



International
Service Organization
of SAA, Inc.

The Outer Circle Mission

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

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

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

If you have comments or suggestions please see the contact information on page 28. To have an article considered for publication, see our Submission Guidelines on page 30.

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

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Time for SAA to Come Out of the Closet

BY GARY T.

This year, let's start stepping out of our collective closet, and contemplate what it means, as a fellowship, to move from shame to grace

I'm gay. Just ten years ago I couldn't have written those words without being filled with shame and fear. In many ways, growing up closeted taught me to be a sex addict: To survive I learned to isolate, keep secrets, and live in shame of my sexuality.

Today, the closet no longer holds that power over me. I'm out to family, friends, and anyone else who cares to know whom I love.

Coming out was the start of my movement from shame to grace. That's why it pains me that sometimes in SAA I feel back in the closet. And unfortunately, the fellowship seems to be right there with me.

These actions are rooted in good intentions. But they also hide SAA from the public — and potentially from the still suffering sex addict.

For example, in my local fellowship, we've had group consciences about whether meetings should identify as SAA to protect anonymity. Yes, anonymity is a core tradition, but it should not conflict with Step Twelve.

In the TOC, I'm not even supposed to say where and when our international convention will be for fear that someone from the media will see it. I understand the need for anonymity, but would a TV report about the SAA convention — about men and women proudly celebrating a spiritual solution to a life-threatening illness — really be so bad?

I know I'm not the only one beginning to ask these questions. I encourage everyone to share their thoughts for our next Quick Take, and start talking about it with each other.

Our convention is a perfect opportunity to do so. This year, let's start stepping out of our collective closet, and contemplate what it means, as a fellowship, to move from shame to grace.

A Guide for Resolving Group Conflicts

BY JOE H.

The Group Guide has many tools that can be used by recovery meetings to help with almost any problem.

Our fellowship has more than doubled in the last ten years. We now have more than 1,550 weekly recovery meetings. While this is great news, there are always challenges as new meetings begin to meet. What I would like to address in this newsletter is where to go for help when meetings face challenges/ conflicts.

The ISO office is always willing to listen to the challenges that our members call us about when it comes to group conflict, but our recovery meetings are autonomous, so we don't tell meetings what they should do. We will suggest resources to members who call us about meeting conflicts but it's up to the group and its group conscience to decide on the best course of action to resolve conflicts.

The best resource we have available for use by our recovery meetings is our Group Guide. The Group Guide has many tools that can be used by recovery meetings to help with almost any problem. The Group Guide contains the Twelve Traditions of SAA, which can be helpful when a recovery meeting is struggling with making a tough decision.

Another helpful tool in the Group Guide is the group inventory. Groups have found it helpful to take an inventory at least annually to provide a thoughtful review of how the group is doing. Information from an inventory helps the group make decisions about changes based on the group conscience. I would suggest every member download a copy of the Group Guide at http://saa-recovery.org/Meetings/GroupGuide/SAA_Group_Guide.pdf and read it.

I am sure you will be able to find value for your personal recovery as well as useful information to strengthen your group.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve.

LETTERS

Quick Take: How Can We Encourage More Women In SAA? (Part 2)

Editor's note: Quick Take invites short responses of around 100 words on an issue of recovery.

Next issue's quick take: Does SAA need to come out of the closet? If so, what do you propose? If not, why? If you have ideas for Quick Takes, please send them to toc@saa-recovery.org.

Women SAA Members Need to Be Nicer to Each Other

The main thing I have noticed in my 23 years in program is that we as women do not fail in the encouragement and support category, but we fail miserably in the “cat fighting,” “in fighting,” judgment, criticism, and unrealistic expectations of our sisters.

The double standard that has always been in place prevails here. Men do not sit down at tables and attack another male SAA for desiring sex or a romantic companion. Somehow unmarried SAA females are supposed to not desire sex or dating/relationships; that is unrealistic. I have heard of female sponsors that say their sponsees cannot go out alone on dates until certain sobriety is attained. A chaperoned date in this millennia?

Women are far too guilty of not taking the kinder gentler way. We need desperately to have outreach to young female SAA's, but far too often our own behavior scares them away. Twenty-three years in I find myself shying away from women's meetings because of the shame and resentment I feel over the behavior.

It is far too unreasonable after a sponsee or other female in program is stable in sobriety to expect her to meet, date, and carry on in a relationship as though we are still in the 1950s. I know some leave because of this expectation.

Cara A

Ask Questions, Provide Safe Contact Information and Resources

It is helpful when people don't make assumptions about me, or women in general, but instead, offer resources and ask questions. What works for me doesn't always work for other women, and may change as I continue in my recovery.

In meetings, the biggest encouragement is to have men willing to sit by me, talk with me and look at me. I also find value in knowing who I can connect with outside of the meeting — other women, gay men, or straight men willing to take a phone call.



It's important to keep it safe, and not get too graphic especially in personal conversations. Hugs are generally fine for me, but I appreciate when people ask the first time. Probably the best thing as in all relationships, is praying to a Higher Power for guidance in helping me understand my mixed motives.

What keeps me coming back when I am the only woman in my meetings? Listening and learning from the stories of men, and growing from their experience. Feeling the grace and understanding in the room when I tell about my shameful behaviors. Having a sponsor that guides me through the steps, keeps me accountable, and encourages me in my spiritual path. Building relationships with other people in the program, both in my meetings and at other meetings.

When I pray to my Higher Power, I feel directed to be here. I feel like I can give something to other people right where I am. I also enjoy the intellect, the psychological and sociological aspects and humor of the people in the room. And I like gaining a better understanding of the hearts and minds of men.

