

THE Plain Brown Rapper

The SAA Newsletter

50¢

May, 1992 Edition

The purpose of the Newsletter is to be a voice of the SAA membership. Written by and for brothers and sisters recovering from compulsive sexual behaviors; to be informative, sensitive, and expressing the experiences, strengths, and hope of recovering members. It is intended as an additional tool of recovery for those working the twelve-step SAA program.

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P.O. Box 3038, Minneapolis, MN 55403 - Telephone 612-339-0217*

A Closer Look at Masturbation

When starting in recovery, I questioned whether masturbation could be a problem for me. Hoping to justify holding on to this "old friend," I thought of the many reasons why it could not possibly be necessary to cease masturbating:

- * I only do it two or three times per week.
- * I seldom take longer than twenty to thirty minutes.
- * It helps me go to sleep.
- * It relieves sexual tension and helps me stay off the streets where I do my really serious and dangerous acting out.

These were my best arguments for convincing myself masturbation was healthy for me. My denial blinded me from seeing how in the past I had also believed many of my other addictive sexual behaviors were life enhancing.

Six months into recovery I contracted with my SAA group to cease masturbating for an indefinite number of weeks to explore life free of this act. The first week was not difficult, yet the second week became almost intolerable. That second week I learned what drove the masturbation machine - it was mental fantasy and intrigue.

Sexual fantasy involves entertaining or constructing mental images of a sexualized nature. Sexual intrigue may or may not involve fantasy. It includes a wide variety of situations where one feels sexually high or excited. This may occur with the very thought of someone to whom one is attracted or it may occur when looking at or simply being in the presence of someone to whom one is attracted. Prolonged eye contact is one example of sexual intrigue.

I never before realized how much of my time was spent shopping for mental images which were later used during masturbation. My awareness became focused, revealing how I encountered people constantly searching for mental stimulation which generated a tremendous volume of sexual energy, leaving me charged like a battery ready for use. With these discoveries came the realization that I could no longer feast my mind on sexual fantasy and intrigue and expect to maintain my contract to temporarily cease masturbating. The mental preoccupation on which I constantly indulged myself created an insatiable sexual hunger. During that second week of abstaining from masturbation, I experienced an internal surrender of sexual fantasy and intrigue to the program. To my amazement, the craving to masturbate disappeared immediately.

After eleven weeks, I told the group that I was doing so well staying out of sexual preoccupation that I believed I could now masturbate in a "healthy" manner without sexualizing people in the process. I resumed masturbation and, to my amazement, it did not feel healthy. The day I began masturbating, the serenity disappeared which had slowly built while abstaining from both masturbation and from sexualizing people mentally. In its place came the distracting roar of mentally sizing up nearly everyone as to their level of sexual attraction or lack thereof. What a disappointment! It took an additional twelve months (18 months since beginning in SAA) of experimenting and coming up with the same results, before I finally hit bottom on my denial, and it became very clear that I could no longer masturbate and call myself sexually sober. What a relief! Finally, I knew what was required of me for sexual sobriety.

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Recovery became much easier immediately. The compulsion to masturbate disappeared within days and has remained absent unless I resumed sexual fantasy or sexualized people. It has now been over five years since I last masturbated, October 15, 1986. The week after I stopped, there was one day when the compulsion to masturbate returned. That day I vividly saw how dangerous masturbation was for me and mentally "hit bottom" without acting out. In the five years since, I have not had even one strong compulsion to masturbate, while the compulsion was present daily before I entered recovery. However, keeping my mind free of sexual fantasy and intrigue requires the vigilance of reporting regularly to sponsors, program buddies and the recovery groups I attend.

Many gifts have come into my life since surrendering masturbation through the program. The most notable is that I am more mentally and emotionally available. This has brought about an increased capacity to focus on important life issues. As a result, intimacy in relationships with all the important people in my life has increased. There has been increased energy for working on and through childhood abuse issues. Many character defects, especially resentments, have surfaced initiating serious program work on steps four through nine. I have come to experience the joy, excitement and healing of recovery, along with the usual toil and pain of changing. Previously, my energy was spent struggling to refrain from acting out. Now that energy is directed toward growth. Taking a closer look at masturbation has deleted nothing of importance from my life - yet has added much. Jim M. (Georgia)

Child Sexual Abuse: A View From Both Sides

Knowing I was sexually abused helped me take Step One.

