimated expenses.

Our operational reserve is fully funded.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

In Your Service,

Joe H.

Executive Director

Conference Committee Structure Seeks Input, Participation

The Conference Committee Structure Sub-Committee (CCS) of the Conference Steering Committee (CSC) would like to know what is currently working in your area. We especially would like to hear diverse input on how you see future development of committee work within SAA as we transition to involvement of more members sharing the work of the fellowship.

We are looking at work currently being done by the ISO board and board committees and developing ways that more of this work can be accomplished through the energy, input and participation of all members of the

ISO NEWS

fellowship. Our particular area is, “How will conference committees be constituted and operate in the future?”

We welcome your participation. We offer three options for contact:

- » You can attend our monthly phone meeting on the third Tuesday of each month at 5pm central time. You can obtain dial-in information by contacting the SAA office at info@saa-recovery.org, or by calling the office at (713)869-4902. We would love to have the input of all SAA members during this time of exciting transitions. All SAA members can participate in our discussions, and current delegates have voting power in any Conference Steering Committee work group.

Calendar — Here are tentative ISO outreach and committee meeting times for the next several months. Meetings times change often. All times are Central Standard Time. To attend a committee meeting, you must be a member or be invited. If you're interested in joining a committee, email info@saa-recovery.org or call the ISO office.

First Sunday of the month

Nominating Committee: 11:00 a.m.

Audio Review (odd months): 2:30 p.m.

Intergroup Communications: 3:00 p.m.

LGBT Outreach: 5:00 p.m.

CSC: Policy & Procedure: 2:00 p.m.

Prisoner Outreach: 8:00 p.m.

First Saturday of the month

Author's Group: 4:00 p.m.

Second Saturday of the month

Intimacy and Sexual Avoidance: 8 a.m.

Women's Outreach: 5:00 p.m.

Second Sunday of the month

Literature Committee: 4:00 p.m.

General Outreach: 6:30 p.m.

Third Tuesday of the month

CSC: Conference Committee Structure: 5:00 p.m.

Third Wednesday of the month

Area Conference Committee: 7:00 p.m.

Third Saturday of the month

CSC: Twelve Concepts Work Group: 12:00 p.m.

Third Sunday of the month

CSC: Charter & Bylaws: 2:00 p.m.

Information Systems and Online Presence
Committee: 2:00 p.m.

SE Region: 6:00 p.m.

Fourth Sunday of the month

Conference Steering Committee: 2:00 p.m.

Meditation Writing Workshop: 5:00 p.m.

Fourth Tuesday of the month

Seventh Tradition: 6:00 p.m.

CONTACT THE ISO

Want to connect with the International Service Organization website, staff, Board of Trustees, trusted servants, or special workers? Here's the contact info you need:

Office

ISO Office Mailing Address:
PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270

Phone: 713-869-4902 -or- 800-477-8191
Fax: 713-692-0105

Office e-mail: info@saa-recovery.org
The Outer Circle e-mail: toc@saa-recovery.org
Website: www.saa-recovery.org

The Outer Circle

Editor: Gary T.: toc@saa-recovery.org

Office Staff

Executive Director: Joe H.: director@saa-iso.org
Associate Director: Chris E.: chrisf@saa-iso.org
Information Technician: Jonathan C.: webmaster@saa-recovery.org
Information Technician: D. J. B.: djb@saa-iso.org
Program Manager : Philip A.: philip@saa-iso.org
Administrative Assistant : Jerry B.: jerry@saa-iso.org
Prisoner Outreach: Jonathan C.: outreach@saa-recovery.org
Administrative Assistant: Harvey A. harveya@saa-iso.org
Publications Manager: Cody S. codys@saa-iso.org

The ISO of SAA Board of Trustees also has an e-mail box, which may be used to register comments, positive or negative, from the fellowship about the ISO staff: oochair@saa-recovery.org.