Elissa T.

Letters to the editor are welcome. Please send your feedback to toc@saa-recovery.org. Letters may be edited for space and content.

Board Actions Include Assigning Groups to Regions, Shifting Responsibility for Other S-Fellowship Communications to Director

Here's a look at the ISO Board actions for January through March:

January

- » Approved a motion that the responsibility for communication and cooperation with other S-fellowships currently assigned to the Inter-fellowship Relations Committee (IRC) be transferred to the Executive Director and that the members of the IRC serve, as needed, in an advisory capacity to the Executive Director.
- » Approved motion that the Board delegate to the Executive Director the responsibility of assigning any currently unassigned groups, and any newly registered groups to existing regions as soon as practicable.

February

- » Approved funding for up to twelve Conference Steering Committee representatives for two days of face-to-face meetings prior to the annual delegate meeting of the ISO in Washington, D.C., as well as two days of Conference participation at the D.C. Conference. Standard travel reimbursements are requested for five days (four service days and one travel day) and four nights (including the delegate lunch).
- » Approved funding a temporary part time position for twelve months at a cost of \$12,516.00.

March

- » Approved the following ISO Policy on Interaction with Outside Enterprises: While the ISO encourages cooperation with professionals and with other Twelve Step fellowships, the ISO shall be careful not to “endorse, finance, or lend the SAA name to any outside enterprise.” For that reason, the guiding operational principle when interacting with or cooperating with any outside enterprise shall be cooperation without affiliation.

Director Reviews Financials for March

In the month of March we had a Surplus of \$7,524.44. We had budgeted for a deficit of \$6,049.60. The increased in our surplus was due to

the Houston Giving Thanks exceeding their budget by \$5,380 and sales exceeded our budget by \$1,847.31.

Our gross sales revenue for the SAA Green Book exceeded our estimate by \$2,798.4 in March and exceeded our estimate by \$3,543.21 for the year.

Our pamphlet and booklet sales were below our estimate by \$1,306.84 for March and below our estimate by \$201.94 for the year. Our bronze medallion sales exceeded our estimate by \$795.00 in March and has exceeded our estimate by \$1,454.6 for the year.

Our total sales for March exceeded our estimate by \$1,847.31

Individual donations exceeded our estimate by \$8,638.59 for March and has exceeded our estimate by \$4,840.09 for the year. Group donations exceeded our estimate by \$734.28 in March and has exceeded our estimate by \$1,500.25 for the year.

Our product inventory is valued at \$67,128.84. The increase from \$41,872.73 in February to \$67,128.84 in March was due to reordering of the SAA Green Book and also the ordering of the SAA Spanish Green Book, third edition.

Our expenses were below our estimate by \$3,503.43 in March.

Summary of the annual budget (January 1, 2015 to March 31, 2015):

- » Gross sales have exceeded our estimate by \$4,490.84
- » Donations have exceeded our estimate by \$6,340.34
- » Expenses are under our estimate by \$1,580.94

Our operational reserve is fully funded.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

In Your Service,

Joe H.

Executive Director

Long Range Planning Convention Committee Presenting Workshop

The Long Range Planning Convention (LRPC) Committee is having a workshop about hosting the Annual ISO Convention.

This will be presented at the 2015 Annual ISO Conference. All are welcome. If your local group is interested in hosting the convention we have information that will be of help to you.

The specific time and place of the workshop will be published in the Convention Program.

In Service,

The LRPC Committee

LGBT Outreach Committee Invites New Members at Convention

We submitted our annual report for the current service year, so please look for it in other ISO reports for details.

As the current service year is coming to a close, the direction of this subcommittee and the service(s) provided will be the main topic on the agenda to be discussed at the 2015 DC Conference. Anyone who is interested is invited to attend and become involved in this important conversation.

For more information or to volunteer for any of the current LGBT Outreach activities, email us at GLBT@saa-recovery.org or attend our monthly teleconference, which is the first Sunday of each month. Contact the ISO Office for call in information.



Compulsive Sexual Avoidance Outreach Looks to Convention

The Compulsive Sexual Avoidance (Anorexia) Outreach Committee is working on ways to connect with more members of the fellowship who struggle with intimacy avoidance issues. Members of the committee are looking forward to attending the SAA Convention in May!

Spanish Language E-Book, Green Book Available

The electronic or e-book format of the Third edition of the Spanish Green Book is now available for purchase as both a printed book and an ebook. We wish to thank our Spanish-speaking members around the world who provided input to the project.

Other news on the international level: The SAA Green Book is being translated into French, Hebrew and Portuguese by members in our fellowship. These projects are in the beginning stage and normally take eight to twelve months.

SAA History Project Moves Forward

Volunteers are gathering data for a history monograph, chronicling the beginning and growth of the SAA fellowship. Recently, they have made arrangements with the ISO office, to record interviews with members of the SAA fellowship, who have information about the fellowship, the ISO, SAA Literature, or other aspects of our organization.

If you have information, insights, or historical perspectives on the early days or more recent expansion of SAA around the world, please let us know. Members who wish to volunteer for phone interviews and possible follow-up questions, can send their contact information to director@saa-iso.org.

All responses will remain confidential in accordance with SAA's Twelve Traditions.

You can help produce the most complete and accurate history possible.

