

# THE OUTER CIRCLE

## Getting There

**A frightening winter road trip offers a lesson  
on Steps Two and Three**

### **PLUS**

**Step Five and Your Sponsor**

**The Hidden Benefits of Service**

**Relationships and the Twelfth Tradition**





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# *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.

**July - August 2015**

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# FROM THE EDITOR

## Conventional Wisdom

BY GARY T.

**I witnessed extraordinary living examples of gratitude in action at the 28th Annual International Convention.**

I've heard it said that service is gratitude in action, and when I'm in the spirit of the Twelfth Step, that's been my experience. I witnessed extraordinary living examples of gratitude in action at the 28th Annual International Convention. But I find it difficult to adequately express the power of that experience.

I could tell you about the six forward-thinking motions delegates passed in such a spirit of unity the business meeting actually finished early. Old timers stood up to say how remarkable — and frankly unusual — it was to see our fellowship running so smoothly.

Or I could recount the Women's Outreach Subcommittee panel, which drove home the need for the fellowship to embrace fully the spirit of our First and Third Traditions. The women on that panel spoke bravely of the pain they've suffered being excluded from men's only meetings. And the resulting lost opportunity of sober men and women being able to heal together.

I could report the exciting developments happening at the ISO level including pilot outreach projects in New York City that could serve as models for other areas to reach the still suffering sex addict.

I could share any number of events from workshops to committee meetings. But ultimately, the real power of the convention was meeting fellow sex addicts — hearing their stories of recovery, of moving from shame to grace. And how that experience compelled them to give back what was so freely given to them. In many cases, they traveled thousands of miles to do so.

In the end, I realized the real power of the convention was getting to see up close the action of selfless service — and the miracle that happens when sex addicts share their experience, strength, and hope to help others recover from sexual addiction.

# FROM THE DIRECTOR

## Convention Plants 'Seed of Hope' for Women

BY JOE H.

**Let's open up our meetings and be welcoming to all who suffer regardless of gender.**

Our 2015 ISO International Convention was recently held in Washington DC. What a Great Experience! The opening ceremony began by playing the Pomp and Circumstance march and then volunteers entered the room from multiple locations carrying red, white, and blue balloons. The moment just took your breath away. The DC convention committee was just getting started. There were all these volunteers running around in orange t-shirts welcoming everyone and providing service to everyone who needed help, or just providing smiling faces. There were great workshops. In fact one workshop was so full we had people standing or sitting against the wall because we could not fit in any more chairs inside.

The biggest impact on me personally was attending the women's panel and listening to the experience, strength, and hope of some brave women as they shared their stories of walking into mixed and men's only meetings. Sometimes they were welcomed and sometimes they were not, even though they were supposed to be a mixed meeting. I think these women planted a seed of hope for many women. There were many positive comments from men in the room, and my hope is these men will go back to their mixed meetings or men's only meetings. I hope they tell the story of these women and begin opening the men's only meetings, while preparing the mixed meetings for the day a woman walks into their meeting.

Tradition Three tells us the only requirement for membership in SAA is a desire to stop addictive sexual behaviors. Tradition Five tells us each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the sex addict who still suffers. Let's open up our meetings and be welcoming to all who suffer regardless of gender. We can all learn so much from each other in our meetings.

# LETTERS

## A Different Take on the Proper Use of Literature in Meetings

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Although I agree with most of Will's answer in the May-June issue regarding proper use of literature in SAA meetings, I wish to offer a slightly different perspective. While Will seems to classify recovery literature into two categories – SAA literature and outside literature – I believe there are, in fact, three categories that we might consider as being different.

The first category, of course, is SAA literature. These publications, especially the Green Book, carry the purest form of the SAA message of recovery. Recovery from sex addiction is possible by working the Twelve Steps with a sponsor and working with other sex addicts.

The second category is AA literature. Although, strictly speaking, these may be considered “outside” literature, two AA publications in particular – the Big Book and the Twelve and Twelve – are documents that are foundational to the Twelve Step program. For that reason, I believe they should be considered differently from other outside publications.

For me, excluding use of the AA Big Book and Twelve and Twelve from SAA meetings would be akin to not inviting my parents to our family Thanksgiving dinner. Unthinkable! Our fellowship began and has grown from the foundation laid by these publications.

In our meeting at a local prison, we give every man two books — a pocket Green Book and a pocket Big Book. I tell them the Big Book (especially pp. 58-103) is the instruction manual on working the Twelve Steps. The Green Book tells them how to relate that Twelve Step program to sex addiction. Using both books seems to make good practical sense, and it has proved very successful.