After 2.5 years of recovery from drugs and alcohol, I entered treatment for depression. I shared my sexual fantasies and behavior with the intake counselor. I was very honest, telling everything. Concern about my fantasies and some of my behaviors had been a factor in deciding to go into treatment. My fantasies consumed my mind and left little mental energy for my normal activities. They were getting more and more extreme. If my fantasies continued to escalate, I was afraid I might act them out. The counselor said I was to take the Sex Addiction track of treatment. Sex was my most dangerous compulsive behavior.

I was shocked! Some of these behaviors and fantasizing had been part of my life since I was 9 years old, most of them since I was 13. Sex Addiction was behind most of my sexual behavior. Where did these behaviors come from? Was I a pervert? At times I wondered if I were the only person on earth who fantasized and did what I did, and that I must be the only one with such a constant awareness of sex. Did I invent these to deal with the stresses of life? Was I just oversexed, born that way? How could I be so out of step with societies accepted behavior?

While in treatment I got in touch with the feeling of being sexually molested at an early age. I had 2 dream like memories, at an helpless age somewhere between 3 and 5. Someone was doing something to me that was all of pleasant, painful and fearful. Why would a 3 to 5 year old have such a dream without something behind it? I also remember at 4 years old becoming sexually aroused when I tried on a head and wrist shackles a neighbor's dad had made.

To me this was mysterious. How could a 4 year old associate sex with bondage or sex with anything for that matter?

The counselor said to believe my body. My body told me I was sexually played with frequently as a child. When my parents came for family week I presented them with what I thought was true. When I did, my mother could not say how she felt at first. Over the next few days it came out that the allegation hurt deeply. She would not consciously fondle me, she said. She had sworn she would never sexually touch her child.

I then learned some of the family secrets. When mother was 5 she came home early from school to interrupt her mother forcing her 3 year old sister to do sexual acts. Grandma grabbed her by the left arm and wrenched it very hard. Her mother threatened her with abandonment and punishment if she ever told anyone. My mother still has occasional pain in her left shoulder at age 68. Latter mother was herself sexually abused by grandmother.

Mother told me that she was aware that her grandfather had molested her mother. There was also a story about the grandfather (my great-grandfather) messing with neighbor girls.

As my Father heard about mother's past for the first time he identified sexual abuse in his own childhood. He described, as though it were natural, how he and his older brother and sister engaged in sexual behavior from the time he was 4 and 1/2. His sister was 8 and brother 6. It is likely that the sister and/or brother were incested.

I had always known that my father's father had died of syphilis when dad was 3 and 1/2. Dad revealed that his uncle, some years latter, told him his father said to stay away from a certain prostitute she had the disease. I can only conclude my grandfather used prostitutes.

The behavior of my parent's and my grandparent's brings up anger, but to blame is to remain a victim. The torch of sexual abuse was passed to me. It is my responsibility to put it out!

It was clear that sex problems went far back in both my parent's families. I consider it a miracle there was no more overt sexual abuse in my family. Memories of covert sexual abuse abound, however. I remember the family having no sense of privacy, my mother being seductive toward me, and being a surrogate spouse for my mother. Mother swore she would not molest her children. She did, however let fear of her sexual feelings interfere with her affection and nurturing. Significant sections of my life are still unavailable to me. There is a chance more did happen, but I have stopped trying to force the memories.

I learned this behavior. I did not invent it! It is a family disease. Knowing this helps me get beyond the shame. I could now take Step One on my sexual addiction. My inability to control my behavior was evidence of my powerlessness. Knowing that I did not invent it reduced the shame and helped me accept my powerlessness.

To overcome the compelling drive to use sex to avoid feelings, I must live the 12 steps. Living them allows me to surrender my life and will to the care of my Higher Power. When I let go of my expectations about a person, place, event, situation or thing, and trust that all is exactly as it must be at this moment, my Higher Power slowly diminishes the core shame that causes the feelings from which I flee.

Since I have not attained perfection, I do occasionally act out in one of my lesser bottom line behaviors. Then I ask my Higher Power to take the shame of acting out away that I may not act out again.

"DRAGON" THROUGH LIFE:

Feelings About my childhood

Once upon a time there were two dragons who had a new baby. They were so happy with their new baby boy yet they soon discovered that their small child was different. He had no scales, only soft delicate skin. His mother worried so much whenever he started off to explore the world that she would quickly whisk him back to the safety of the cave, as if he had done something wrong.

