

The Plain Brown Rapper

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“...the computer triggers my addiction, because in the past... After participating in online meetings I now see the computer as a tool for my recovery...”

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“...since she was part of the problem, she was not to be part of the solution.”

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How the New Orleans Convention Changed my Life

By Roseland W.

I've been in SAA since 1994 and, although my life has improved tremendously, this thing called depression keeps haunting me. It's embarrassing, and I feel flawed even though the AA preamble speaks to "grave emotional disorders". So, despite having long-term sobriety, my experience, strength and hope sometimes feel vulnerable and weak.

For the last five months I have been severely depressed, not really wanting to live nor seeing any hope for change in a life intermittently crushed by depression. Going to the convention gave me so much hope and so much healing that I now feel bursting with, not only hope, but gratitude and light as well. The convention motto: 'Let the Good Times Roll' became an actuality for me. Here's how:

I went two days early so I could meet with my long-distance sponsor. Spending time with her and her friends felt wonderful. Even though they hardly knew me, they were very inclusive. We ate great food and heard local music. This was the first "fun" I had had in months.

Next, I participated in the delegate meeting and felt moved to tears by the profound commitment of all the SAA individuals working to bring our message of hope to addicts.

The opening speaker on Friday night reminded me of the pain addicts in isolation suffer and how the simple act of finding others like ourselves can be life saving. I remembered how much worse my life was when I was depressed *and* alone in my addiction.

Honestly, I skipped most of the workshops and spent the next 2 ½



How the New Orleans Convention Changed my Life Continued

By Roseland W.

days talking with new and old friends. My focus was on recovery and breaking old patterns of interacting. News break: I have character defects including feeling unsafe and unwanted in groups and having profound fears of rejection. Three years ago—through working the steps—I realized I had reenacted these family-of-origin issues and felt ostracized by my own local SAA community. I was painfully stuck trying to work the steps and attend meetings with the same people who triggered my need to work the steps! During the New Orleans convention I met many wonderful SAAs who helped me talk my way to clarity and full release of resent-

ments. I am deeply grateful for their support.

The drum circle provided another leap towards recovery from addiction and depression. I felt deeply connected to others in the circle as we drummed loud and wild and percussively together in joyous noise making.

Each year I attend a convention—and this is my fifth—I move closer to “sanity” in a way that has grown and deepened. I gain new perspectives, make new friends, reconnect with previous convention buddies and marvel at their growth. Each year I am strengthened by the experience and renew my belief that attending conventions is a critical piece of my recovery plan.

Testimonio de Sergio—Sergio’s Testimony

Submitted by Jim H.

[Editor’s Note: Jim H. es el huésped de la reunión online de SAA los martes. Para más información sobre esta reunión, visite nuestro website, que es www.saa-recovery.org. (Jim H. is the host of the Tuesday night Spanish online SAA meeting. For more information on this meeting, visit the SAA website at www.saa-recovery.org.)]

Soy colombiano y vivo en Bogotá. Con la ayuda de un especialista descubrí hace seis meses que soy adicto al sexo. Al princi-

pio tuve una gran confusión y comencé a averiguar quien podía ayudarme.

A través de la página de SAA, contacté a uno de los líderes de reuniones online. Muy rápido recibí una respuesta de Él y a partir de ese momento han pasado muchas cosas:

1. Encontré un sponsor [padrino]. No podía creer que una persona que estaba a más de 4000 millas quisiera ayudarme.

2. Comenzamos una reunión online en español al poco tiempo e inmediatamente comencé a recibir beneficios para mi. Mas tranquili-

dad, no sentirme aislado y sobre todo tener a alguien para compartir mis inquietudes.

Algo que es paradójico para mí es que el computador era un disparador de mi adicción, pues en el pasado mi adicción se incrementó en la red. Esto me traía perjuicios en mi trabajo y veía al computador como un enemigo de mi paz interior. Hoy, después de usar el chat como una herramienta para manejar mi adicción puedo trabajar más tranquilo en mi oficina.

Por mi sponsor pude adquirir literatura sobre adicción al sexo y hoy conozco más a mi enemigo. He estudiado con mucho empeño y hoy entiendo muchas cosas de mi condición.

Mi meta ahora es crear un grupo en español con muchas personas que aún sufren por su adicción, continuar trabajando por mi recuperación y romper las cadenas de esta adicción para que yo, mi esposa y mis hijos podamos vivir en paz explotando todo los talentos que un Ser Superior nos encomendó.

ENGLISH VERSION

I am Colombian and I live in Bogotá. With the help of a specialist in addictions I found that I was a sex addict. At the beginning I was very confused and I started to try to find out who could help me.

I looked at the SAA web page and I contacted someone who is an online meeting leader. Very soon I received his answer and

after that many things have happened:

1. I found a Sponsor. I could not believe that a person who was more than 4000 miles away from me would want to help me.

2. We started a Spanish online meeting and I started to receive many benefits very quickly. I was more peaceful, I was not feeling isolated, and furthermore I found a person whom I could count on very open to share my anxieties.

Something that is very amazing is that the computer triggers my addiction, because in the past my addiction increased when I got online. That brought me problems at work and I came to see the computer as an enemy to my internal peace. After participating in online meetings I now see the computer as a tool for my recovery and I can work more peacefully in my office.