The third category of literature includes recovery, psychology, and religious publications that may or may not embrace the Twelve Step program. All of Will's comments about “outside” literature apply to this category. Some of the books in this category are helpful; some are not. But in any case they are clearly outside literature, and, in my opinion, they should not be discussed at length or recommended in SAA meetings.

The unity of our fellowship (Tradition One) and our singleness of purpose (Tradition Five) are the guiding principles that urge us to maintain our focus

on the Twelve Step program. I believe that judicious use of the literature in the first and second categories is consistent with those traditions and enriches the sharing and learning in SAA meetings.

On the other hand, I feel strongly that so-called “recovery” literature from the therapeutic and religious communities, though perhaps useful for some, should not be quoted or recommended in SAA meetings.

Finally, I might add that I am neither left-handed nor sinister, but I am enormously grateful to be a recovering sex addict as a result of the unfettered SAA program of recovery.

**Jim L**  
Birmingham, AL

## **Quick Take: Does SAA Need to Come Out of the Closet?**

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

*Next issue’s quick take: What pearls of recovery wisdom have you heard lately that are helping to keep you sober? If you have ideas for Quick Takes, please send them to [toc@saa-recovery.org](mailto:toc@saa-recovery.org).*

### **SAA Members Should Tell THE Story of Recovery**

I heard a woman speak about confronting her abuser. When he asked if she’d told anyone, she said, “I have bad news for you.” For her, telling everyone was the key to recovery. I talked to her about the fundamental importance of anonymity in our fellowship. She responded, “You don’t have to tell YOUR story; you have to tell THE story”. In my opinion, SAA members should share THE story of recovery. That’s the good news.

**Allan O**  
Portland, OR

*Letters to the editor are welcome. Please send your feedback to [toc@saa-recovery.org](mailto:toc@saa-recovery.org). Letters may be edited for space and content.*



# ISO NEWS

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## Board Approves 2016 Convention Logo

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Here's a look at the ISO Board actions in April:

- » Approved motion that the logo presented by the 2016 Convention Committee be adopted.
- » Approved motion that the current edition of "Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised" be affirmed as the parliamentary authority for the conduct of meetings within all components of the ISO.

## Director Reviews Finances for March

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In the month of May we had a Surplus of \$13,974.96. We had budgeted for a deficit of \$1,327.60. The increased in our surplus was due to exceeding our group donations estimate by \$9,331.93 which was due to the UK intergroup giving a large donation of around \$9,000 and a late Giving Thanks Houston donation of \$2,245.

Our gross sales revenue for the SAA Green Book exceeded our estimate by \$2,408.02 in May and has exceeded our estimate by \$6,322.21 for the year.

Our pamphlet and booklet sales were below our estimate by \$13.09 for May but has exceeded our estimate by \$225.20 for the year. Our bronze medallion sales exceeded our estimate by \$175.00 in May and has exceeded our estimate by \$1,661.98 for the year.

Our total sales for May exceeded our estimate by \$3,895.43

Individual donations exceeded our estimate by \$4,188.55 for May and have exceeded our estimate by \$10,812.95 for the year. Group donations exceeded our estimate by \$9,216.93 in May and have exceeded our estimate by \$13,150.14 for the year.

Our product inventory is valued at \$63,752.91.

Our expenses exceeded our estimate by \$2,345.18 in May.

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

- » Gross sales have exceeded our estimate by \$9,918.36
- » Donations have exceeded our estimate by \$23,963.09



» Expenses are under our estimate by \$314.56

Our operational reserve is fully funded.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

In Your Service,

Joe H.

Executive Director

## Spanish Language E-Book, Green Book Available

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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

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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](mailto:director@saa-iso.org).

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

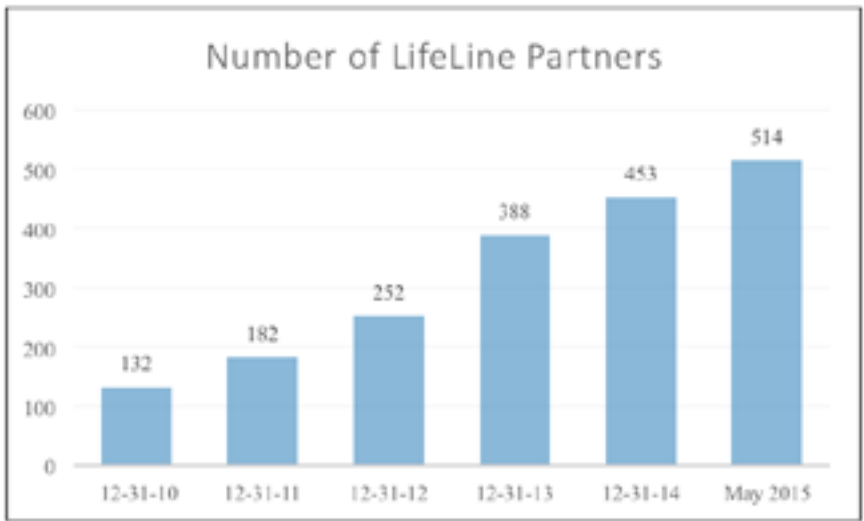
You can help produce the most complete and accurate history possible.