The parents knew the child could not stay in the cave forever so they had to do something to protect him from the world. Since the child wanted to explore all the time and was shamefully in need of direction, the parents tried to instruct him in the way of dragons by blowing flames of fear near him. The child's sensitive skin was a big problem because the flames were so intense. Finally, his mother took some loose scales from her tail and others from her husband, she sewed a dragon skin for the boy. That way he could truly be a dragon in the midst of the heat and flames without feeling the pain on his sensitive skin. At first the new skin didn't fit very well - often sliding off his shoulders - feeling heavy and burdensome. But at least the correcting flames didn't seem to hurt so much.

The boy was eager to please his parents and tried very hard to be a good dragon, but his efforts always seemed to bring more flames. Some flames were angry, rageful flames, but more often they were flames of shame and fear intended to mold him into a proper dragon that could never be hurt by the big world outside. The mixture of sweet smiles (when he did well) and the flames of shame, confused the child. He could feel the painful heat of those flames along the seams of his handmade dragon skin. Each time the flames would subside and the smiles would return as though his failures were but fading memories to his parents.

He set off on his quest to be the perfect dragon. He wondered what kind of God could have created a dragon child with such soft sensitive skin. Worse yet, in his "Book of Truth", there were so many things required to be a good, acceptable dragon, that he knew in his heart he would never measure up - he was defective and unacceptable.

As the boy grew, he learned how to make flames of his own. His anger and shame would simmer and grow inside him until the flames just burst out in full force. However the dragon skin his mother had made for him had no holes for the nostrils. Whether by design - to avoid bad burns - or by mistake, the mother had missed this important feature of a dragon skin. The flames welling up in the boy burned hot inside the skin, causing deeper pain than he had ever experienced.

As he grew and the skin became tighter, there came a day when he took a step and felt a tear along the crotch of his skin. The next time he was filled with flames, the flames seared down his body and flared out the small tear. In some way this felt good to the boy to let some of the flame out of his suit like this. The boy's mother once found one of the boy's underpants that had been slightly seared and she questioned him about it. The boy was so ashamed that he denied knowledge of the flames and nothing more was ever said about the subject. The boy felt sure that if his great secret was known, his dream of obtaining full acceptance would be lost.

The boy left home and went off to college, but the flames came with him. Although he did well, he had so many fears of failing that everything became much more difficult. Still, he kept trying - getting by with his own bursts of angry flame and sometimes finding a hiding place to let some of the flame out of the tear. He began to notice other dragons that had flames a lot like his father's. Perhaps it was a teacher or an employer or someone else, yet always he reacted as if it was his father - either by trying to please or by giving up in frustration. He did not blame his father for he believed deep inside that somehow he was just not worthy, defective beyond repair - and everyone would know that if the shameful truth ever came out.

Confessing his failures to God and trying harder to please, brought some relief, yet he still felt ashamed and confused by his continuing desire to release some of his flame through the small tear. He felt certain that because of his defectiveness, God was waiting for the right opportunity to send him to some really huge flames.

One day he met a girl and right down through his scales he felt something like never before. She had the most soft delicate skin he had ever seen. Feelings poured out of her like a warm summer rain, drenching his dry scales with a healing balm. He loved her, and to his surprise and delight, she loved him back. Somehow, he felt safe around her, so that sometimes he slid the dragon skin off his head and let it hang down around his shoulders. He believed that his family would be very pleased at last, since he had found a wife with such a zest for life who was so in line with his family's beliefs and values.

To his agonizing dismay, they rejected her with fierce flames, all the while smiling with toothy grins of welcome. He went back to his wife and gave her a small piece of his dragon skin so that at least her heart would be protected from the flames. He didn't have the courage to give her more and in fact, often added his own flames to those of his family against her. Her pain was unbearable to him, yet he would not risk losing the chance of winning his parent's approval, so he flamed more hotly inside his dragon skin, scorching his sensitive skin nearly to the bone.

After only six months of this he began to run and hide in places only defective types of dragons would go. He would try to release the painful flames out the small tear in his crotch only to return to his wife with a larger supply of shame to fuel even hotter flames. The relief, though short-lived, became an inescapable drive within him until the police arrived to call a halt.

Fearfully, he went to his parents to disclose his secret, fully expecting fierce angry flames to destroy him. They offered some words of support, but when told of his felt need to be perfect, said they didn't think he was perfect anymore. Was it possible that without his knowing it, his parents had previously thought of him as perfect? Yet it didn't really matter because he'd certainly lost any chance to get it back. He became all the more certain that he was truly a defective person.

Now, after two more police interventions, the 33 year old boy stands with his dragon suit in his hand. He is still very afraid of fire, yet knows that the suit with no nostrils, which never really fit, has never been very good protection from the world. His value was set by God from the beginning and his skin is sensitive for a reason.

