

THE OUTER CIRCLE



Like a Prayer
A surprising
lesson in growing
a relationship
with a Higher
Power

PLUS

2016 Convention Reports
Making Healthier Choices
Living Amends to Women





International Service Organization of SAA, Inc.

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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 contact information on p. 30. To have an article considered for publication, see our Submission Guidelines on page 31.

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


July - August 2017

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FROM THE EDITOR

Does Using AA Material Violate the Traditions?

BY GARY T.

It may be time for groups to consider their literature and ask themselves what it says to the newcomer.

I love the promises from Alcoholics Anonymous. They're read at the end of all of the meetings in my fellowship. Nearly a decade after I first heard them, they still resonate with me.

The only problem with the promises is that they're not ours.

This raises a bigger question about AA material in general: Does using it violate our Traditions regarding unity, outside affiliation, and our primary purpose of helping the sex addict who still suffers?

Those questions were looming over this year's conference as committees and delegates struggled with how SAA can continue showing our gratitude toward AA for the spiritual foundation of our program — and continue to grow up.

Increasingly, the answer is to use our own literature wherever possible whether in print, audio, or online. Indeed, the Literature Committee (of which I'm a part) took important actions to move further away from AA material being allowed, especially in audio format.

For the past several years, LitCom has been removing mentions of AA material from printed materials, which may have violated copyrights, but definitely went against AA's wishes. This does not mean the ISO is telling groups they can't read the promises or any other literature they choose to use. The autonomy of groups remains sacrosanct.

However, it may be time for groups to consider their literature and ask themselves how it fits with the Traditions — especially what it says to the newcomer. I realize this is a controversial subject. But I believe it's important for our fellowship to begin this conversation, and I welcome your feedback!

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Meetings Get Stronger When They Focus on the Steps

BY JOE H.

How did our first members find sobriety and help newcomers? They worked the Steps.



Use this QR code to download the Group Guide

We celebrated our 30th ISO International Convention in Orlando. This event is planned and executed by local volunteers. I want to give the local Orlando Convention Committee a big THANKS for their time and effort in hosting a great convention.

The convention put me in mind of my own recovery — and what got me sober. I found that working the Twelve Steps was much more beneficial in my recovery than discussing topics such as selfishness or other character defects during my recovery meetings. I also found that check-ins during a meeting were less about the solution and more about the problem. I need to be solution-focused, and that means I need to focus on working my steps over and over.

I'm sharing this insight because our fellowship has grown at a tremendous rate over the last couple of decades. Many of our meetings struggle to find sponsors or members with sobriety. How does one find the experience, strength, and hope in a meeting with little sobriety?

My suggestion is that meetings focus on working the Steps. This is how our fellowship began in 1976, with meetings that had little sobriety. How did our first members find sobriety and the ability to pass along their experience, strength, and hope to newcomers? They worked the Twelve Steps.

What can you use to help identify how well your meeting group is coming together to meet its primary purpose?

It's simple: take a group inventory to discover its weaknesses and strengths. The group inventory is found in the *Group Guide* which can be downloaded for free from our website: http://saa-recovery.org/Meetings/GroupGuide/SAA_Group_Guide.pdf

DEAR GRACE

Guidelines for Healthier Dating

BY WOMEN'S
OUTREACH
SUBCOMMITTEE

Your sponsor can
help you modify
these guidelines
or devise others
based on your
previous addictive
behaviors.

Dear Grace,

My sponsor and I agree that I'm ready to date now that I've completed the steps, and I'm really scared. I've never dated as a sober person. Actually, I've never dated at all; I just hopped from one 'relationship' to the next. How do sober people date? My sponsor has never sober dated; she's been married for many years. She said I should start making a dating plan. How do I even start? Are there rules to this?

Ready to date

Dear Ready to Date:

Congratulations on completing the steps and being ready to considering dating!. SAA members have received great insights, suggestions, and guidance from reading program literature and reaching out to sober members with experience, strength, and hope to share on the subject. The following examples of dating guidelines may help keep things in perspective:

- » Maintain commitments around meetings, friends and family.
- » Maximum of two dates a week, up to three hours each.
- » Dates in public spaces only with other people around.
- » Not visiting each other's living space for a set amount of time.
- » Limiting physical touch to friendly hugs only.
- » Phone, email and text contact twice weekly, not to exceed 10 minutes

Your sponsor can help you modify these and/or devise other guidelines that fit for you, based on your previous addictive behaviors. The goal is to avoid creating a false sense of intimacy that talking for hours or spending long periods of time can create.