Through the help of my sponsor I got some literature about sex addiction. I have studied it very deeply and I can say that I know my enemy better today and I can handle my condition more tranquilly.

I have some goals now and one of them is to create a Spanish group in Latin America in order to help the people who still suffer with their addiction, continuing with my recovery process and breaking the chain of the addiction in order for me, my wife and my kids to be able to live very peacefully as we all can use the talents that our Higher Power lent us.



Helping Sponsees Recognize Their Half Measures

By Anonymous

“Steve” is an SAA over-achiever. He is the kind of person who throws himself into a project and works very hard, whether it is school, a job, relationships or recreation. He has been in the program for almost four years and has everything going for him except for one thing: he can’t seem to establish long-term abstinence from his addictive behaviors. He had seven months once, five months another time and lesser stretches clean at others. Some may say that’s great, he’s getting the program, don’t worry about the occasional slips. The problem with his situation is two-fold: first Steve really wants long-term abstinence and second in the times when he has slipped his addiction progressed into successively more dangerous behaviors.

The thing that most bothered Steve is that he had done everything I had asked of him: First Step inventories, five or more phone calls a day, reading literature, and making Twelfth Step calls: you name it; he did it. He was thinking about “How It

Works” when he said, “Darn it, I can’t be accused of taking half measures; I’ve done everything I’ve been told to do 110%! It hasn’t worked for me.” Since nothing I had said was reaching him, I encouraged him to ask his groups to talk about half-measures. At his next few meetings he asked the members to talk about this, listened to what they had to say and then he discussed their insights with me.

One set of speakers basically suggested that he try harder; they said that he must only be trying half way and that he needed to give more effort. They also suggested that he should give himself credit for all he has done for his recovery. In talking about these ideas later Steve noted that each of the people who took this line of thinking, while good people, had the same trouble that he did; they couldn’t stay abstinent either. He had put lots of effort into recovery work. He was not satisfied.

Other people said that at first they too put in maximum effort and couldn’t stay clean; they made the point that they were more concerned about working hard than

working smart. Some of them pointed out that they had been trying to be “successful” in recovery by doing everything they were told to do. One of them joked that he had to give up trying to win the “newcomer of the year” award. Instead, they said that the measures they did take were most effective when they consciously tried to limit this success mindset. They gave up ideas such as: my inventory must be done in so many days or be so many pages long, I must make sure I tell my stories in dramatic detail, or I will make sure that I call only the most recovered

people in my meeting. Steve said that this group made a lot of sense to him. They helped him understand that his success-driven approach was actually a tool of his addiction. While he wasn’t sure what the alternative was, he knew that he wanted to approach recovery differently.

Steve also heard one or two old-timers hit on a theme with which he was very uncomfortable. They suggested he look at what was actually in the “other half,” the part that was missing from his recovery work. The half that was being omitted by his half measures was vital for getting abstinent. They noted that

... Steve is starting to live his program rather than performing it.

very often, when they tried hard they were leaving out things like honesty, emotional vulnerability and their fears of giving up addictive sex. They were thinking through their reactions rather than just letting themselves react spontaneously. They were constantly filtering their responses to their lives, including in their program

work. Steve acknowledged that this scared him because he had spent his life trying to look like he had everything under control. He was hearing from these old timers that recovery was about heartfelt honesty, not control. He could see that his half meas-

ures were geared to making everything look good and go smoothly.

While he is still struggling to make sense of all of the ideas offered to him by these last two sets of speakers, Steve is starting to live his program rather than performing it. He has a renewed hope for getting fully abstinent.

This is one way to approach sponsees’ questions about half measures. If there are experienced sponsors who have other ideas please pass them along. If you have questions or comments, please send them to the Sponsorship Corner, c/o the Plain Brown Rapper.

Humility and That Elusive Virtue's Place in Our Recovery

By Santi L., Charlotte NC, Sept. 19th 1994

The word humility comes from the Latin "humus," meaning earthly. Humble people are down to earth and rarely misunderstood. To avoid becoming too lofty, they plant their feet firmly on the ground by knowing who they truly are and admitting that without God they wouldn't be here or have what they have. They undeniably admit the existence of a Higher Power and submit to it. For recovering addicts the admission is a lot easier than the submission, which rarely comes willingly.

Part of the reason for humility's attractiveness is its honesty. Being humble begets honesty and vice versa. When we are honest and sincere there is no waxing over what we say or do. We tell it like it is and don't try to make ourselves out to be something we are not. We humbly admit limitations, especially our own, accept them and if active in recovery we resolve to be rid of them. Again, humility begets honesty and vice versa.

There is another benefit to being humble. We are not afraid of what others think of us. We are ourselves without pretenses. What others see in us is authentic; they can either take it or leave it. How freeing and refreshing! How many times have you been at meetings wanting to say something spiritually sound

that you are deeply convicted about only to allow that precious opportunity slip by for fear of contradicting another addict or for fear of rejection by the group because you may sound too righteous? Only a group of addicts not in recovery would find the truth insulting.