As he sets the carefully folded skin at his parent's feet and turns to go back to his wife and family - who are themselves recovering from the burns he has given them - he notices, perhaps for the first time, that his parent's skins are hand-made like his own.

Tim S. (St. Paul, MN)

NSO REPORTS

SUMMARY--N.S.O. Winter Board Meeting 1-17-92 through 1-21-92

Present: Ed G. - S.W. Rep.
 Kathy C. - S.C. Rep.
 Alice C. - S.E. Rep.
 Gregory M. - P.N.W. Rep. - Secretary
 Arnold D. - G.L. Rep. - Chair
 Grant J. - N.C. Rep.
 Karl H. - At Large Rep.
 Jill S. - T.C. At Large Rep.
 Art F. - T.C. At Large Rep.
Absent: Linda M.-Chair of Literature (absent re: travel funding difficulties.)

Non-voting Observers Present:
 Kevin K. - Board alternate, S.C. region.
 Lisa G. - N.C. Literature Representative
 Gary L. - Trusted Servant of T.C. Intergroup
 Staff: Douglas P.

The first large period of time was devoted to **assessing our progress on the goals for the year**. We decided our focus for the remainder of the year by breaking down what would be done, by whom, and **setting deadlines** for when the actions would be completed.

Here is one example of the way the goals were approached (a complete report on the goals will be included in the annual report); Goal 2.1 Increase percent of groups contributing. **RESPONSIBILITY** - Art and Ed.

RESULT - There was a recent plea letter asking for more contributions.

FUTURE - Motion: Grant, and Karl will rewrite "Making it Work for You" by 2-17-92., Grant will provide feedback on this project.

Motion passed.

Motion: To send receipts on all contributions.

Motion passed.

The proposed "Pledging Groups" form was discussed, and it was agreed that it would be included as an insert to groups only with the PBR. Karl will format the item and it will be sent with the March PBR.

Other major topics of concern about the goals were as follows; Telecommunications, intergroup/regional development, upgrade office, upgrade computer, increase staffing, increase role of office in convention, interfellowship, Faithful Fiver/Trusted Tender, developing 3 month operating reserve, getting the national phone number listed with information/referral agencies, outreach to people in treatment centers, people in prisons, increase the involvement of women and minorities in SAA, and coordinate better communication between the Board and the Lit. Com.

Discussed how much disclosure there needed to be for board members (and staff) regarding their sobriety. Discussed if we needed to share sobriety definitions and what our responsibilities were if we were to slipped. **We reaffirmed our past policy for service--the standard guidelines of one year of sobriety and two years in the program.** In the past a break in sobriety was talked about in face to face gatherings of the board and not on teleconferences, that slips did not necessitate a call for resignation--it was up to what the person needed to do.

On Saturday a member gave a **presentation on non-profit boards & structure**--detailing roles of board, roles of its members, staff roles, and the role of the convention.

The Prison Outreach Committee gave a presentation explaining how outreach is being conducted presently and what their aims are long term.

Reached agreements on **the separation of N.S.O. and Twin Cities Intergroup**--here are the basic negotiated arrangements. Summary of the Joint management agreement that was signed; For the period until the end of 1992 management of the office shall be under the direction of the two at-large Board Members from the Twin Cities, and the Trusted Servant and Treasurer of Twin Cities Intergroup. This committee shall review current office staff performance (i.e. hiring, firing, reprimands, commendations, and make other decisions that reasonably falls under its mandate for the operation of the office. Continuation of this agreement beyond 1992 will be at the discretion of both governing parties.

Summary of **the copyright agreement** that was signed;

1. Copyrights on the conference approved items (Abstinence & Boundaries, First Step to Recovery, Group Guide, 12 Question brochure, and the medallion) will be turned over to the NSO. NSO will for posterity pay a 7 % royalty at the time of production to TCI (there will be no royalty on the 12 question brochure).

2. Copyrights on the NSO approved items (Exploring Healthy Sexuality, and Getting Started in SAA) will be jointly held until they become conference approved.

The board adopted a working policy taken from a section excerpted from the proposals on separation. For protection of copyright holders for locally generated literature - literature that is NSO approved and published nationally, NSO would hold the copyright more conditionally (i.e. any changes made by the Nat. Lit. Com. would need to gain approval prior to publication of the altered material). This would protect the interests of the original copyright holders by insuring that the integrity of the piece would be preserved (that the originators would have power to object to dramatic changes). Yet, that joint agreement would expire upon conference approval of the item - with NSO solely holding the copyright.