Finding, Asking for Sponsorship is Key to Sobriety

BY WOMEN'S
OUTREACH
SUBCOMMITTEE

The process of asking for help, sometimes for the first time, can elicit profound growth

Dear Grace,

I have emailed grace@saa-women.org to get a sponsor, but so far Grace hasn't found me a sponsor. Why won't Grace help me? I keep waiting for her to assign me someone, but she hasn't.

Sponsorless

Dear Sponsorless:

Thank you for your question. It is very important to have a sponsor, and we are glad you are looking for one. Our Green Book says, "As new members, we are encouraged to get a sponsor as soon as we can" (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 13). We are also glad you have reached out to Grace. There may be a misunderstanding, however, about what Grace does and does not do.

Grace helps women find sponsors by maintaining the Women's Outreach List (see note for basic information about Grace and the list). The list can be a valuable resource, especially for those members whose meetings are small and/or young. One of the pieces of information women can provide is availability for sponsorship. Grace receives ten to twenty requests each month for help in finding a sponsor, and Grace provides each of those women with a list of potential sponsors and program sisters (the Women's Outreach List).

Grace does not assign, suggest, or endorse sponsors. One reason is that, even though it sounds efficient, it is simply not practical. The relationship between sponsor and sponsee is too individual for an outsider to arrange it. Another reason is that each member of SAA is responsible for her own recovery. Finding a sponsor is one of the first tangible



tasks for a newcomer; as such, it is an important indicator of the desire to stop addictive behaviors. The process of asking for help, sometimes for the first time, can elicit profound growth.

We hope that when you emailed Grace, you agreed to join the list, a community of women SAA members. Once added to the list, it is your responsibility to reach out and find the sponsor you are looking for!

Blessings in your recovery,

Grace

Note: "Grace" (not a person, but a group of women volunteers from the Women's Outreach Subcommittee) answers emails and maintains the Women's Outreach List. Sometimes referred

to as the "Grace list," this is a list of women members of SAA who agree to share their contact information with each other so that they can network within SAA. To receive the list, women must agree to join the list and provide their own contact information (name, phone, email, etc.)

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

DEAR WILL

Can I Share About Non-SAA Literature in Meetings?

BY WILL

Just as when you are talking about your acting out behaviors, you are not using slang terminology, you can certainly find safe ways to talk about other books you are reading.

Dear Will,

In my home group if someone says something they consider triggering or inappropriate they raise their hand. I was sharing about a wonderful book I had been reading and several people raised their hands. I asked one of them afterwards what the problem was. He said that I was discussing non-SAA literature. Is this so bad?

Not Intending to Trigger Anyone

Dear NITA,

The final sentence of Tradition Six in the SAA Green Book on page 87 reads as follows: “[B]y always keeping in mind that we are separate and distinct from other organizations and enterprises, and communicating only SAA’s unique message, we stay on the simple path of service to our fellow sex addict.” So the reason for the members of your group raising their hands is that you could be coming close to sharing something that is contrary to the SAA message. Since SAA has its own unique message, even among the various S-fellowships that are out there, what you are sharing could be confusing to the newcomer.

Does this mean that Will thinks you should not be reading non-SAA literature to help you with your recovery? Certainly not! Does this mean that Will thinks you shouldn’t be sharing about other literature you are reading at meetings? This is a little more slippery, but Will still says “no.”

Higher Power speaks in all kinds of ways, including through other people and through life experiences. Just as when you are talking about your acting out behaviors, you are not using slang terminology,



you can certainly find safe ways to talk about other books you are reading.

Some of Will’s groups suggest that folks not name specific acting-out places; similarly you could avoid naming the book you are reading. You could, however, paraphrase something out of “a book I read” and from there talk about the experience, strength, and hope you got from that passage, how it helped you with a situation you were facing, and so forth. Without all those hands staring you in the face, you would even be able to share how what you read relates to the SAA message. You could even, if you were prepared to do so, give a quote from SAA literature that expresses a similar idea. Will heard somewhere that there were really only seven original thoughts in the whole world, and everything else is based on

those. Or something.

It’s entirely possible that if you approach your share in that manner, you may pique the interest of others in your group to the point that one of two of them may even approach you after the meeting to ask more details about the book you are reading. At that point, it would not be inappropriate to name the book or even go into more specific detail about the passage you read.

Will

Will, a member of the currently inactive Men’s Outreach Committee, is seeking fellows who can help get the committee active again. Please contact him at men4saa@saa-recovery.org.

LIVING IN SOBRIETY

A Memorial to Sobriety

BY KEN M.

SAA lost a dedicated friend and recovery advocate when Robert S. passed away recently at age 85 in Rapid City, South Dakota. Robert passed away with more than 25 years in sobriety. He passionately devoted his life to recovery, the SAA organization, program, and fellowship. He became an SAA member while residing in Minnesota during the formative days of our organization.

With meetings in short supply at the time, he drove between 100 and 180 miles round trip depending on where he was living in western Minnesota to an SAA meeting in Fargo, North Dakota.

Drawing on his business background, Robert wrote the original 501c plan for the SAA organization. Moving to Rapid City in 1994, he introduced SAA to the Black Hills region of western South Dakota and was the founding member of the Black Hills SAA Group in 1995.

His wife, Sonja recalls: “Robert was very anxious to get a meeting going in Rapid City and worked until it became a reality. [However,] Robert continued his contact with his group in Fargo, and whenever he was in that area he attended meetings.” Additionally, he was active in the North Tier Intergroup in Bismarck, North Dakota

There were few programs in SAA in which Robert was not involved. For seven years he was an active member of the SAA Literature Committee, and he edited the SAA newsletter, then known as the *Plain Brown Rapper*, for five and a half years. Robert also assisted with the editing of the first edition of the Green Book. He participated in the SAA Prison Outreach Program and was an early donor to the Lifeline Partners Program.