We get to know people by their actions, not their words. Most of us relate to presenting our best image and saying what we think others want to hear. By following these guidelines, we can give ourselves the time to really get to know and experience someone to see if we'd like to consider a romantic relationship with them.

This is where the spiritual side of the program is so important. If we are not spiritually complete, we could attract people who subconsciously see our weakness(es) and will enter our lives to fill that void. Those people are rarely good for us.

As we become more spiritually whole, we no longer attract those people. Instead we find ourselves attracting people who are healthier for us.

This applies to people in all aspects of our lives but it is especially important in dating and relationships.

As recovering sex addicts, we get to choose consciously the people we become intimate with. Many spiritual



paths talk of people being spiritually healthy or not. Others can tune into that. Healthy people just naturally stay away from those they see as unhealthy. When we are healthy, those who are not look for someone else.

Dating has the potential to lead us back to addiction or bring us joy in recovery. We need to ask ourselves, our sponsors and our fellowship: have we had the spiritual awakening that makes this possible?

Grace

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

LIVING IN SOBRIETY

Four Life Lessons of Long-Term Sobriety

BY MARY JOY S.

Here's what's different today from eighteen years ago and why it is worth it to stick around and do the work of recovery.

When I was newly sober, my illusions of what seventeen years of sobriety would look like were very different than what is real for me today.

I was desperate when I got to this program. My life was the culmination of “self will run riot” and it was filled with pain. That pain and desperation made me willing to get a sponsor and listen to the suggestions that were given to me. Those suggestions were:

- 1) Go to a lot of meetings.
- 2) Work through the Twelve Steps of SAA.
- 3) Call my sponsor and meet with him on a regular basis.
- 4) Tell the truth since I cannot save my face and my behind at the same time.
- 5) Be willing to work with others and look for ways to be of service.

The romantic notions I held about what long-term sobriety would look like were that I would be more saint like, be triggered infrequently, and be happy, joyous, and free most of the time. Today I have eighteen years of sobriety from my inner circle behaviors.

However, my character defects are still alive and well. I am reminded on a regular basis that I am still a sex addict. So what is different today from eighteen ago and why is it worth it to stick around and do the work of recovery? Let me list the whys.

- 1) “The truth shall set you free.” Having gone through rounds of working the Twelve Steps, including Fourth Steps and ongoing Tenth Steps, my character defects are no longer a surprise to me. I know when I am being self-centered, mean,

dishonest, insecure, fearful, controlling, manipulative, perfectionistic, and hurtful. There is no longer denial about these traits in my personality. When they show up (and they do on a regular basis), I have a well-used blueprint on what to do. I make amends and correct my behavior. I share it with one or more of my recovery support people, I release it to my Higher Power through prayer and meditation, and then I let it go. Today, my spiritual muscles around this process are well honed and the process works.

2) My relationships are restored. I hold myself accountable for my thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and actions. This frees me from such traits as victim thinking. How liberating to know that being willing to see and experience the truth about myself can cause such a shift and a surrender that allows my Higher Power to create miracles for me with all the people I love and value so much. It's ironic that it's not perfection that people want from me but vulnerability and the humility to ask for forgiveness when I mess up.

3) The miracle of moving from shame to grace continues to be my experience. Much of my teen and adult life was spent in secrecy and shame, hidden away from the sunlight of the Spirit. Today, there are absolutely no secrets. I have people I love and trust to share everything with. This makes it very hard

to isolate myself since so many supportive connections have been made. When I want to isolate (and I still do), I reach out to one of my recovery buddies. I am reminded that no matter what I have thought, said, or done, I am still a precious person worthy of healing, love, and good experiences.

4) The experience of surrender is now a strong spiritual muscle for me. It gets stronger with every Third and Seventh Step I complete. This is a frequent part of my recovery. When I am in self-will, manipulation, and control (which I still am on a frequent basis), I get the opportunity to once again surrender it to my Higher Power. I start every day on my knees as a physical practice of letting go and letting God. It is not a religious practice. It is an exercise that reminds me how powerful and destructive my addict is and how desperately important it is for me to continue to give it up to my Higher Power. In surrender, I am safe. In surrender, I let my Higher Power do for me what I am absolutely incapable of doing for myself. That is what I am reminded of when I get on my knees each morning.