Financial status: Art spoke of the complexity of his situation as treasurer, inheriting a lack of records, multiple accounts, and an inability to obtain all of the financial records until recently. He told of our new accounting system which is being installed--a system which will better identify / isolate funds and expenses. The Treasurer's big picture report was; we are not getting enough donations. The bottom line; our operating expenses exceeds our income.

Structure: There was great interest in establishing at least the essential committees--needing to become more formal in our approach re: responsibility, accountability, and effectively servicing the needs of the fellowship. **The board agreed to create the following standing board committees:**

COMMITTEES	MAKE-UP
Office management	Jill, Art
Finance	Art, Karl, Greg, Ed
Convention	Alice, Karl, Kevin, Kathy, Ed
Prison	Jill, Arnold
Intergroup/regional devel.	Grant, Kevin, Ed
Structure	Kathy, Greg
Women outreach	Kathy, Alice
Minority outreach	Grant, Kevin, Greg
Intra-fellowship communication	Alice

Literature: Lisa G. (sitting in for Lit. Chair Linda M.) gave out handouts relating the progress of the literature committee, and its needs. Discussed numerous items; guidelines on convention taping, the literature approval process, PBR distribution, discussion about several by-laws concerns, changes in the new edition of "Getting Started", progress on the "Three Circles" pamphlet, the manuscript that is being edited for draft publication, membership feedback on the Healthy Sexuality booklet, and assembling a delegate package. Also discussed the major questions about the financial relationship between the Lit. Com. and the Board; the sense is that the board finance committee needs to be informed as to the activities / expenditures of the Lit. Com..

Discussed staff related issues: The board empowered the JMC to pursue setting-up staff policies (procedures, gaining job descriptions), deriving the policy information from some proposals forwarded by Art.

Tucson convention: Set business meetings schedule (starting Friday from 3:00-5:30). Discussed progress the Tucson Committees are making. The board agreed to no longer have the convention titled as the SAA/COSA convention. Beginning in 1993 it will be the SAA convention. Decided as of 1993 we will extend the length of our conventions, beginning with two days of business, followed by two days of conference, with some overlap in the middle.

Discussed the **Convention Manual** which is being assemble by Karl. Site selection; for 1993 and 1994 requests for bids will go out to all intergroups. A form with specifications will be part of what is sent to them. We will review bids on Friday morning before the convention, and at the floor to delegates the decision of the board will be announced.

Guidelines for convention site selection: -Who can bid for conventions? Registered intergroups. -What does the bidding intergroup need to provide to the board to be considered? Three possible sites with proposed dates (with the recommendation that they choose memorial day weekend). The board would want to understand the process of bid preparation, their motivation, and what is their capacity to do this. Sites need to be described in detail, with estimations of cost and actual facility descriptions. We need a description of transportation (air and ground) concerns and attributes. We need to understand their level of commitment to raise scholarship funds. Agreed the Board convention committee should be composed of board members, at least one rep. from the following; the prior convention, the upcoming convention, and the following years convention.

Discussed **procedures for handling criticisms of individual conduct or concerns with traditions violations.** We agreed in principle that we need to develop a mechanism to handle legitimate concerns or complaints. Created an intra-fellowship committee to provide a forum for this. This committee will take responsibility for documenting communications received and will take responsibility for acknowledging and follow-up on the issue.

Respectfully submitted,
 Gregory M.
 Secretary
 Douglas P.
 Office Manager

* Members wishing to see the actual minutes can send \$ 4.00 and they will be furnished with the minutes from this meeting.

Prison Outreach Update . . .

*I'm writing to someone in prison,
writing emotions strong and well.
Hurt that my brother was torn from me
when he had the courage to tell.
Learning of my loneliness, old loneliness,
hurts left from when other friends were left
behind
Fearing that I'd never find another friend
or that no one else will be that kind.*

I've been writing often to a brother in the program who is now in prison. He is there because of his acting out and he broke the secret in his amends. I've had my own fears broken open by his actions. My acting out was in a very similar pattern. So, seeing him get sentenced to many years filled me with fear.