Today people are crying out for the virtue of humility in the church, the government and in society as a whole. There is a growing sense that manipulating, hiding and falsifying the truth can destroy mankind. There is no group of people more adept at doing this than addicts. We are experts at the con. Not only do we get over on others but also even more subtly we con ourselves. SAA, like other 12 step fellowships, hungers for recovering people of character, moral fiber that know their humble beginnings and limitations and speak the truth. We need these leaders desperately so that we do not allow this beautiful God given strict spiritual program to become wishy-washy and ineffective.

My prayer is that out of the darkness of sexual addiction SAA leaders who are led by the Light will emerge to help set us free and keep us on the path of godly people who rejoice in their dependence on God for all things. After all, isn't that what the steps are all about?

Sponsorship

By Bill J.

Hello my name is Bill and I am a Sex Addict.

Miracles have happened since I worked the steps with my SAA sponsor. It took about 15 months. We used two different workbooks for the process and met weekly (you may e-mail me for details at bilj@cox.net). Now I sponsor six people myself. The reason I am mentioning sponsoring people is that when I was being sponsored through the 12 Steps it was understood that sponsorship wasn't a "dead end" commitment. I was told that I would need to pass on what was freely given to me by my sponsor and sponsor people through the 12-Step process.

I was in the program 5 years having slip after slip (S.L.I.P. – sobriety lost its priority) and had become mentally incapacitated. I had severe depression, I had developed a "dissociation" disorder and had lost my job as well. I couldn't stay sober. I finally decided to work the steps geared toward my Sex Addiction. I had worked them in another 12-step program but skipped most of the sex issues or really I didn't delve into them with any depth with a person who understood and had been there. I thought that by working the 12 steps in another program it would give me immunity from working the steps in SAA. The chips were down and I had to do something.

We met once a week without fail for one hour going over the work I had done in the workbooks. The workbooks were more or less a catalyst for creating conversation around and about my sex addiction. He read to me and paused when he felt that an important point should be discussed and he asked me questions.

I was required to set a date with my SAA group and give a formal first step. I also did this with a formal tenth step in my group. A lot of things changed for me between my first step and my tenth step. When I use the workbooks to sponsor others and I re-read what I had written the first time I can see that I had zero faith in myself, in God or anything else. I was 100 percent negative.

I did get some major relief in Step 7. It just happened and that same thing has happened to others at that point in working the steps. I have read that my step work is never finished and as I take other Sex Addicts through this weekly fact-finding and fact-facing ordeal, I find that I gain more insight about me. There have been a few who have started the steps with me but faded away and didn't finish. The ones who did make it through Step 12 this are now sponsoring others and find what I have: that I get immensely more out of sponsoring than I could have dreamed.

Thank you. See you sober.

Isaiah's Recovery Prayer

By Marilyn S., Nashville, TN, 1/30/05

"Before they call, I will answer. While they are still speaking, I will hear." Isaiah 65:24

Oh Great Creator and Healer, we ask you to lay your hands upon us as we speak this prayer. We are in pain. Through your grace, be merciful and give us peace. Minister to our broken spirits as we seek you, even though some of us may doubt.

Where there IS doubt, bestow upon us the trust to work through those doubts. Where there is weariness and fatigue, we ask you to give us the desire, humility, and patience we need to surrender to your direction and timeline.

Where there is loneliness, let us find solitude and acceptance. Give us the strength to reach out to others.

Where there is spiritual emptiness, rejuvenate us by revealing your constant presence. Embrace us, and lift the veil of despair from our eyes. Let us see that you are

the ANCHOR in our recovery.

Where there is fear, let it be quenched by your love. Protect us, and let us wear the armor of your courage. Where there is denial or resistance, expose it, and break the stranglehold it has on our lives. Let us prosper and thrive in the freedom this will bring.

Bless us with insight, and the spiritual awareness to recognize negative influences around us. Steer us to serenity on the path of honesty and integrity. Usher into our lives vibrant healthy people who can encourage, support, and nurture us in our growth. Guide and mentor us in this process.

We beseech you, Higher Power, to infuse our lives with your healing touch and let each of us experience the miracle of recovery as we continue to work this program, one day at a time. Amen.

Service Work

By Joel D.

Many of us came to the fellowship feeling defeated and hopeless. Giving back to the fellowship by way of service work was not a gift we thought we possessed nor an action we were capable of undertaking. After our initial meeting, old-timers welcomed us and eventually we heard that we were helping them with their sobriety just by showing up at a meeting and shar-

ing about our experience with sex addiction. This, we learn, is our first duty at service work: sharing ourselves and our experience with others. We are made useful.

Surprisingly, we do not have to wait to work Step Twelve to carry the message to other sex addicts. We can do this by sharing our experience with working

Step One. Working the Steps, we have found, has uncovered the obstacles that keep us from a power greater than ourselves, and it is that power that removes those obstacles. With the removal of those obstacles, we may be surprised to find ourselves with more responsibilities, especially within the fellowship. These responsibilities can be opening or chairing a meeting, sponsoring other members, meeting newcomers, and being a group delegate. There are many more. When we do service work, we feel a part of the fellowship because we are contributing ourselves to it rather than feeling apart from.

With sobriety, we find this fellowship to be important in our lives. We give back to the fellowship because to many of us this fellowship has helped us save our lives from destructive behaviors of sex addiction, which rendered us virtually ineffective and useless in our jobs and our relationships with people. Service work becomes fulfilling for us as individuals, which benefits the fellowship as a whole, and most important of all we become a light of hope for those sex addicts who come into the fellowship feeling much like we ourselves have. So we give back freely because this feeling of hope and joy was freely given to us.