During his years in Rapid City, he conducted more than 100 Twelve Step calls and served as a sponsor to countless SAA members both in Rapid City and by telephone nationwide. As a sponsor, he stressed to those with whom he worked a lifetime commitment to the recovery process. His watchwords were “reality, truth, values, and integrity.” A firm believer in the efficacy of recovery retreats and the fellowship they fostered, Robert for many years was a regular participant in the Panora, Iowa retreats and facilitated many local one day retreats at his beautiful home in the Black Hills.

Robert and Sonja were regular participants in the annual SAA Conventions with Robert often serving as a delegate. Working together they contributed greatly to the sustainment of local couples’ recovery by organizing and chairing a Recovering Couples Group in Rapid City. Sonja organized and led a local COSA Chapter. They were gracious hosts over the years to many SAA visitors to the Rapid City area, sharing the hospitality of their home in the Black Hills.

Growing up in rural Minnesota during the Great Depression, Robert learned early the art of canning fruits and vegetables and he could create delicious strawberry-rhubarb pies. After retirement he worked seasonally in Minnesota driving trucks hauling sugar beets from the fields to refineries. And last, but far from least, he was a talented amateur Thespian who

was featured in local plays “The Grapes of Wrath” and the “Life of South Dakota Poet Laureate, Badger Clark” in which he also sang and played guitar.

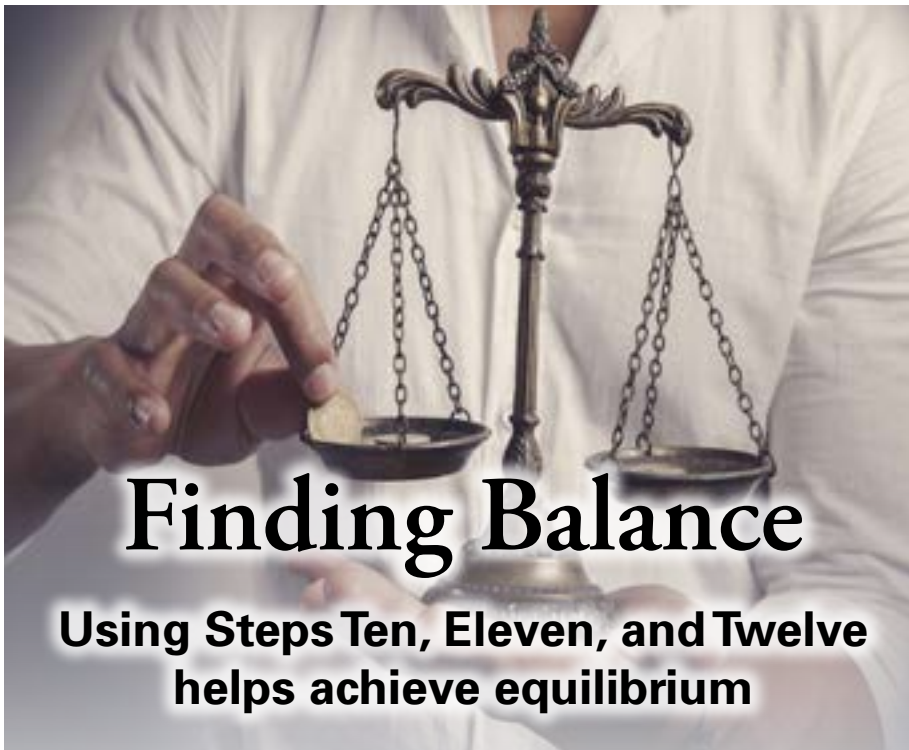
The personal story Robert contributed to the first edition [2005] of the SAA Green Book stands as a memorial to the life of recovery he enjoyed and shared with countless others. In our local SAA gatherings, Robert always encouraged closing with the Promises as promulgated by the Ottawa SAA Group. The last paragraph of these Promises perhaps best sums up Robert’s recovery program:

“A spiritual awakening will free us from the tyranny of our addiction. An awareness of being guided by a Higher Power and supported by caring friends will sustain us. Regret for the past and worry for the future will give way to living for today. We will open ourselves to the amazing possibilities of a life worth living — our life.”

Robert is greatly missed, but his dauntless spirit of life and recovery lives on in the rich legacy he bequeathed to the SAA program.

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

Robert S., one of the early members of SAA, passed away with more than 25 years of sobriety. His was a life devoted to service and spiritual principals.



Finding Balance

Using Steps Ten, Eleven, and Twelve helps achieve equilibrium

BY JASON H.

I am currently incarcerated in Texas and have been in recovery from inner circle behaviors since February 19, 2009. With the help of my sponsor and other pen pals through the ISO prisoner outreach program, I have really made progress in living a life free from acting out.

The biggest credit though goes to my Higher Power, whom I choose to call the great spirit. He does for me what I can't do for myself. I believe that our Higher Power, whoever you have identified that to be, puts lessons in our life to teach us how to live life. These lessons can come directly from my Higher Power, during meditation, or he can send them during an "ah-hah" or light bulb moment. He can use another human being, or he can let me bump my head until it hurts enough that I learn not to do it from past experience. This is how he molds me to be more like him, which is what I strive for.

Recently I was writing a letter to a recovering SAA member. I was talking about being out of balance, and how that affects others and me. This is when I had a light bulb moment! I was able to see that when one area is out of balance, the others are also out of balance.