# ISO NEWS

## Number of LifeLine Partners surpasses 500 for First Time

One of the key initiatives of the 7th Tradition Committee of SAA is to increase the number of LifeLine Partners. LifeLines are key to funding improvements in our ability to carry the message to the addict who still suffers. LifeLines were established in 1994 by the Board of Trustees of SAA. A goal of \$20,000 per month in LifeLine revenue was set, and yet many people doubted that the goal was achievable.

The generosity of our fellowship, however, has been exceptional. The chart below shows the dramatic increase in the number of LifeLine Partners.



LifeLine revenues are used to improve outreach and supports the activities of the ISO.

Regarding outreach, LifeLines help support:

- » Prison Outreach
- » Women's Outreach
- » Translations
- » Outreach, Service, and Convention websites
- » New Outreach website

- » Publication and distribution of Green Book and all SAA literature
- » Responding to ≈ 2500 phone calls and e-mails to the ISO office in Houston
- » Direct mail pilot programs
- » Other pilot programs
- » Audio version of Green Book in English

A tremendous “Thank You” from the 7th Tradition Committee of SAA!

## **SAA Green Book Available in eBook Format**

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The ISO is pleased to announce the immediate availability of the SAA Green Book, Sex Addicts Anonymous, in downloadable electronic format. The eBook can be purchased from the ISO office or online from the SAA Store (<https://saa-store.org/book>).

After online purchase is complete, you will receive an e-mail with a link to download a zip file that contains both the mobi (Kindle) and ePUB (Nook) versions of the book. One of these formats can be read on most e-readers available today.

Special thanks go out to an anonymous member of the fellowship, who took the time to create the eBook version. Such generous help from volunteer members enhances the capacity of the ISO to support member groups in carrying the SAA message of recovery to sex addicts everywhere.

## **SAA Convention Recordings Now Downloadable as MP3s**

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Many members of the fellowship have found our convention speaker and workshop CDs to be a valuable resource in their recovery. The ISO is pleased to announce the immediate availability of downloadable mp3 audio files.

The mp3 downloads can be purchased online from the SAA Store. These files may be played on almost any portable music device or computer.

After your online purchase is complete, you will receive an e-mail receipt containing the links to download each recording. (Please keep in mind that each file is very large, and may take considerable time to download.)

# DEAR GRACE

## Do I Have to Listen to My Sponsor?

**BY WOMEN'S  
OUTREACH  
SUBCOMMITTEE**

**Many times  
we can't see  
ourselves and our  
motives clearly  
and our sponsor  
acts like a mirror,  
bouncing back an  
accurate view of  
ourselves.**

Dear Grace

I'm new to this whole thing, and I don't get why my sponsor is telling me to do certain things. I've been going to mixed meetings.

My sponsor says that's fine, but I shouldn't talk to just the men. She wants me to connect with other women, too, but I just don't, and I'm scared to try. I'm straight and I've always had an easier time relating to men.

**Do I have to listen to her?**

Dear Do I Have To,

The short answer: no, you don't have to. Sponsors are there to guide us through the steps. The most sponsors can do is make suggestions. Most of us take our sponsors' suggestions very seriously because they are sober and have had a spiritual awakening and we, when we start in recovery, are not and have not.

Many times we can't see ourselves and our motives clearly and our sponsor acts like a mirror, bouncing back an accurate view of ourselves.

How long have you been working with your sponsor? How well does she know you and your recovery? Do you trust and take her advice in other areas? Are you able to express to her that you disagree?

These might seem like strange questions, but it is important to be working with someone whom you trust and who can challenge you. Some members have found that it is difficult to be honest with their sponsors. Think well about your relationship with her. It is possible that she is telling you to



avoid hanging around before and after mixed meetings because she is familiar with you and your recovery?