Yet I will continue to write and I have traveled to see him. My recovery has been helped by seeing the complete cost of acting out. I can't afford to let any part of my addiction remain in secret. Dave R. (Plano, TX)

A Traditional Column

Tradition Five: *Each group has but one primary purpose - to carry its message to the sex addict who still suffers.*

Two months ago, in this newsletter, we printed the new group descriptions that the literature committee derived when faced with the need to make a piece of Twin Cities literature ready to be submitted for conference approval, by making it more representative of the nation-wide customs in S.A.A. Besides the intention to make the changed group designations reflective of S.A.A. as a whole, (not just the Twin Cities) there was also the intention to bring us more in line with what is done in other twelve step programs, so that people don't need to learn new definitions when they come to our program. Since then, a letter came in from a member of the fellowship who expressed concern about the custom especially popular in the Twin Cities of "twelve-stepping" newcomers into meetings. Although the author did not say so directly, what was implicit was the concern that members of the fellowship might be disregarding the fifth tradition. Because there are doubtless other people who have similar opinions, included here are excerpts of that letter.

"...types of groups to be included in the revised group guide. Open Group, Closed Group, Closed-12/New, Closed-12/All. I am under the opinion that the last two groups referred to are getting their name from Step 12."

"If this is the case these types of groups need to be renamed as they have nothing to do with Step 12. ...Step 12 says nothing about protecting ourselves."

"I am not opposed to open and closed groups. I am opposed to groups that make it more difficult than it already is to get help. Our Preamble states that the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop compulsive sexual behavior. So if a person thinks they have a problem with sex addiction...they should be allowed within our walls. Twelve Stepping is not there to protect us. It is to share our experience, strength and hope with another that we feel may be open to it, so that they might know there is hope. I am not opposed to twelve stepping and we definitely need more of it. But I am opposed to calling this twelve stepping when a person or group sets themselves up as God and determines if this person is eligible to join this particular group. Do we know what is best for every one? Hell, I don't even know what is best for me."

"All our meetings in New Orleans are closed --at present.... When a new person shows up at our meeting, when he comes in, one of us (it's the duty of the chairperson) will ask him why he is there. If he says he is looking for the SAA meeting, we ask him if he thinks he has a problem with compulsive sexual behavior. If he says "Yes" he is welcomed and introduced."

"....Step 12 is a reaching out step - a sharing step. Step 12 is not a protecting step - a selfish step." [Exerpts from a letter from Bill D. (New Orleans)--Ed.]

Judging from this letter, there is some confusion about the procedure and purpose of twelve stepping newcomers into SAA meetings, and an explanation is in order. I have been in both positions of an SAA twelve step call. Five years ago I was twelve-stepped into my first meeting by two women; since then I have twelve-stepped dozens and dozens of people. The way that the twelve step call was described to me when I called the office was "a meeting with two members of the group who will explain something of their own reasons for joining SAA, and perhaps describe some of the changes that have been wrought in their life since then. It is an opportunity for the newcomer to assess whether they think SAA will be helpful for them. Questions from the newcomer are welcomed and if they feel comfortable, they are welcome to share something of their own story."

As I understand it, although the twelfth step call tends to help the group members feel a little safer, the primary intention of the twelfth step call is to help a newcomer feel more welcomed, not less welcomed. A pair of us takes the time to meet with every interested individual. In this respect, it is very much an expression of both the Twelfth Step and the Fifth Tradition. It is by no means a screening process, people are not refused admittance. Rather it is an opportunity for the newcomer to test the waters, so that when they arrive at the meeting they will already have met two of the people present. Most of the time I ask for a commitment to attend six meetings before deciding if SAA is right for them, but of course this is only a suggestion, based on the fact that an SAA meeting can vary a great deal from week to week. It is true that asking the newcomer to take the time for a twelve step call is asking for a demonstration of commitment and it does make it less easy for a person to just go to a meeting, but I think the benefits outweigh the drawbacks. Incidentally, the idea of referring to outreach to newcomers as a "twelve step call" is not something that originated in S.A.A., the tradition goes back to the first days when Bill W. and Dr. Bob went to talk to drunks about their A.A. program. This is why we call it twelfth stepping.

Lisa G. (St. Paul, MN)

ANONYMITY NEEDS TO COME FIRST

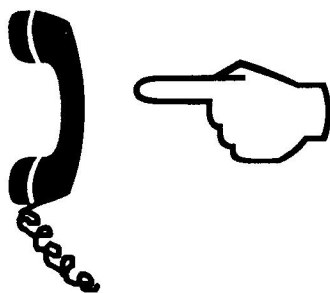


Recently a member from another SAA group approached me telling me of a discussion about how certain members feel they need to report abuse that they hear about at SAA meetings. I recall this issue coming up at a meeting I attended several years ago. Let me say this as it was discussed in group:

SAA, if it chooses to continue to follow the 12 Steps needs to remember that as a spiritual program - anonymity is the spiritual foundation. When someone comes to a meeting they leave their professional hat at the door. Issues of legality, even of morality are discussed as part of a spiritual program. One person's program was not intended to fit for all.