Today, life is very different than I thought it should, would, or could look. It is far better than my own limited imaginings.

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



Like a Prayer

A surprising lesson in growing a relationship with a Higher Power

BY AMY L.

W

hen I thought about writing an article about prayer and meditation, I immediately went to my folder of SAA literature to find what the fellowship had written about it as a guide.

I was taught to do this at the very beginning of my recovery journey – not only by my sponsor, but in the meetings I attended. There were countless nights of withdrawal. When there wasn't a meeting to get to or someone to call, I could always open up the Green Book or a pamphlet and read.

Even if the words didn't make sense because my mind was so distracted, I did it anyway. Sometimes I even read out loud to a captive stuffed animal to help me focus. The Green Book p. 63, "Our experience has shown that we move forward in our recovery when we take action." This was the most concrete way I could do that.

In the *Tools of Recovery* booklet, p. 16, there is a special reading dedicated entirely to the tool of prayer. After first seeing the words, "It is strongly suggested that we add prayer to our lives on a regular basis," I

knew I needed to practice prayer, but I wasn't sure how. (I have since discovered this is a crafty way for my addiction to convince me not to do it.) Fortunately the booklet is one step ahead of that thinking. "There is no right or wrong way to pray," it adds, along with "we each choose what is most meaningful to us" (p.17). Well, I thought, ok... that seems a little broad, but clearly this book has more insight than I do, so I'll try it.

And it helped. But there was something still missing.

It wasn't until recently I connected a main point of prayer for me, in of all places, a grocery store. This store is known for regularly rearranging its aisles. As an addict, I'm not fond of any change. Being powerless to change this fact, one day I found humor in my frustration and shared it with a regular clerk, who agreed with my sentiment. It was an uplifting exchange, and I felt some camaraderie knowing I wasn't alone.

A little while later, I couldn't find one of my items on my list. I remembered the clerk and found her stocking yet another relocated aisle. When I asked her for help, she smiled and said, "Sure, we'll go look for it together." After a few minutes we found the item, and shortly after I was on my way home.

What do groceries and clerks have to do with prayer and a Higher Power?

In the same *Tools of Recovery* reading about prayer it also mentions, "Praying simply for a relationship with a Higher Power can work wonders" (p.17). Aha!

I started to think about the word relationship. I built a relationship with the store clerk with my own sort of daily contact.

Then, when I needed help, I asked her and we found the answer together. I formed a habit of conscious contact when going to the store. This habit made it easier for me to approach her when I was lost and needed help.

I like to think my Higher Power is with me all the time, and if I don't talk (pray) to it, there is no relationship. When I think about it that way, it makes sense that I would practice the tool of prayer everyday in my recovery.

Even without any specific intentions, I can build trust and faith that the answers will come.

"By inviting the God of our understanding to help us know the difference between what we can and can't change, we often feel more at peace" (p.18).

All that and a "bag of chips."
Literally. ●



Healthier Choices

The similarities between junk food and acting out are eye-opening

H

BY ERIC F.

ave you ever found yourself standing in front of the refrigerator, looking over the options, trying to decide what to eat? I certainly have. Making the right choice can sometimes be a real challenge.

There's the choice that I know is good for me — a nice bowl of vegetable soup, let's say. But making that bowl of soup is going to take some work. I'll have to chop all those vegetables, get the broth going, maybe steam some brown rice to go with it. It'll probably be a good half-hour before I have something ready to eat.

On the other hand, I could just grab that big piece of greasy fried chicken or that last slice of birthday cake. I can choose instant grati-

fiction, with little or no effort on my part.

The choice I end up making has a lot to do with how I'm feeling at the time. If I'm feeling serene and good about myself, the effort and patience needed to make that soup is no big deal to me. But if I'm stressed, or tired, or feeling down about myself, I just want the fast, easy choice — a quick fix. Never mind the indigestion I might feel later on.

In my life as an active sex addict, I was a 'junk food junkie,' no question about it. Compulsive acting out — mainly masturbating to pornography — was my typical response to any and all of life's challenges.