If this is the case, it is a good idea to listen, even if you disagree, to your sponsor's suggestion. Keep in mind that this suggestion will probably not last forever.

As you grow in sobriety and serenity you will be able to go places and do things safely and healthily that you were unable to do in early sobriety.

If you find that you don't trust your sponsor's suggestions, and that you are unable to be honest with her when you disagree, it might be time to look for another person to work with.

We can't grow in recovery if we are not able to be open with our sponsor. Make sure you are working with someone you respect and can be honest with.

**Sincerely,**

**Grace**

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

# DEAR WILL

## **SAA Can Heal Relationships, Not Necessarily Save Them**

**BY WILL**

**My recovery is my responsibility, undertaken not to salvage a relationship or prevent a divorce, but to arrest an addiction that wreaked havoc on the relationship or marriage.**

Dear Will,

I was caught acting out by my wife. It wasn't the first time. And it was probably the straw that broke the camel's back. Out of desperation, I started going to SAA meetings because my life was a mess and starting to fall apart around me. By going, I thought I could find recovery and put back together what was beginning to fall apart. I have been going to meetings for about six months and working with a sponsor. Life at home is still difficult, though, and it looks like my wife is still going to leave me. I thought that my marriage could be saved by recovery, but it doesn't look that way. Could you please give me some advice as to what to do?

**Facing Divorce**

Dear FD,

I am happy that you have found the SAA fellowship. Please keep in mind that SAA is a "one day at a time" program, whereas it sounds to me as though you are living in the future.

On page 13 of the SAA Green Book, it says "We also get support to do the hard things that will help us find the freedom we seek. When faced alone, these tasks can seem overwhelming. But with others of like mind, we discover a new courage and a new faith." This quote talks about the benefits of being with others "of like mind." I have seen men in this program who came in enthusiastic about being in recovery, only to be sharing within a couple of months that their significant others were still planning to call it quits. With the support of others in the fellowship, they were able to accept their situation gracefully and move on.



The program of SAA helps me to see that my personal recovery must be top priority—at least for a time. Otherwise, I am worthless to others around me. Acceptance and forgiveness from others may or may not come in the short term—this is a consequence of my actions. And often, acceptance and forgiveness come later, as I demonstrate by our behavior that we have indeed achieved significant recovery.

Ultimately, my recovery is my responsibility, undertaken not to salvage a relationship or prevent a divorce, but to arrest an addiction that wreaked havoc on the relationship or marriage. My recovery is my priority, without which I will have no healthy relationships anyway.

Finally, FD, I hope that you have found some benefit in the SAA program and will continue to work it. Please keep in

mind the value of the Steps. Regardless of what happens in the legal status of your relationship with your wife, you will still have the opportunity to do what you can to heal that relationship. Step Nine will be of particular value in that regard, and also in building future relationships.

You are obviously walking a very difficult path right now, FD. My thoughts and prayers are with you as you continue.

—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](mailto:men4saa@saa-recovery.org).*



# LIVING IN SOBRIETY

## The Hidden Benefits of Service Work

BY FRANK D.

**Service work is the way Higher Power taught me to connect with others. Those connections taught me I have much more to offer others than sex — what a concept!**

Today, I have 19 years of sobriety from my acting out behaviors, and I feel deeply connected with others. But I spent much of my life thinking of myself as a loner; “introvert” is the more politically correct term nowadays.

I considered myself an introvert long before I became aware of being a sex addict. I would come home from school, and go directly to my room, coming downstairs only for supper. My excuse was that I had lots of studying to do, but, even before my addiction caught on, I was living in my own fantasy world. Part of the reason for my keeping to myself was that I couldn't bear being around my dysfunctional family.

Nevertheless, I did have opportunities to engage socially in high school and college. One of my elementary school teachers asked me to help him with a high school team he coached. I did this for my entire three years of high school.

And as much as I couldn't wait to get away from my family after graduating high school and going to university, I was also afraid of the unknowns of dorm life. I remember staying in my dorm room, but leaving the door open in hopes that somebody would come in and talk to me.

I eventually discovered the thrill of a new connection: quasi-anonymous sex. I didn't see the fact that these folks weren't part of my regular social life as a drawback — quite the opposite. I also didn't realize the disadvantages to these sorts of connections. I lost interest in connecting with persons with whom sex wasn't a possibility.

Worse, these connections were not as satisfying as I imagined they would be. Most of my partners had no interest in pursuing any sort of relationship with

me outside of the sex, and I couldn't maintain any ongoing relationship with them. Still, I was living the life I thought I wanted.