Especially here in Minnesota, where there are so many treatment centers, counselors and therapists abound. However, the power and control issues that arise in this setting need to be screened out in the 12 step spiritual programs. The 12 Steps are to be healing of the spirit. We can not share our spirit and heal without anonymity and freedom from fear. That's what spirituality is all about. Anonymous

DON'T ACT OUT -- REACH OUT!!!



My boss, at work, is bugging me; there's a big snag in an important project (I'm afraid . . .). I just got the bill from the lawyer and it's a stretch to pay it (I'm afraid there's not enough . . .). I'd heard the clatter inside turn to a clamor, then a deafening roar. My spiritual connection falters when the external stresses pile up. The internal stresses cause disconnection and fear. Before I know it my serenity and abstinence are threatened.

Knowing I'm sliding, I call my sponsor. He patiently and knowingly listens. He's concerned about my concerns. He waits patiently until my frantic story blows by. Then, compassionately, he asks, how are my sponsees doing? Did I approach any newcomers at the last meeting?

All these things really happened. How many times have we been through this routine together? I don't know, and I don't know why it works. After awhile I begin to understand that working with others keeps me abstinent. I feel better about myself. My magnified problems shrink when I'm talking to a newcomer at a meeting, or returning a call on the S.A.A. phone line.

When I see how my experience can benefit others, I realize that this program was not given to me to keep, but to pass on. Each time I share my program I gain a sense of compassion for others and I lose the need to use my character defect of selfishness a little. I begin to feel better about myself. And feeling better about myself was what I wanted most when I came in. Working the 12th Step has given this to me. Now I'm sponsoring, sharing, serving, and doing what I can to reach those who still suffer.

S.A.A. nationally and in Houston are forming Outreach Committees. That's in addition to the N.S.O. Committee on Prison Outreach. The N.S.O. Prison Outreach Committee put together a good information packet and guidelines. The local committee is looking to develop guidelines for what to send and to whom. The fledgling Houston Committee is focusing on contacting professionals who may be in contact with sex addicts. There are individuals who have reached out, who we can learn from. Two issues have arisen: 1) What's the limit on attraction? Or, When does reaching out become (oh horrors) promotion? 2) How do we maintain safety and security? How open do we want to be? I'd like to hear of other people's trials and successes in future outreach columns. Please send submissions to the PBR editor.

Opportunity abounds for those who want to maintain their abstinence through working the 12 Steps. This is a program for those who want it. We are called to help those who still suffer and who want a way out. -- Kevin K., Houston, TX

Abstinence through Service

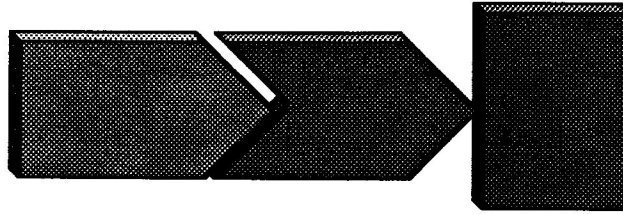
The 12th Step reads, "Having had a spiritual awakening AS A RESULT OF THESE STEPS, we tried to carry this message to other sex addicts, and to practice these principles in all our lives."

Since I have been a member of S.A.A. (5 plus years), I've seen a tendency for new people to get involved in service before working the steps. Service work includes such things as: answering phone lines, being an InterGroup representative, serving on various N.S.O. Committees, and so on.

This leads to a question: Can recovery be accomplished without service work? The answer, of course, is YES. What do I need to do in order to accomplish recovery? Work the steps with a sponsor and help other S.A.A.'s with steps (sponsorship). It is in doing these things that I have a spiritual awakening and as an on-going part of my life, seek out other sex addicts to help with step work.

I do service work because I'm committed to recovery and feel committed to keeping the eyes of the fellowship focused on the 12 Steps. -- Al

Pain: A Great Teacher



Marcel Proust is credited with saying, "To wisdom and goodness we make only promises, pain we obey." He might have worded it nicely, but the idea is as old as the stars, and I've found it true during my pilgrimage here on earth.

Here are a few other quotes about pain and suffering: "Nothing begins and nothing ends / That is not paid with moan; / For we are born in other's pain, / And perish in our own. (Francis Thompson); "Much of your pain is self-chosen. It is the bitter potion by which the physician within you heals your sick self." (Gibran); and "Unless a seed falls to the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if dies, it brings forth much fruit." (Jesus).