Let me explain what was revealed to me, and how I am using it to live more in harmony with others, my environment, and myself. First off, I believe more in the concept of spirituality than I do in subscribing to a particular religion. In particular I believe that there are three distinct realms that make us human beings: physical, emotional, and spiritual

Each realm is separate and they are interconnected to make up us. If you take away one of the realms, then you don't have a whole person. That person is living out of balance. Being out of balance is like being out of focus when you take a picture. I am unable to see life clearly.

When I am balanced, it is at that point I have achieved mastery in each realm, and I am centered/at peace with others, my environment, and myself. When this occurs I can be of benefit to others and myself.

If I am out of balance in one of these areas, it throws the other areas off. This is where practicing the steps in my life — especially Steps Ten, Eleven, and Twelve — help me identify where/what realm I am out of balance in, and how I can get back into balance. This is accomplished when I take a personal inventory and look at how I am perceiving things that are transpiring in my life, and how I am reacting to those perceptions physically, mentally/emotionally and spiritually.

Here's a basic outline I use to see on

a cognitive and emotional level when I am out of balance, and how I know what areas are out of balance. This is part of what was revealed to me as I was writing my letter to my SAA brother. It goes as follows:

When out of balance physically:

- » Physical illness of body such as stress reaction, i.e. headaches, tension in muscles, and minor aches and pains.
- » Strain in interpersonal relationships, with family and friends due to stress of life events, the meaning I place on them, and how I react to those meanings.

How to get back into balance:

- » Prayer/meditation
- » Practicing Steps Ten, Eleven and Twelve in my daily life.
- » Exercise to relieve stress
- » Talk with people in recovery and sponsor on a daily basis, especially during times of crisis.
- » Attend SAA meetings on a regular basis to promote long-term sobriety.
- » Eat healthy foods

When out of balance emotionally:

- » Unable to think clearly. Focused more on problem than on solution
- » Reacting more out of emotions than thinking things through.
- » Overreacting instead of responding to life events. Perception/meaning

is not congruent to what is actually transpiring. This causes conflict.

- » Rapid thoughts. Flight of ideas. Again focus on how others are treating me in my view. I view things from the victim stance.
- » Irrational thoughts and emotions!

How to get back into balance:

- » Prayer/meditation. (See “how to get back into balance” for physical.)
- » Counseling to help resolve internal and external conflicts.
- » Look at meaning placed on perception of life events transpiring. Challenge irrational thoughts, beliefs, and reactions to those things.

When out of balance spiritually:

- » Questioning meaning and purpose of life
- » Questioning existence of a Higher Power due to perception and meaning placed on life events.
- » During time of crisis, extreme stress.
- » When I fail to practice Steps Ten, Eleven, and Twelve.

How to get balanced:

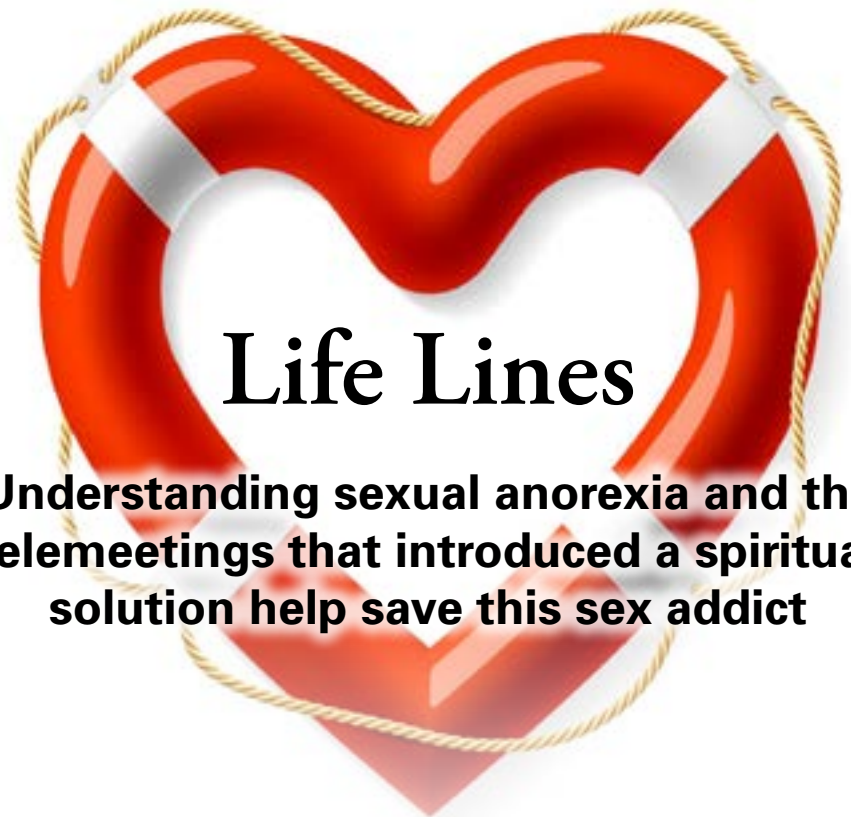
- » See lists under physical and mental
- » Identifying beliefs, principles, and philosophies of spiritual connection to a power greater than me. Realize that intention outweighs form in connecting to my Higher Power.
- » Take time each morning and evening

to connect with my Higher Power. This assists me in getting balanced.

When I get back in balance, I experience a true sense of connectedness to my Higher Power, myself, others, and the environment. I am not thinking and planning on acting out in one or more of my inner circle behaviors. As I've said, I find and maintain balance in the three realms by practicing Steps Ten, Eleven, and Twelve each and every day.