I was basically a total loner when I came to the doors of SAA. If I got to a meeting early enough, I chose a seat that had empty seats around it. I didn't go out for fellowship after the meetings. I was in essence repeating my same behaviors from high school and college.

And yet, buried beneath those behaviors were the same hopes for connection that I subconsciously harbored when I was younger. I would hope that somebody would come and sit next to me, just as when I left my door open at the dorm. Almost always somebody would end up sitting next to me; and Higher Power always brought me the person I most needed to talk to that evening.

Even though I didn't think I was good enough to go out to fellowship with the others after meetings, I found a niche in service work, the same niche I found with the athletic team in high school. That service work helped me to learn to connect with others. I continued to come out of my shell and get to know others, and not just haphazardly or only through service work.

I remember celebrating at a birthday meeting in another twelve-step program and hearing several folks mention how shy I was. It caught me by surprise that

people were mistaking my naturally quiet demeanor for shyness. Finally, somebody said, "Frank's not shy at all. He's the first one to go up to the newcomer and introduce himself."

When I began to write this article, the theme was going to be "service work keeps me sober." However, I have come to realize that service work is the way Higher Power taught me to connect with others. Those connections in turn taught me that I had much more to offer others than sex — what a concept! It was worth it to me to remain sober just to keep enjoying those connections.

Now I am on the verge of proposing marriage to somebody I have known through recovery for more than ten years. The answer may be "yes" or it may be "no," and, yes, I am scared. Either way, even considering marriage is something I never thought would ever happen to me.

Step One says, "We admitted we were powerless over addictive sexual behavior—that our lives had become unmanageable." Thus the program introduces at the very beginning the concept that this is a "we" program. I have found a lot of comfort in that "we."

*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](mailto:toc@saa-recovery.org).*

# Getting There

**A frightening winter road trip offers a lesson on Steps Two and Three**



BY NICOLE S.

**T**he only problem with the retreat was getting there. It would be wonderful — relaxing and inspirational. But it had been a long winter, and the roads were still iffy that February. The ride there would prove to be for me living hell, but also a kind of redemption. Luckily for me, Bob was the one driving. And though I didn't know it then, he would teach me a lot about the Second and Third Steps — and trusting my Higher Power.

On that day, Bob and I were late getting started because I had failed to plan enough time to pack. I finally got my luggage loaded into Bob's minivan. I was excited at the thought of reaching my destination. Both of us had been to this Sex Addicts Anonymous retreat a year earlier. Both of us had taken away a lot. And the grounds, cared for by the Franciscans, were stunningly beautiful.

Bob is someone I respect immensely. At every SAA meeting we state the nature of our addiction. Bob talked about being a sex offender and engaging in rape fantasy quickly and easily. At that time I was new to the program. Rape fantasy was the single most difficult aspect of my recovery. I didn't know how to talk about the fact that I was a sex offender. I cowed in shame at every meeting. In just those few moments I found someone with the same problems I had. I literally did not know until that mo-

ment that there were people who struggled and suffered with the same things I did. It gave me hope — hope that a power greater than myself could restore me to sanity just as Step Two promises. It made recovery seem possible. It gave me faith that no matter how far down the scale I had gone, God was able to reach me to love and care for me as the Third Step promises. I was not beyond redemption. If this man could recover maybe so could I. I was obligated to try.

Before I came to SAA my life was a mess. Rock bottom for me was having to get tested for sexually transmitted diseases because one of my victims, an elderly man with a severe developmental disability, contracted hepatitis through a blood transfusion. I lost job after job because I was so consumed with rape fantasy that I couldn't focus on my work. I had no hobbies. I was utterly alone. I couldn't remember a time when things were different. My life was insane in every sense of the word. I did the same thing over and over and couldn't understand why I kept getting the same results. I was truly insane and only a Higher Power could restore me to sanity.

Today, my life could not be more different. By the grace of my Higher Power, I am free of the fantasies that wrecked my life. It has been a long, slow struggle. But, I have a good job and many fulfilling activities in my life. Most importantly I no longer feel alone. Thanks to a lot of people like Bob I have learned the value of fellowship, and my Higher Power's unconditional love for me.

That day of the trip was the perfect metaphor for how my Higher Power works through members of my fellowship. We were heading out to our destination several hours north of where I live into the heart of Minnesota. As night came on and we headed up I-35 into the heart of Minnesota, the roads became progressively worse. Never had I seen conditions so bad. The washboard ice made it impossible to see the road, and caused the van to slide and shimmy. The minivan bounced and jolted so hard the reverberation into the floor of the car made my feet hurt. I grabbed the door handle seconds before being slammed against the door. For hours there was nothing in sight but ice. The minivan jumped and jiggled and slid like a faulty amusement park ride.