Saying Goodbye

By Joe P.

[Editor's Note: All names in this story, including the author's, have been changed.]

One of the problems many of us face in early recovery is terminating a relationship. Often times this relationship is a primary acting out vehicle for our addiction.

I had two dysfunctional and improper, lengthy-relationships that I needed to end as I entered recovery almost three years ago. My successes and failures in terminating those relationships might prove helpful to others entering or new to the program.

First let me set the record straight. I was married throughout my relationships with both the women I'm about to describe. Each of these relationships violated my primary relationship with my wife and our marriage vows. I continue to be embarrassed to admit to the deception that made these relationships possible.

The first of these relationships, with Nora, was strengthened by the fact that Nora was in long-term recovery from alcohol addiction. Nora was influential in my decision to seek recovery. When I entered recovery, Nora was happy for me, since she had long since intuitively realized I was cheating on her, just as I was cheating on my wife. Nora hoped she could be a supportive

partner in my recovery and was crestfallen when I told her that, since she was part of the problem, she was not to be part of the solution. At my therapist's urging, I told Nora it was time for us to end the relationship as part of my recovery. Nora was disappointed but said she understood. We mutually set a date, about one week hence, to end communications. We saw each other for the last time on that date. In between, we had numerous conversations and saw each other twice. After the agreed upon termination date, she notified me of an upcoming surgery, about a month after the termination. I knew she would be alone and in pain, so I called to check up on her once during her bed stay. Nora never once called me after the agreed termination date. She wrote me a couple of letters. After the second letter, I e-mailed her and told her the letters were not welcome. After that e-mail, we had no further contact.

The second relationship, Donna, was far more difficult. I told Donna over dinner that I was in recovery. Donna was upset and walked to her car without saying good night or goodbye. I remember driving home that night ecstatic that although she had not been happy, that I had ended this relationship in one quick visit. Little did I know there were numerous problems on the horizon.

The next morning, I had an in-

vective-laced message awaiting me on my private voice mail. Later in the day when we spoke, Donna was insistent that we meet again that night.

That night when we met, we said nothing about my recovery. Instead, we got into my car and had sex. This was obviously not a positive step forward in my recovery.

Although I tried to get back into recovery the next day, I had established a dangerous pattern. It was obvious I was about to encounter a major obstacle to my recovery.

At my group's and sponsor's urging, I tried a series of stronger and stronger tactics to resist talking to Donna on the phone and meeting her in person. One of these included call blocking on my phone lines.

I got better at it as each week went along and after almost two months into recovery, managed two weeks' sobriety. One Saturday, I went to a 12-step meeting and was shocked to run into Donna in the parking lot as I was about to enter the room. I left the church where the meetings were held and drove around in a daze waiting for my sponsor and the group to finish the meeting, so I could see them for breakfast afterward. When I was told Donna was joining the breakfast group and that I should essentially "get lost," I was crestfallen. On my way home, I called every person I could think of and even stopped at a real estate develop-

ment where one of my former acting out partners was employed. On that day, even she ignored me.

Later that evening I turned on my cell phone and found seven messages waiting for me from Donna. I listened to most of them on the street in front of her house (not the best place since she too was married). For the next two days, I got to work after noon so that Donna and I could spend the morning in a hotel room—so much for recovery. When I told my therapist I had slipped, he corrected me "this was a full-blown relapse," he said.

Donna and I met shortly thereafter and I told her that I was still committed to recovery and that three days hence I was going to stop communicating with her. She tried to convince me otherwise, but I was steadfast on the date. She called and left a few messages on my answering machine, but made no direct contact. She did however continue to attend 12-step meetings with the same group I was in, but on different days. This joint attendance drove me crazy and made me hostile toward the group, especially those who attended meetings with both of us. My sponsor was very active in all the meetings and loaned Donna recovery materials. Hearing about this drove me almost insane with jealousy and contempt.

About three weeks later, I couldn't stand it any further. I emailed Donna and told her I thought the group was too small for the two of us to both attend

Saying Goodbye Continued

By Joe P.

meetings, even on separate days. I told her I was prepared to find a different group. Donna agreed about the group being too small, but urged me to not make any hasty decisions. Meanwhile, I found another 12-step group and began saying good-bye to the current group. Donna shortly thereafter demanded that I let her be the one to leave the group, since I had been there longer and was more active. I tried to argue otherwise, but she was insistent and seemed logical in her arguments. I eventually capitulated and agreed to be the one to stay. Then she dropped the request on me that I see her one last time to thank her for being the one to leave. I initially refused, but weakened and eventually thanked her in bed at a hotel. That started a four-day binge. Throughout the interaction, I maintained this was a "time-out," not total rejection of recovery. During this time, we started to say goodbye, something we had neglected in the three prior months. We also negotiated an ending date, something again we had never mutually agreed upon before. All previous terminations had been my imposed "drop-dead" date(s).