What single thing has motivated you more than anything else to turn from your old lifestyle and begin seeking recovery? For me it can be said in a word: *pain*.

No amount of sermonizing could ever have moved me to begin the process of owning my pain and ceasing from trying to escape from its omnipresence. My mother, my father, my sisters, my preacher, friends and teachers, no one, *not even myself*, could lessen my burden through advice or attempts at control.

The irony of the attempt to run from your pain is that as long as you do so you're bound to keep feeling it --only in an incomprehensible, senseless way. It's by facing the pain, admitting your brokenness, giving yourself permission to grieve and ache and lament all of your losses, that you begin to find some release.

How long does this painful process of refinement last? Ah, my friend, simply as long as it needs to take. Have you ever heard the quote, "The years have their wisdom that the days know not of?" The ebb and flow of living, faltering, stumbling, aspiring, dreaming, praying If you could somehow stand back in time and sort of hear this flow in unison, all at once, surely it would keen forth a song of great and profound wisdom.

All of this sounds "deep," doesn't it? But what do I do when, say, I stub my toe on the leg of the chair when I stumble out of bed in the morning? Do I reflect on the marvelous chorus of the universe's pleasures and pains? Of course not. I yell and mutter words I won't repeat here. Is it part of the process? Undoubtedly. But I have no clue as to how or why.

When I return to "old," acting out behaviors, I sometimes am recalling my pain. At those times it usually means I'm not willing to be honest with myself. I want to remember old pain but I also want to feel it in an easy, controllable way; in a way that I never experienced when I was young. Acting out gives me a pretext for feeling the things that I am *already feeling* but don't want to admit to myself.

When I am (consciously or unconsciously) living outside of my boundaries, for instance, if I will but simply take a moment to tune into the message of my heart I will know with some certainty that the sacredness within me is in danger of being profaned. If I make mute the testimony of my heart, I will eventually hear; for God will amplify His Love song for my soul; for His Love is stronger than His Justice.

Befriend your woundedness. Let it give you wisdom. Running away from it either doesn't work or is a form of self-deception. Allow yourself the grace to be loved and accepted just as you are. --Anonymous

Spirituality

It's those who have a spiritual awakening that make it and "see the light" to health and wholeness. I believe everyone is capable of this. The twelve steps are designed for this purpose, but there is a catch - spiritual healing is not as many think or what I used to think. It isn't a magical touch on the forehead by some evangelist that happens to leave you cured. Spiritual healing is more a process of change and a way of life one day at a time. It is a slow process (if you are impatient) that never really ends.

Healing means doing not being. Let me explain, although you and I are in a sense healthy - we also are health - health is already a part of you and me, all we need is to find it in ourselves and nurture it. If I do sick things, think sick thoughts and feel sick all the time, I will be sick.

Healing is doing. It is an act of love for myself leading toward a spiritual goal. Healing is doing those things that allow healing to happen, God (or nature) takes care of the rest. Healing is not doing those things that prevent healing from occurring. Healing is not thinking about healing or going to meetings and talking about healing, healing is doing. Healing means feeling and suffering. Healing is risky and hurts. When I cut my arm it hurts and bleeds before the healing is over, the same is true for emotional healing.

Jason F. (Golden Valley, MN)

TIME OR MONEY- S.A.A. COUNTS ON YOUR HELP!

In March, a total of 48.5 hours of volunteer help was contributed to the N.S.O. office. A special thank you goes out to Tom J., Bob V. and Jim L.

Do you have a story, an experience of growth, or would you just like to share your emotions and feelings? Please write The Plain Brown Rapper. Your brothers and sisters in SAA would like to hear from you. We have much to share with each other. Please write to PBR Editor, c/o SAA, P.O. Box 3038, Minneapolis, MN 55403. If you can submit your writing on a computer disk (either 800K Macintosh or IBM), that would be greatly appreciated. Please ensure that all IBM disks (either 5-1/4 or 3-1/2 inch) are formatted consistent with their physical density (i.e., high-density disks formatted high density; low-density disks formatted low density). Please submit all writings for the June newsletter by May 21, 1992.

Unless otherwise noted, the content of all articles, stories, and poems that appear in the *Plain Brown Rapper* reflect the opinions of the respective writers. Those opinions are not necessarily shared by the N.S.O., S.A.A., or the Literature Committee. Discussion of the contents of this newsletter is encouraged.