Yet at that moment it did not occur to me to turn around and go back. I longed to be at the retreat house where it was safe and quiet and warm. I did everything in my power to distract myself — called mom, texted my rabbi, recited poetry in my head. I stared through the minivan windows at a cloudless sky, stars, and a beautiful full moon. I wanted to scream but couldn't say a thing. An awful silence enveloped us. Miles and miles went by with the only sound from me and Bob our breathing. I sat clutching the door handle, experiencing a visceral powerlessness.

My father sexually abused me in a car when I was a small child. I have an almost phobic fear of being in cars alone with men. When I was about seven my

father threatened to commit suicide and take me with him. It was after one of the many times he had abused me. My father was severely mentally ill. He had once again lost his job due to his illness. We went for a drive and dad started talking to himself furiously. He said he couldn't face my mother. He took both hands off the wheel and screamed that there was nothing worth living for now. I managed to convince my father that we could lie to momma (the way we so often did). Somehow I talked my father into going home.

Both of Bob's hands were firmly on the wheel. But memories of that day flooded into my mind anyways. I couldn't think about anything else. I was reliving being in a car that was out of control. The only sound coming from me was the sound of my teeth grinding.

Suddenly, Bob reached out his hand and touched mine. I could not suppress the urge to flinch. He turned toward me for a moment. I looked up into his face and saw his brow knitted together with an expression of intense concern. His hand was warm and his eyes were bright. I heard the soothing sound of his voice, a voice that could have been my Higher Power.

"Are you afraid?" he asked me.

"Well, yes," I said.

"Do you trust me?"

"Yes," I lied. "You are a very good driver." This was truthful.

Silence crept back between us. I wanted to say something, anything. But I couldn't explain and was comforted that I didn't need to — just like I didn't need to explain myself to my Higher Power. I thought for a long moment and slowly came back to the present. I was in a minivan with a man I could trust. The only thing I had to fear was ice. I looked back at Bob his hands tightly gripping the wheel and realized I could trust him after all.

Finally I broke the silence. I stammered out an apology for making us late.

"I'm not going to judge you for being late," Bob said.

The silence resumed but this time my thoughts were not distracted. I relaxed back into my seat. On either side of me were jackknifed semis along the side of the road going up a steep incline. Yet somehow for the first time since that day in the car with my father I could relax. At that moment, I trusted someone in a way I never had before.

I closed my eyes and tried to ignore the sound of the minivan bouncing on and off the road. I rested suddenly more at peace than when I was in my own quiet, cozy home. While being jostled around by hardened ice I found serenity I had never known before. Amidst jackknifed semis and a beautiful moon I found I was not alone. For the first time in my life I experienced sanity. The retreat was all I hoped it would be. But I learned more getting there.



# Revealing Yourself

## Why sharing your Fifth Step with your sponsor is a wise move

BY JIMMY M.

**T**he basic text of SAA states it clearly: “Most of us share our Fifth Step with our Sponsor” (p. 38). The paragraph goes on to give some other possibilities for sharing the Fifth Step: friend, therapist, spiritual advisor, wise confidant. And in some cases, there are doubtless good reasons for choosing somebody else.

I admit that I considered sharing my Fifth Step with somebody else besides my sponsor. I thought of going to a church far away and talking to a priest from that church, somebody who wouldn't know me, and who probably would never see me again, especially given that I had stopped going to church some time before I started working the Steps.

But that would have not been any different than those times that I stepped into a darkened booth and told somebody I couldn't see and who couldn't see me about my latest batch of transgressions. I could see him at church the next day without

## Voices of Recovery

*“Effective amends are as selfless and sincere as we can make them, with no hidden agendas.”*

—*Sex Addicts Anonymous, page 49*

Service work and acts of love are living amends that are also incredible validations to my spirit. I can bring joy and love into the lives of others as an amends to my past where my fear-filled actions brought suffering and pain.

When I have done a thorough housecleaning and know in my heart that my actions are grounded in love, I can freely give my time as a means of assisting someone along the path of their life journey. The added benefit for me is a boost in my spirit, an increased degree of self esteem, a stronger connection to my fellow human beings, and, ultimately, a stronger connection to my God.

*Today I will commit to at least one anonymous act of kindness for the sake of love.*

*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.*

either of us even knowing that we had spoken the night before.