The eventual good-bye day came and we cried a lot, but parted as agreed. I am proud to say that day is more than 2 ½ years ago and represents my so-

briety date. She did not totally respect the decision, but due to my determination to be successful in my recovery and the help of a new sponsor, I was able to resist the temptations. Eventually, I left my original 12-step group after she returned to it.

The parallels between the two stories are obvious to me, but let me summarize what I feel are key lessons that I learned:

1. A mutually agreed upon date a few days in the future provide me time for good-byes and was more easily accepted by both of us than a unilateral date would have been. For me, a week worked the best.

2. I could not stop a long-term relationship on a dime.

3. Even after an agreed upon date, there were still attempts to compromise the agreement.

4. Slips were a part of my early recovery.

The shorter of these two relationships was one year long. Not long after his sobriety date, the author and his therapist agreed to divulge the nature of the author's addiction to his wife. He and his wife are currently in couple's therapy and are still married and living together. The author is now Secretary of an active SAA group.



A Small Plastic Chip

By Mike B.

A small plastic chip, brought me to tears
 Not for what it costs, but what it meant
 It touched my heart, down to my fears
 I know now that is was heaven sent

On one side there is a sunrise
 On the other, the Serenity Prayer
 Sobriety is the sought after prize
 Peace and joy is the treasure there

"From shame to grace" one side does say
 "One day at a time" is on the other
 It reminds me to be sober, today
 Not to worry about another

So now I will carry it with me
 Whether working or involved in play
 And every time I feel it I see
 That my life has found a better way

A small plastic chip, brought me to tears
 Not for what it costs, but what it meant
 It touched my heart, down to my fears
 I know now that is was heaven sent

February 12, 2005

Step 4 Worksheet

Submitted by Anonymous

[Editor's Note: The following article represents a method of working Step 4 that has worked for some members of our fellowship.]

Step 4: Made a searching and fearless moral Inventory of ourselves

A moral inventory would consist of all items - good, bad, and mediocre.

1. List 1 to 5 items of shame.
2. List 1 to 5 items of hurt.
3. List 1 to 3 items of anger.
4. List 1 to 3 items of pride or prideful acts.
5. Lists all acts of revenge or vengeance.
6. List all resentments presently held.
7. List recent lies told to self or others.
8. List items stolen.
9. Lists acts or areas of deceit or fraud.
10. Not for sharing in group during Step 4. FYEO - For Your Eyes Only. Share with HP and sponsor. What 1 or 2 actions do you fear most to reveal?

Areas of Improvement

1. Selfless acts
2. Acts of honesty
3. Acts of humility
4. Acts of courage
5. Acts of helpfulness
6. Acts of letting go
7. Random acts of kindness
8. Times of joy, gratitude, or gratefulness
9. Acts of grace or forgiveness - given or received
10. Times when acts of kindness, aid, direction gracefully accepted.

Overcompensation

By Scotty W.

My wife and I had a very helpful conversation today, and I thought I'd share. As always, take what you like....

Early in my recovery, I wrestled with terrible feelings of insufficiency (as I'm sure many do). During these times, I remember hearing myself frequently saying "I need to do such-and-such" or "I need to talk to so-and-so," in my conversations. The problem is, if I didn't accomplish something I said I "needed" to accomplish, I would beat myself up for not doing something I "needed" to do, which allowed me to further reinforce my negative image of myself.

Recently, I noticed I was taking a totally different viewpoint on the "I need to" issue. I've

come to recognize this phrase as one of the former self-defeating "traps" in which I caught myself, and now I try not to use it, because of my sensitivity to the phrase. (So far, so good, right??)

However, when OTHER PEOPLE - like my loving wife - use the phrase "We need to..." anywhere near me, I get all prickly, and react in a way that seems almost offensive, as if I'm

defending myself from some terrible adversary or threat. The phrase still has an effect on me.

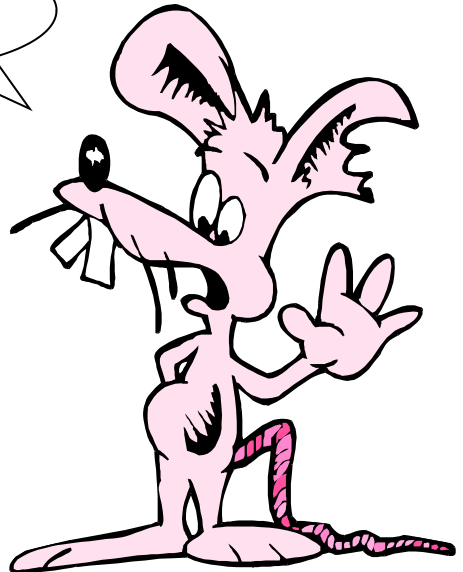
I feel I'm over-compensating on the entire "need to" issue.

Early in my recovery, this phrase was a setup for a personal put-down, mainly my feelings that I couldn't accomplish the things that "needed" to get accomplished. Later in recovery, I just avoided using the phrase. But now I'm coming to realize that NEITHER approach is particularly healthy.

This is yet another example of how my "black or white" perfectionist thinking is being challenged by the multitude of grays that exist in real life. Is change comfortable? Not really. Is change difficult? Definitely. Is change worth it to me?

Absolutely.

But I need to!