Step Ten is especially important. Often I interact with my environment (others) based on my response to life, which is usually selfish and self-centered. Step Ten allows me to look at my thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and perceptions and examine my reactions to them. I do this through a personal inventory throughout the day and in the evening. As Step Ten instructs, when I'm wrong, I promptly admit it. This helps me stay balanced especially when I am able to think before I just react and place negative energy out there, which comes back to me in the end.

I think my Higher Power has to teach me things when I am most open to receive them. Evidently when I was writing that letter, my mind was open to receive this lesson. I am grateful for this lesson and all the lessons my Higher Power has taught me during the good times and the bad times. It is my prayer that someone reading this will be able to use it in their life to help maintain sobriety and ultimately balance in their life. A-HO (so be it).



Understanding sexual anorexia and the telemeetings that introduced a spiritual solution help save this sex addict

BY DEB W.

I joined the fellowship when I discovered the SAA pamphlet, *Recovery From Compulsive Sexual Avoidance: A Return to Intimacy*. When I looked at the “meetings” section on saa-recovery.org, I loved that there were dozens of telephone meetings! It was simple: I just chose a meeting, called the number, and used the access code listed on the website. I identify myself as a recovering sex addict and sexual anorectic.

That sometimes confuses people, because when they first hear the word “anorexia,” most people think of food anorexia, or anorexia nervosa. They may not understand what the word means in the context of sexual addiction. But there are close parallels between food disorders and sexual disorders. Food anorectics starve themselves of physical nourishment; sexual anorectics starve themselves of sex and closeness with others. Letting someone nurture me sexually and/or emotionally requires me to be vulnerable, which can bring fear of being rejected or let down. So, like self-starvation with food or other self-deprivation behaviors, controlling the amount of sexual or emotional nurturing I allow anyone to give me builds a

Voices of Recovery

“We keep everything as simple as possible, and this helps us focus on recovery.” — Sex Addicts Anonymous, page 91

Sometimes doing the business required to successfully navigate day-to-day life can feel overwhelming to this addict. I cannot stand beside a curling ocean wave and command it to stop. Like that wave, sometimes my feelings feel like they can and will consume me.

Sometimes a compulsive thought or scheme arises. At these times of seemingly disorganised, messy feelings, I know that my best course of action may be to relax and do nothing.

In participating in the business of such a fast-growing fellowship as SAA, I operate similarly. When I am not sure what step is the next right thing, I can wait and do nothing. I can reason things out with others or just trust the process.

All I have to be is authentic. If the next move is not clear, or if the noise is too loud – internal or external – I can relax, trust the process, and wait on clarity.

This is an excerpt from the booklet, Voices of Recovery: Meditations on the Steps and Traditions. Submissions are needed to help create a daily meditation book. For more information, and how to submit a meditation, see page 26.

protective wall that makes me feel powerful and safe.

Many people in SAA might say, “Sexual Avoidance? I don’t have that problem! My problem is that I have too much sex!” But like many others who are recovering from sexual anorexia, I have struggled with acting out behaviors as well as “acting in.” Compulsive masturbation, compulsive fantasizing, and pornography-viewing are common anorexic behaviors, but so are things like sex with strangers or abusive sex. They give the illusion of connection but in reality are preventing authentic emotional bonding with another person.

The Green Book conveys this concept. “Whether we were acting out or not being sexual at all, our addiction involved being emotionally unavailable. Being a sex addict felt like being trapped in endless contradictions. We sought love and romance, but when we found it, we feared and fled from intimacy” (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 6). “No matter how much sex we had, we still felt unsatisfied. We were afraid of vulnerability and intimacy” (page 70). For me, avoiding connection with others isn’t merely a sexual issue, either — it’s just where I noticed it first.

When I first read the pamphlet, *Recovery From Compulsive Sexual Avoidance: A Return to Intimacy*, I identified with many of the symptoms of sexual anorexia. I’d finally found an explanation for things I’d been struggling with for years, such as being really uncomfortable in groups of people, not having any close friends, hating my body, being disconnected from my feelings,

inexplicably lacking sexual desire towards a beloved spouse of 17 years, and only being able to be sexual with him when my mind was engaged in fantasy. I felt a tremendous hope that the Twelve Steps of SAA could help me have a better life.

The Sexual Avoidance-focused telemeetings quickly became my “home.” For the first time in my life, I found people who could identify with my issues. I discovered I gained more from the meetings when I introduced myself and shared. Before long, I started helping with readings and leading meetings. Though it felt scary at first, I soon learned to laugh off my mistakes instead of feeling ashamed. Frequent attendance and participation helped me feel a sense of kinship with the others who called in to the same meetings regularly.

When I shared my First Step on a telemeeting, I told a bunch of strangers the very worst things about myself, and I was accepted, welcomed, congratulated, and told I was brave! The people on those calls gave me strength and encouragement, and helped me learn to accept care and nurturing from myself and others, including my Higher Power, which helped me heal and move forward.

I started staying on the line for fellowship after the meetings. I also signed up on the Grace (women’s contact) list by sending an inquiry to grace@saa-women.org and filling in the information on the form they emailed me. Then they sent me a copy of the list, which I used to contact several women who indicated they were available to sponsor. I was blessed with a great spon-

sor from another state who helped me work the Steps around sexual anorexia. We both learned as we went along.

The Twelve Steps of SAA are working for me! My recovery hasn’t been a steady forward advancement as I’d imagined and hoped it would be. Instead, it’s been a bumbling, zigzagging “trial-and-error” kind of growth! But “progress, not perfection” is a great mantra. And I am making progress!