I divide my time with my sponsor into three periods: pre-Fifth Step, Fifth Step, and post-Fifth Step. This view reminds me of something I learned when I was working in radio years ago: “Tell them what you’re going to tell them, tell them, and tell them what you told them.”

I had a difficult time choosing a sponsor. From what I heard at meetings, I realized I was going to have to be open and honest with him, and I had never been open and honest with anybody. Fearing my sponsor might, to repeat that old cliché, run screaming from the room when I began to tell him my story, I began my disclosures with small things just to gauge his reaction.

Seeing his complete lack of judgment (“You haven’t done anything that I haven’t either done myself or heard other people say they had done.”) gave me the courage to open up to him a little more, not to mention putting together my First Step to tell before a group.

Even after I did my First Step, I still told him little things here and there that I could not fit into the limited time frame of that Step. All the while I was getting ready for the larger revelations that would be coming in my Fifth Step. The mistake I made was looking to the Fifth Step before I had even written my Fourth Step.

In the back of my mind I was thinking, “How am I going to tell him about XYZ, while making it sound not quite as bad as it actually was?” My sponsor gently told



me that I shouldn't even be thinking about the Fifth Step while I was working on the Fourth Step, advice that once again came in handy with the Eighth and Ninth Steps.

Despite my off-kilter approach to preparing my sponsor for my Fifth Step, I was doing something very valuable: building up my trust level with him. When the day came for me to do the Fifth Step, while still nervous, I had developed a lot of trust in him; also he knew enough of my story by that time that I could be certain I wouldn't be throwing any surprises at him.

It was all downhill, in a sense, from there; after my Fifth Step, my sponsor really knew me. And he must have had a photographic memory because he was able to call up things I told him during my Fifth Step and apply them to situations I was currently experiencing, even though I rarely if ever saw the connection. "Remember the time you said such-and-such? This situation you are going through now is almost the exact same." And he would use those similarities as a starting point for any suggestions he might have.

Using my Fifth Step as an opportunity for my sponsor to really get to know me is the principal reason I am glad I chose him to hear it, rather than somebody who wouldn't have the involvement in my life that my sponsor has continued to have. And yet, it was similar to my experience in radio. My Fifth Step was in some ways a deeper revelation of things I had already told him, and it laid the groundwork for my being even more open with him afterwards.

## *The Second Step*

*By Bruce M.*

Birds dive into the clothing  
of the naked sky.

That's faith. Faith in what?  
In nothing.

Faith is always faith in  
nothing. Seize it. And be a  
cliff-jumper with the birds.

What have you got to lose?  
We'll laugh alongside one  
another on the way down.

Down? Maybe there is no  
down.

The First Step crowds us to  
the brink.  
The Second?  
Off into space like a bird!

No one's going to arrest the  
sky or clap the sea in irons.  
Even the mountains don't  
disapprove.

Don't wait until there's no  
onion on your breath.  
Even onions jump.

Give a little whistle.  
Then topple.  
If God can't catch you  
Nobody can.



# Relationships as Service

## What does it mean to apply the Twelfth Tradition in relationships?

BY FREEMAN D.

**A**

nonymity is the spiritual foundation of all of our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

Anonymity seems quite simple at first glance. Whom I see and what I hear are not to be repeated — not in SAA and especially not outside SAA. It would be too easy to disparage someone and imply that a desire to stop addictive sexual behaviors is not the *only* basis of membership.

Perfectionism is a character defect, and, at times, I attempt to have others conform to my standards above and beyond spiritual principles. Focusing on our primary purpose allows me to let go of my unrealistic expectations and place the principles above my personality.

Genuine humility can be expressed in my selfless service, rather than my ambition for recognition/prestige. From *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 97: “Selfless service... rather than our individual desires or ambitions.” Selflessness has been described to me by my sponsor as the process of thinking of myself less and thinking of others more, and being of service to meet their needs.

Our Green Book is clear on the point that anonymity does not mean that we lose ourselves, our unique personalities, but rather, by removing our character defects, our personalities become more authentic expressions. “...Most of us experience

our personal qualities as becoming more special, colorful, and vibrant as we gain abstinence and grow spiritually, and our individual strengths help us to carry a message of hope.” (page 97)

In short, it’s not all about me. I have learned that by giving away what I have, recovery through the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, anonymously, is a life enhancing activity, one that helps me be happy, joyous and free.

### **Tradition Twelve—Relationships Form**

Selflessness is the spiritual foundation of our relationship as life partners, ever reminding us to place principles above personalities.