Board of Trustees and Literature Committee

Great Lakes

Board: Stephen N. (Vice-Chair); Alternate: Vacant
BoardGL@saa-recovery.org
LitCom: Vacant; Alternate: Vacant
LitComGL@saa-litcom.org

Intermountain

Board: Bob H.; Alternate: Allan B.
BoardIM@saa-recovery.org
LitCom: Raymond W.; Alternate: Robbie
LitComIM@saa-litcom.org

North Central

Board: Dawn S.; Alternate: Vacant
BoardNC@saa-recovery.org
LitCom: John W.; Alternate: Alice P.
LitComNC@saa-litcom.org

Northeast

Board: Tim A. (Secretary); Alternate: Carl D.
BoardNE@saa-recovery.org
LitCom: Don R.; Alternate: Mike B.
LitComNE@saa-litcom.org

North Pacific

Board: Cliff G.; Alternate: Bob L.
BoardNP@saa-recovery.org

LitCom: Les J.; Alternate: Ben B.
LitComNP@saa-litcom.org

South Central

Board: Paul M. (Chair); Alternate: Mike L.
BoardSC@saa-recovery.org
LitCom: Tracy R.; Alternate: Doug S.
LitComSC@saa-litcom.org

Southeast

Board: John J. (Treasurer); Alternate: CW G.
BoardSE@saa-recovery.org
LitCom: Garret I.; Alternate: Byard B.
LitComSE@saa-litcom.org

Southern Pacific

Board: Antonio B.; Alternate: Wayne B.
BoardSP@saa-recovery.org
LitCom: Carole D.; Alternate: Mark W.
LitComSP@saa-litcom.org

At Large

Board: Lisa S.; Herman J.
BoardAL@saa-recovery.org
LitCom: David M.; Steven P.; Wayne K. Gary T.
(*The Outer Circle* editor)
LitComAL@saa-litcom.org

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Get Your Story Published in *The Outer Circle*

The Outer Circle newsletter relies on submissions from the Fellowship. It's a great way to carry the message to other sex addicts!

Deadlines for Submission and Topics

Jan/Feb:	"Taking Action"	Nov 5
Mar/Apr:	"Healthier Sexuality"	Jan 5
May/June:	"First Three Steps"	Mar 5
July/Aug:	"Prayer, Meditation"	May 5
Sept/Oct:	"Steps Six and Seven"	July 5
Nov/Dec:	"Giving Back"	Sept 5

Articles may be submitted by email to toc@saa-recovery.org or by mail to the ISO office. If possible, please submit articles via email in Microsoft Word format. All articles must be accompanied by the **RELEASE FORM** at the bottom of this page.

Here are some general writing guidelines:

Articles can be anywhere from 500-1,000 words. The main guideline is to share your experience, strength, and hope in the principle of Step Twelve. It may be helpful to think of your submission as a written form of a share you'd give in a meeting — something that's working for you or that you're struggling with.

Please don't worry about grammar and spelling. We'll clean that up for you.

General Release Form

In consideration of being reviewed for possible publication, I hereby transfer and release to the ISO of SAA, Inc (assignee) all legal rights to the publication of my submission(s) or any edited version thereof in any official ISO publication, including Sex Addicts Anonymous, The Outer Circle, the SAA meditation book, the SAA websites, or any other SAA program material, such as pamphlets, booklets and audio recordings.

With this submission, I transfer to the assignee without limitation the legal title and all literary rights, including copyright and/or trademark and the full right and license to reproduce, copy, edit for content, modify, distribute, and create derivatives from the submitted work. I understand that every effort will be made to safeguard my personal anonymity in the publication and distribution of this material. I also understand that I may or may not receive further communication regarding my submission prior to its publication.

I hereby further attest that I possess full legal capacity to exercise this authorization, and I hereby Release the assignee from any claim whatsoever by me or my successors.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Printed name: _____

Witness: _____ Date: _____

Printed name: _____

SAA TWELVE STEPS

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