Compulsive masturbation, compulsive fantasizing, and pornography-viewing are common anorexic behaviors, but so are things like sex with strangers or abusive sex.

I can make phone calls to fellowship men and women and share my pain as well as my triumphs. I am experiencing closeness and true give-and-take in some of my friendships. My relationships with family members are improving. I am learning how to give and accept physical nurturing from my husband, and we’re beginning to understand how sex can be a spiritual experience. I’m grateful for those who created and maintain the websites for SAA and for the telemeetings. They’ve made a huge difference in my life!



Applying the Eleventh Tradition to relationships is a powerful way to live spiritual principles

BY FREEMAN D.

Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion. We need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, T.V., and films.

Our primary purpose as members of Sex Addicts Anonymous may be summed up in Step Twelve on page 58 of the Green Book. "... We tried to carry this message to other sex addicts and to practice these principles in our lives."

Tradition Eleven once again reminds us of our single minded purpose by pointing out what the SAA purpose is not. "Our purpose is not to increase our membership, make broad claims about the effectiveness as a program, capitalize on celebrity endorsements, or otherwise promote our fellowship."

As a newfound member of SAA who has found relief from sexually addictive behaviors, I wanted to share the SAA program to any and all who would listen. Having a wise

sponsor, I was cautioned about the dangers of becoming a promoter, or a zealot of a kind that made the program seem unattractive. He went on to tell me that my behavior as a recovering sex addict, over time, would be what attracted others to the program, and to a healthier way of living.

On a public level, the Green Book on page 94 also tells me that if I "...Put a lot of emphasis on the details of our personal stories, this tends to distract attention from our basic message of recovery." Further, "If SAA becomes identified in the public mind with a particular individual, the credibility of our message would suffer if that person relapsed." My primary purpose is to carry the message of recovery to the sex addict who still suffers.

Tradition Eleven Relationship Form

As a couple, we individually convey our beliefs and philosophy through attraction rather than promotion. We are each in charge of our own anonymity.

By virtue of my committed relationship, there are certain behaviors I express exclusively with my partner to the exclusion of all others. This is healthy for me. The way I conduct my behavior lets everyone know I am in a committed relationship. I behave as a sober person in a monogamous relationship. I don't engage in flirtatious behaviors, or lead others on.

Others in SAA may choose otherwise. But for myself, monogamy is an outer circle behavior that enhances my life and recovery. In all my relationships, I am in

charge of my own behavior and personal wellbeing. I like the idea of being taken care of by someone who intuitively knows what I want and need. Since this is unrealistic, it is up to me to let my wants and needs be known. As my partner and I each come to a better understanding of ourselves, we are able to separate the needs and wants, set our priorities straight, and learn how to be of service to each other without seeking recognition. Anonymously, my behavior speaks volumes. But is my behavior so loud my partner can't hear what I am saying? Since I am in charge of my own behavior, I police my actions to ensure I am being attractive to him. And I allow him to police his own behavior accordingly.

Relationships are based on attraction rather than promotion. This is definitely made clear in our intimate relationships. By taking care of myself — how I look, dress, manage my weight, fight the ravages of time — I continue to attract my partner to me. I also avoid vulgar language and cursing because I believe this makes me unattractive and spiritually ugly.

In any relationship I must continue to grow. Just as the SAA program is a program of action, so too are my relationships. With this in mind, I take action to improve myself. I develop new abilities and enhance old ones. I continue my spiritual and intellectual studies, ever mindful that my behavior at home as well as in public can attract my spouse and help us be centered in living our lives one day at a time — together.

ISO ANNOUNCEMENTS

SAA Pamphlets Now Available to Read Online

The International Service Organization of SAA is pleased to announce the availability of SAA pamphlets on the SAA website (saa-recovery.org). The pamphlets may be found by following the “SAA literature” sub-tab from the Home page. Also included are the pamphlets in Spanish and the “Pathway to Recovery” pamphlet in French.

This milestone has been accomplished by the combined efforts of the ISO Literature Committee, the ISO office, and the ISO Board of Trustees and its committees, specifically the Online Presence Committee and the International Development Committee. We believe that ready access to SAA literature online will greatly enhance the capacity of member groups and individual members of the fellowship to carry the SAA message of recovery more effectively and more efficiently.

As before, the printed pamphlets are available for purchase from the ISO — either through the online SAA Store or by telephone or postal mail from the ISO office. Don't forget to ask about our volume discount.

This development is a good example of how the ISO is working to support members of the fellowship and member groups. As you benefit from having access to the SAA pamphlets online, please remember that the ISO is totally dependent on financial support from members, member groups, and intergroups to offer and maintain this type of service for the fellowship. If you appreciate what the ISO does for you, please consider making a tax-deductible contribution today.

Submissions Sought for SAA Meditation Book

The ISO Literature Committee welcomes submission for the SAA meditation book, which will consist of 366 entries for each day of the calendar year. To ensure consideration, submissions should follow these guidelines:

A short quotation should be taken from SAA publications that are Literature Committee or Conference approved (see page 27). The quote must be exact and followed by a citation that includes the name of the publication and page number, using the following style: *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, p. 20. Submissions using quotes from other sources will not be considered.

ISO ANNOUNCEMENTS

The main body of the entry should be a thought-provoking expansion of the topic or principle expressed in the quotation, ideally including some fresh perspective on a particular aspect of SAA recovery.



We are looking for your experience, strength, hope, and voice. Please note that we have found that using “I” rather than “we” in the body of the meditation makes for a stronger message.