Never mind that I had a devoted and loving wife who longed for intimate connection with me. I wanted easy pleasure and escape — and I wanted it now. I didn't want to work for anyone's trust or affection. I didn't want to consider anyone's feelings or boundaries. And I definitely didn't want anything to do with intimacy, something I regarded with fear and loathing.

For me, addictive sex — especially the cold, plastic world of pornography — is like being on a steady diet of junk food. As we know, junk food has no nutritional value (hence the

For me, addictive sex — especially the cold, plastic world of pornography — is like being on a steady diet of junk food.

name "junk"). It just has a lot of sensation: lots of salt, lots of grease, lots of sugar. If I eat junk food on a regular basis, I start to lose my taste for ordinary, healthy food. The same goes for my experience with pornography. There's no intimacy, no human connection. So everything is exaggerated, to make up for that basic emptiness. The more I turned to addictive sex, the more exaggeration I needed in order to get my quick fix. The types of images I sought out early in my addiction were nowhere near as extreme as those I was viewing on a daily basis a few years later.

Just as a junk food diet can leave you feeling worn-out and sick, my life of sexual acting-out left me an emotional and spiritual wreck. I could no longer connect with any feelings other than rage. My self-esteem was at rock-bottom. And my marriage, the most valuable and beautiful thing in my life, was crumbling.

Fortunately, I finally made the decision to get into recovery. Eventually I got into the SAA program and began working the Steps. I've had slips and stumbles along the way, but now, five years later, my life is healthy in ways I never thought would be possible.

One of the many gifts of my recovery is the chance to experience sexuality in a positive, healthier way. To be sure, healthier sex is no quick fix. It takes patience, and it takes work.

It means recognizing when the time isn't right, and being willing to take no for an answer. It means respecting my partner, and being sensitive to her needs.

Most of all, it calls for — (gasp) — intimacy. Not just in the bedroom, but throughout our lives together. Healthier sex isn't a quick fix. But it can be both joyous and satisfying, something that supports my marriage and my self-esteem, rather than tearing it all down.

Frankly, I'm not the healthiest eater I know. Yes, I still sometimes reach for that piece of fried chicken. But in my recovery from sex addiction, I strive to make the healthier choice every time, and do what's best for my mind, body, and spirit. ●

Tug of War

By Paul P.

Standing on one side

Another grabs it tight

A tug of war ensues

An endless desperate fight

Wanting the very last word

Pulling hard on one end

Can I loosen my grip?

What a message this will send

Conflict and pain within me

Holding and grasping to no avail

Letting go brings serenity

Higher power helps, will not fail

The tug of war for me

Tightly holding life's rope

Releasing the grip soothes the wound

Message of surrender and hope

Let go of the struggle

The tug can end with grace

Peacefully submitting to a power

An emboldened recovery we embrace.



How men can make amends to women

BY D.B.

Working with my sponsor on my Eighth Step amends list, I had the “usual” assortment. Old lovers, affair partners, my ex, persons with whom I held resentments, persons I stole from or failed to pay a debt, victims of voyeurism and objectification and fantasy, and on and on.

My sponsor led me through the who and the what of making amends. “What exactly is it that you did to them that you want to make amends for?” “How could you make amends to them for what they did to you?” “How sure are you that they knew about what you did to them?” In one case it was, “Are you kidding me? You can’t make that amends without freaking them out!”

Some were clear and easy to see what was the appropriate course. Repaying money, although costly, is nevertheless simple enough. Some would be straightforward if the people were available, or even still alive. To some it was appropriate to send a heartfelt letter; to others such a letter would be hurtful. But the who and what was often clear.

Then I came to the line, “Anonymous women.”

And there were many. The depth and details of my offenses are not necessary for this story. They ranged from simply ogling (objectifying), to hurtful remarks or suggestions, to inappropriate touching. I was often selfish and willful, and knew what I could get away with.

I told my sponsor that I have no idea how to make amends to the many anonymous women I have hurt in my life.

I’ve come to see my sponsors reply as great wisdom. He said something like, “I see how supportive you are of women in the program; I don’t think you have anything more to do than this.”

I continue to be supportive to the best of my understanding to the “women sex addict who still suffers.” Some people have called what I do a “living amends,” but it is more than that.

I have a friend in program who calls this an “amends-in-kind,” which he defines as doing something (appropriate) instead of or in place of doing a direct amends.