In my intimate relationship, growth and a deeper connection can only be built on the foundation of trust and respect. If my partner shares my deepest secret to our neighbors, all trust will be broken. By respecting the nature of our intimacy and our sharing, we keep what is said in private, private.

Selfless service within a committed relationship is an act of love. Since I am doing all I can to meet my partner’s needs, and he is doing all he can to meet my needs, we are building the spiritual foundation of our relationship through selfless service.

As an addict, I want to believe that I am self-sufficient and that I don’t need anyone. My own spiritual growth and life experience have taught me that I cannot recover on my own, that it’s best to reach out and connect, utilizing

all of the tools available to me, staying centered and healthy for myself, then my spouse.

If I am not being the partner he needs me to be, I remind myself that I have agreed to do whatever it takes to make this relationship work and discover what I can change in myself in order to meet their needs.

I have been told that no one cares what I repeatedly think or feel, that I am not what I repeatedly think or feel. People know me by what I repeatedly do. I become what I repeatedly do. What I do is what people care about; what I do will enhance or detract from life.

What is my real importance in my relationship? Is it not to be of service, to be kind, generous, and loving? Indeed it is, selflessly, lovingly serving my spouse from the spiritual principles. I have found by living a life based on the twelve steps and twelve traditions.

Excellence is not an act, it’s a habit.

*Note: This writing was inspired by an A.A. recording titled “The Twelve Traditions at Work and at Home,” The “Traditions Checklist” from the A.A. Grapevine and a “Twelve Traditions Workshop,” outlining the “oughts” and “ought nots” discussed in the Twelve by Twelve, as well as our own Green Book.*

*The only resource directly quoted in this essay has been the Green Book. All others are merely used as inspiration.*

*Thank you!*

# ISO ANNOUNCEMENTS

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## SAA Pamphlets Now Available to Read Online

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The International Service Organization of SAA is pleased to announce the availability of SAA pamphlets on the SAA website ([saa-recovery.org](http://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 inter-groups 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

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The ISO Literature Committee welcomes submissions for the SAA meditation book, which will consist of 366 entries, one 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: [oocchair@saa-recovery.org](mailto:oocchair@saa-recovery.org).

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# CALENDAR

Here are tentative ISO committee and subcommittee meeting times for the next several months. Meetings times change often. All times are Central Standard Time.

## First Sunday of the month:

Audio Review Committee — 2:30 p.m.

LGBT Outreach — 1:00 p.m.

CSC - Area Formation — 1:00 p.m.

## Second Saturday of the month

Author's Group — 4:30 p.m.

Women's Outreach — 4:00 p.m.

## Second Sunday of the month

General Outreach — 6:30 p.m.

Literature Committee — 4:00 p.m.

CSC - Nominating Committee — 4:00 p.m.

## Third Tuesday of the month

Prisoner Outreach — 8:00 p.m.

## Third Thursday of the month

Seventh Tradition — 6:00 p.m.

2016 Convention — 7:00 p.m.

## Third Saturday of the month

Inter-fellowship Relations — 3:00 p.m.

ISOPCOM — 2:00 p.m.

CSC - Policy & Procedure — 1 p.m.

SE Region — 6:00 p.m.

## Fourth Sunday of the month

CSC — 2:00 p.m.

Meditation Writing Workshop — 5:00 p.m.

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](mailto:info@saa-recovery.org), or call the ISO office.

Here is a listing of upcoming SAA events from around the fellowship.

## August

The New York City Intergroup is sponsoring a Twelve Step Recovery Retreat in Morristown, NJ, on **August 8-9**. A guided trip through the Twelve Steps is planned. Register soon for best prices. [events@nycsaa.org](mailto:events@nycsaa.org)

The Seattle area fellowships is hosting Serenity on the Sound in Longbranch, WA, **Aug. 27-30**. Open to all SAA

and COSA members. [serenity.on.the\\_sound@gmail.com](http://serenity.on.the_sound@gmail.com)

## September

The Women's Retreat Workgroup is hosting the 4th International Women's Retreat **Sept. 18-20** near Seattle. This is a closed event, for women SAA members 18 years old and older only. Advanced registration is required. [GraceOnTheSound@gmail.com](mailto:GraceOnTheSound@gmail.com).

If you'd like your event to be listed in the Calendar section, please send it to [toc@saa-recovery.org](mailto: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

## 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](mailto: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.

### Deadlines for Submission

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

## 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.

### General Release Form

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

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

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

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed name: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed name: \_\_\_\_\_

# SAA TWELVE STEPS

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