At the bottom of the page, a concise statement in the author's own words should summarize the main idea of the meditation or offer a poignant challenge or affirmation. Each entry should be a maximum of 275 words including the quotation and the closing affirmation, so that each meditation will fit on a single page. Multiple entries may address slightly different aspects of the same subject.

Submissions must include your name and contact information and be accompanied by a signed release (see p. 30). By signing the release, the author grants the ISO of SAA, Inc. sole rights to edit, alter, publish, or reject any submission. A blank release form is available in this newsletter or may be obtained from the ISO office or downloaded and printed from the SAA website.

SAA Approved Literature: *Sex Addicts Anonymous (SAA Book); Abstinence and Boundaries in SAA; First Step to Recovery; Getting Started in Sex Addicts Anonymous; Sex Addicts Anonymous (SAA Pamphlet); Sexual Sobriety and the Internet; Abstinence; The Bubble; Writing to Prisoners; Group Guide; Intergroup Guide; Three Circles; Tools of Recovery; Getting a Sponsor; A Special Welcome to the Woman Newcomer; Recovery from Compulsive Sexual Avoidance; Safe & Sexually Sober Meetings; SAA and the Lesbian / Gay / Bisexual / Transgender Sex Addict*

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

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CALENDAR

Here are tentative meeting times and event dates for the next several months. Meetings times change often. All times are Central Standard Time.

- May 3** Compulsive Sexual Avoidance, 1:00 p.m.
- May 3** LGBT Outreach, 7:00 p.m.
- May 3** CSC - Area Formation, 1:00 p.m.
- May 9** Women's Outreach, 4:00 p.m.
- May 9** Author's Group, 4:30 p.m.
- May 10** Literature Committee, 2:00 p.m.
- May 10** General Outreach, 6:30 p.m.
- May 10** CSC - Nominating, 5:00 p.m.
- May 17** ISOPCOM, 2:00 p.m.
- May 17** CSC - Policy & Procedure, 1:00 p.m.
- May 17** SE Region, 6:00 p.m.
- May 19** Prisoner Outreach, 8:00 p.m.
- May 21** 7th Tradition, 6:00 p.m.
- May 21** 2016 Convention, 7:00 p.m.
- May 24** CSC, 2:00 p.m.
- May 24** Meditation Writing Workshop, 5:00 p.m.
- June 7** Compulsive Sexual Avoidance, 1:00 p.m.
- June 7** CSC - Area Formation, 1:00 p.m.
- June 7** LGBT Outreach, 7:00 p.m.
- June 7** Audio Review, 2:30 p.m.
- June 13** Author's Group, 4:30 p.m.
- June 13** Women's Outreach, 4:00 p.m.
- June 14** CSC - Nominating, 5:00 p.m.
- June 14** General Outreach, 6:30 p.m.
- June 16** Prisoner Outreach, 8:00 p.m.
- June 18** 7th Tradition, 6:00 p.m.
- June 18** 2016 Convention, 7:00 p.m.
- June 21** ISOPCOM, 2:00 p.m.
- June 21** CSC - Policy & Procedure, 1:00 p.m.
- June 21** SE Region, 6:00 p.m.
- July 5** Compulsive Sexual Avoidance, 1:00 p.m.
- July 5** LGBT Outreach, 7:00 p.m.
- July 5** CSC - Area Formation, 1:00 p.m.
- July 11** Women's Outreach, 4:00 p.m.
- July 11** Author's Group, 4:30 p.m.
- July 12** Literature Committee, 2:00 p.m.
- July 12** General Outreach, 6:30 p.m.
- July 12** CSC - Nominating, 5:00 p.m.
- July 16** 7th Tradition, 6:00 p.m.
- July 16** CSC - Policy & Procedure, 1:00 p.m.
- July 16** 2016 Convention, 7:00 p.m.
- July 19** ISOPCOM, 2:00 p.m.
- July 19** CSC - Policy & Procedure, 1:00 p.m.
- July 19** SE Region, 6:00 p.m.
- July 21** Prisoner Outreach, 8:00 p.m.
- July 26** CSC, 2:00 p.m.
- July 26** Meditation Writing Workshop, 5:00 p.m.
- Aug 27-30** Serenity on the Sound Retreat
- Sept 18-20** Fourth International SAA Women's Retreat

To attend a committee meeting you must be a member or be invited. If you're interested in joining a committee, email info@saa-recovery.org, or call the ISO office. If you'd like your event to be listed in the Calendar section, please send it to toc@saa-recovery.org. To ensure your listing gets published in time, please send it no less than two months in advance of the event.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

SAA TWELVE STEPS

Get Your Story Published in The Outer Circle

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

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

Here are some general writing guidelines:

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

Also, please consider writing a 500-1,000-word article based on a workshop or talk you've given around the Steps and Traditions. Again, the key is sharing your experience, strength and hope with other sex addicts. Please don't worry about grammar and spelling. We'll clean that up for you.

Deadlines for Submission

July/Aug:	May 5
Sept/Oct:	July 5
Nov/Dec:	Sept 5
Jan/Feb '16:	Nov 5
Mar/Apr '16:	Jan 5

General Release Form

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

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

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

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Printed name: _____

Witness: _____ Date: _____

Printed name: _____

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

THE OUTER CIRCLE

Finding Balance

**Using Steps Ten, Eleven and Twelve to achieve
equilibrium in your life**

PLUS

Understanding Sexual Anorexia

Living in Sobriety in Memoriam

New Spanish Language Green Book