One Step a Month

By Rich W., Minneapolis, MN

After five years in the program, I had done the twelve steps, become a sponsor and the promises were really starting to come true. My addiction, although still a part of me, was in check and the minor slips that arose were items that I wouldn't have even noticed when I first joined SAA. As I neared my sixth year anniversary, something felt amiss. I felt stagnant, uninspired. I prayed and, of course, Higher Power

...it became clear that twelve steps and twelve months were not coincidental. I made a commitment to do a step a month...

gave me the answer – I wasn't working the Steps. Oh sure, I talked about them, done step talks in the meetings and helped my sponsees work theirs. I, however, was not working the steps. No action, just talk. I looked at the year coming up and it became clear that twelve steps and twelve months were not coincidental. I made a commitment to do a step a month starting in May, my anniversary date.

In April I pulled out my old first step and read it over. It brought back memories, but it was abundantly clear that I was no longer that scared, broken person. I had changed and the

program had become more than a way of curbing my addiction. The program was there to change my life. I was reminded of the dry drunk – still a jerk; just doesn't drink. The program offered me

more than sexual sobriety. It was offering to change my whole being but that wasn't going to continue if I didn't work the Steps.

As May came, I started on Step One and focused on how my life was still out of control. I listed, of course, my addiction and the triggers that still made

me feel powerless. I still objectified some women, looked too long at this picture or that, lingered a bit with titillating television shows, read and re-read stimulating passages in a book. All these were part of my inventory but I also looked at other areas of my life that were not in control. I was still plagued by bouts of anger. I lied, sometime out of habit, even when I didn't "need" to. I spent way too much time thinking about money and way too little on improving my relationships with others. All of these had improved as I was in the program, yet all still needed work. May became a month of great insight and my program became one

of looking at myself as a whole person. I was finally looking at myself as person who was a sex addict rather than a sex addict who was a person.

Step Two was my “ego step” and I looked at the ways I still tried to take control from God. I did it in my addiction except when a minor slip came too close to a fall. When it got too close, I moved toward Higher Power but before that I was Mister I-Can-Handle-This-myself. So much of that was true about the rest of my life. I was only coming to believe in a power greater than myself when things hit the fan. Step Three became easy as Step Two passed. I had gotten the spirituality piece of recovery years earlier but now it was time to look at it again and make a re-commitment to turning my will and my life, not just my addiction, over to the care of God.

Step Four was given to me by God as I worked Step Three. I was given the insight that my life was made up of seven important areas; my addiction, my

spirituality, my relationship with my wife, my relationship with my children, my connection with the rest of the world, my physical well-being and my career. The Fourth Step jumped off my pen as I wrote about each area, where I am now in each, the strengths and the weaknesses, where I need to go and where I would like to be in a year. In September I shared my fifth Step with God and my sponsor.

As the year moved along, so did I – through the steps, each time keeping in mind “How is it NOW”? In May of this year I will again start the steps for the ninth time. I am now a whole person, striving for perfection, expecting only progress. The promises keep coming true. If I ever wondered about this process working, I only have to look at some of my sponsees who are working the “twelve in twelve” for the third time. I am amazed at how much change I see taking place, perhaps easier than I can see in myself. Yes, I had heard from the start, “Work the Steps.” I seemed to miss the part that says, “It works when you work it.”

As the year moved along, so did I – through the steps, each time keeping in mind “How is it NOW”?

I am now a whole person, striving for perfection, expecting only progress.

From the Editor

By Mike L.

Even though not everybody in our fellowship would readily agree with me, this month I have to say thank heavens for the internet. Putting this issue of the PBR together would have been much more difficult without it.

Since February 27, I have been in Ft. Lauderdale for work-related reasons. Today, May 2, I am back in Houston for a week and a half, so I am at least finalizing this issue from my home base. Then I'll be returning and will probably be there until roughly June 15. I don't think I'll have to do any more six-week stints like the one I recently finished.

Let me say, first of all, that Ft. Lauderdale is a beautiful place, and if I have to spend that much time in exile, at least I am fortunate that I'm getting to spend it in a place that is so nice. It recently came to my attention that in 1960 a film called *Where the Boys Are* was made there, so I ordered a copy of it just to see if I recognized anything. Well, I got to see Las Olas Boulevard, which is the street that my hotel is on and is also the street where I cross over A1A to go to the beach. So it's fun to watch folks standing on the corner of Las Olas and A1A, as I have done numerous times recently. It's also interesting to see the bar called the Elbo Room which is still there although it does not resemble the one in the film in the slightest. I guess 45 years brings a lot of changes. It certainly has in me.

Going through this experience has reminded me a lot of some recovery material I read recently although I can't for the life of me remember where. The material had to do with a man who was supposed to be somewhere on a plane by a certain time, and the plane was held up in the airport (if you recognize this story, please tell me where you read it). He kept revising in his head how the plans would still ultimately work out so that he would be at his destination when he had originally planned to, thus remaining in control of the situation, and of course when his modified and re-modified plans failed to work out he was resentful.

Similarly, when I first got to Ft. Lauderdale, my plane reservation to come back was for April 13, and I was geared up to come back on that date. Different delays started setting in almost immediately and I kept revising my schedule in my head so that everything would still work out my way. I was resentful to even have it suggested to me that the work might not be completed even by Memorial Day. I too was trying to control the situation, and did not want to face the possibility that I might not be able to. It became clear well in advance of April 13 that I wouldn't be coming back on that day, and so I really had no choice but

to sit back and enjoy it. Of course, there have been many advantages to taking this point of view, not least of which has been getting to enjoy the beach and the many other delightful things in this beautiful and well-kept-up city. And instead of just getting to see Lucia di Lammermoor at the Florida Grand Opera, I'm also going to get to see *Un ballo in maschera* as well. So there are always advantages to sitting back and just letting the ride happen, although those advantages are not always clear.

One possible disadvantage is going to be that I may have to miss this year's convention, one I have really been looking forward to. I have been to every convention since Ann Arbor in 1995, and I'm going to be sad if I end up missing this one. Still, I keep telling myself that it is going to happen the way it is supposed to happen. By the time this issue comes out, I will know whether I got to attend any of the convention. If not, I hope that some of you carried my energy there.

I hope that you enjoy this issue of the PBR. As always, we have inspirational stories and folks sharing their experiences of what working the steps and living the program has done for them. Following up on our article in Spanish on the history of SAA in Argentina, we have an article this month in both English and Spanish from a Colombian member of the fellowship. The Sponsorship Corner is back as well, something I always welcome in the PBR.

I'm really gratified by the number of submissions we have gotten lately. Please keep them coming. You can send them to pbr@saa-recovery.org or else to the office at ISO of SAA, P.O. Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270-0949. If you attend the convention and want to write about your experiences there, especially you first-timers, please do. Deadline for the September/October issue is August 10.

So regardless of whether I see you at this year's convention, I look forward to seeing you in the pages of the next PBR.





ISO News



ISO Literature Committee, ISO Board, & Board Committees

Notices and News Bits SAA Book Feedback

Our new basic text, *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, is the culmination of the efforts of many in the fellowship, whose collective experience has given us a new way to carry the message of recovery.

The ISO Literature Committee of SAA respectfully requests feedback about this new book. Please forward any comments, suggestions, or criticisms to:

ISO of SAA, Inc.
P.O. Box 70949
Houston, TX 77270-0949

e-mail: info@saa-recovery.org





Notices and News Bits

PBR Subscription Renewal

Last year the ISO spent \$10,194.00 to print and mail hard copies of the PBR to the approximately 1,740 individuals and groups on its mailing list. In order to keep the mailing list up to date, at least once each year the ISO requests verification of address. We know the newsletter is getting delivered. What we do not know is whether or not it is being read.

The ISO Board wants people to receive the PBR free, but it does not want to use the fellowship's valuable resources to mail it to individuals and groups who are not actually reading it. With this in mind, at its meeting in New Orleans, the Board directed the ISO Office "to put a notice in the next two issues of the *Plain Brown Rapper* to individuals and groups that anyone who wishes to continue to receive a copy of the PBR must notify the ISO Office and to publish this notice annually." The first of two notices appears below.



ATTENTION ALL GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS WHO RECEIVE *THE PLAIN BROWN RAPPER*!

Unless you notify the ISO Office by September 15, 2005, that you wish to continue to have the newsletter mailed to you, your name and address will be removed from the PBR mailing list.

Mail your request to continue to receive the PBR to
ISO, P.O. Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270
Phone in your request to continue to receive the PBR at 800-477-8191
E-Mail your request to continue to receive the PBR to
info@saa-recovery.org



ISO Board Minutes

The Board of Trustees of the ISO of SAA, Inc., met face-to-face May 25-26, 2005. The following is a report of significant actions taken.

Approved: Motions to allow an off-site parade event during the 2006 ISO Convention and to hold the Saturday session of the 2006 Delegate meeting from 8:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. and to hold the Focus Groups on Saturday from 4:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Approved: Guidelines for selection of ISO convention speakers. (Note: These guidelines will be used by future ISO Convention Committees and will be incorporated into the "Convention Speakers Request.")

Authorized: The ISO Webmaster to create a special e-mail address for the Board that includes the ISO Office and to create a second set of e-mail addresses for regional Board members and alternates.

Approved: A motion to put a notice in the next two issues of the *Plain Brown Rapper* mailed to individuals and groups that anyone who wishes to continue to receive a copy of the PBR must notify the ISO Office and to publish this notice annually.

Approved: A motion for [the ISO Office] to notify those using the ISO's name, logo, and copyrighted literature without permission to cease and desist.

Approved: A motion to take from the table the recommendation made by the 2001 Delegates to move toward discontinuing the sales of outside literature through the ISO after our basic text is released. The Board then approved the delegate recommendation and voted to submit as additional business to the 2005 Delegates a motion for the ISO to discontinue sales of outside literature as existing stock is exhausted. (Note: The complete minutes of the 2005 Delegate Meeting can be downloaded from the ISO website or obtained from the ISO Office).

Approved: Motions to put into effect a mechanism to implement Organizational Structure Phase III and to appoint a subcommittee composed of Don K., Jerry B., Ken S., and Shelley K. to bring to the Board a plan for implementing Organizational

Structure Phase III. (Note: Organizational Structure Phase III is a part of the long range planning carried out by the Board in 2001 and calls for the ISO Office to be organized into two main divisions, one devoted to services and one devoted to business.)

Approved: The hosting city for the 2007 ISO Convention.

The Board of Trustees of the ISO of SAA, Inc., again met face-to-face May 29, 2005. The following is a report of significant actions taken.

Elected: Ken S., Great Lakes Region, as Board chair; Shelley K., Intermountain Region, as Board secretary; and Don K., At-Large Member, as Board treasurer.

Ratified: Carol Ann R., SAA member from the South Central Region, to serve a three-year term as a member of the Office Oversight Committee (OOC).

Approved: A policy that prohibits anyone who is an employee of the ISO or who has a conflict of interest from serving on the OOC.

Approved: A motion that the ISO Board task the Interfellowship Relations Committee with developing guidelines for interfellowship relations.

Approved: Motions tasking the Internet Outreach Committee with developing proposed SAA policies and procedures documents regarding internet forums operated by the ISO of SAA, Inc., and with developing a proposed policy regarding downloadable content on the SAA website.

Authorized: Don K. and Jerry B. authority to meet travel reimbursement needs of its trusted servants, using funds from the Operational Reserve if necessary.

Approved: Motions that the Southeast Region be allowed to be the autonomous region for the country of Argentina and that the ISO perform the accounting needed for the Southeast Region to designate funds for support of Argentina, with those funds to be spent by the Southeast Board representative.

Note: Upon request, the complete minutes of these Board meetings can be obtained from the ISO Office.



The ISO Literature Committee met face-to-face during the 2005 Convention in New Orleans. The following is a report of significant actions taken.

Elected: Elizabeth S., Great Lakes Region, as Literature Committee chair; Jeff W., North Pacific Region, as Literature Committee second chair; Mike L., PBR editor, as Literature Committee secretary.

Approved: The changes of the pamphlet *Tools of Recovery* as suggested by the Sub-Committee.

Approved: A motion to create a subcommittee to take responsibility for reviewing feedback from the fellowship of the SAA book, recommending changes to be ready for the *2007 Call to Convention*.



The 2005 Delegate Meeting was held May 27 – 28, 2005, in New Orleans, Louisiana. The following is a record of significant business enacted by the participants.

Ratified: An ISO bylaw change that corrected the physical address of the ISO Office.

Ratified: A change to Article V, Section 3 of the ISO bylaws, adding at end the following sentence: "The Literature Committee or its representatives appointed to subcommittees for specific tasks shall always be consulted by the Board for advice and input in any business matters relating to ISO publications."

Approved *Tools of Recovery* was approved as being "Conference Approved."

Recommended That a committee be formed to evaluate and make recommendations to revise the current ISO Board Procedures for Handling of Information About Ongoing Sexual Abuse of Minors. (Note: Recommendations approved by a majority of the delegates and authorized alternates voting at an international convention must be considered by the ISO Board of SAA.)

The 2005 Delegate Meeting Minutes in their entirety can be viewed and downloaded from the ISO website.



ISO Financial News

Financially, this May and June have been the most dramatic two months in ISO history. The staff has had its hands full trying to keep up with the demand for *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, while at the same time working to close the books on the 2005 Convention, meeting the demands of day-to-day operations, being of service to the members and groups and responding immediately to requests for help from the addicts who still suffer. The tardiness of this issue of the PBR reflects just how busy it has been.

Little time has been left to analyze the impact of the book and the results of the convention. We do know that selling out the first printing of the book in little more than two months has brought an infusion of money, even after paying for the second printing in advance. We also know that, although a success by every other measure, the convention fell short of financial expectations. At least in the short term, it is evident that *Sex Addicts Anonymous* has reduced to a trickle the sales of non-SAA literature and, to some extent, even the sales of SAA literature. The effect on donations has yet to be studied.

By the end of July, when the next PBR is being prepared, a more complete picture of ISO finances will be available to be shared with the membership.

Thank you for your patience.

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How to Submit a PBR Article

First:

Write from your experience, strength, and hope. Others may need to hear exactly what you have to say.

Second:

Send your article by e-mail to:

PBR@saa-recovery.org

or mail to:

ISO

P. O. Box 70949

Houston, TX 77270

Third:

Send the **Article Release Form** below. Download an extra from the SAA website if needed or feel free to make copies.

"Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to other sex addicts..." Step 12

Submission deadlines:

Dec. 1, Feb. 1, April 1, June 1, Aug. 1, Oct. 1

Release Form: I hereby give this newsletter, its successors, assignees, and those acting on its authority permission to copyright and/or publish any articles, poems, other written material, or art work pertaining to my personal story of recovery from addiction and my personal experience with or opinions about the SAA fellowship or program. I understand that additions may be made to my written material and that it may be changed or edited. I further understand that every effort will be made to assure my anonymity. I possess full legal capacity to exercise this authorization and hereby release the ISO newsletter from any claim by myself or my successors.

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Sex Addicts Anonymous is a twelve-step program of recovery based on the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous. Our primary purpose is to stop our addictive sexual behavior and to help others recover from their sexual addiction. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop addictive sexual behavior. Our fellowship is open to women and men regardless of religion, race, ethnic background, marital status, sexual orientation, or profession. Our members define their own sexual boundaries with the guidance of their sponsors and other group members. We encourage our members to discover and explore what healthy sexuality means to them.

Region

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Board Alternate

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Lit. Com. Alternate

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