For example, one person who was abusive to children now participates in fundraisers for a local hospital that treats abused children. Amends in kind, appropriate but indirect. Different children, also abused, get the benefit.

This is more than just a “living amends.” It involves active participation in an activity to make right the wrong you made to some person, by making an appropriate compensation or action to a different person who may have been hurt in a similar way.

When I took an active part in planning a local event for SAA women, this work was my amends-in-kind to women – not the same women of course, but this was the best I could do for the hurt I had caused.

I want to call out one particular thank you that I received for this work from a long-time woman member. She told me that this was the first time that anyone had ever made an amends to her. Shocking to me, because such an amends was surely needed.

But to SAA men (those who, like me, habitually and cruelly objectified and used women in our acting out), the lesson I would suggest is this: that we owe this amends-in-kind for the women we have mistreated and abused. The best we can do sometimes is to pay it forward to the women of our SAA fellowship who were very likely abused and mistreated by others.

To all sponsors and sponsees – don’t we all need to be a little more generous with our time, talents, and donations in supporting the women in this fellowship?

We will be amazed before we are half-way through. It is a promise. ●



Hearing the Message

Digital audio recordings are a great way to hear convention speakers — even if you can't attend

BY DOUG S.

S AA just had another wonderful convention complete with a host of speakers sharing incredible experience, strength, and hope. But even if you didn't get to hear these outstanding presentations and workshops — or just want to hear them again — you still can.

For more than twenty years, most of the convention speeches and workshops have been recorded and made available in the store on the ISO website.

In fact, when I attended this year's convention there were many workshops I wanted to attend but could not because I couldn't fit all of them into my schedule. Now I can hear these valuable resources to my recovery in the comfort of my car.

There are nearly 500 recordings available covering almost every possible recovery topic. Working the steps? There are more than 100 recordings on this important topic. If you need ideas for outreach, there are several recordings to help you along. Some of the recordings are in Spanish.

As an alternate member of the Literature Committee last year, I listened to recordings of the entire convention. When I listened to “My Sponsees Three Circles Look More Like Three Amoebas,” I found some suggestions about how to use the outer circle that I had never considered. I not only shared them with several sponsees, but I also changed my own outer circle to create a better relationship between my outer circle and middle circle behaviors.

The most popular recordings are those from the recent conventions, but one member bought all the recordings on relapse prevention going back to 1995 in order to help her deal with her recent struggles.

Topics include understanding the traditions, sponsorship, working with prisoners (a topic close to my heart), dating in recovery, and specific help for women, atheists, or our LGBTQ members.

A few members have purchased the complete collection. Many sponsors recommend individual record-

When I listened to one recording, I found some suggestions about how to use the outer circle that I had never considered before.

ings to sponsees as they help them work the steps. The recordings are a bargain at only \$2 each, and are just \$1 if you purchase 10 or more at one time.

All workshops represent the experience, strength, and hope of the presenters, and not all represent the official views or positions of the ISO or the fellowship as a whole.

In recent years, however, the Literature Committee has reviewed the new recordings to assure the material is promoting the SAA program and is not in violation of the SAA Traditions. Last year more than 90 percent were approved for sale. The presentations from this year’s convention are already being reviewed and should be available soon.

Please remember that these recordings are copyrighted. Please do not duplicate your purchased files or forward them to others. ●

To access SAA audio files go to <https://saa-store.org/audio>.

The Gift of

HUMILITY

An ego-deflating event yields sobriety

BY GREG P.

My sponsor kept telling me I didn't

understand the importance of humility. I had not gotten more than thirty days of sobriety in months — and I was feeling proud!

It was a Saturday night. My two kids from my first marriage were not with me. I was separated from wife number two who was six months' pregnant, and I was alone.

My addiction has cost me more than half a million dollars, years with my kids, and almost my state bar license. However, at that moment, I felt entitled to order

pornography, since I had worked hard all week. I was accused of cheating, so why not act out?

About fifteen minutes later, unbeknownst to me, my pregnant wife came home to see if I was cheating. She heard what she thought were several women in bed with me. What she found instead was me, humiliated. She went from, "You cheating jerk!" to "You are pitiful!" And that taught me humility.

I have been sober eighty-four days. Admittedly I am stuck on Steps Eight and Nine, and I wish I could undo what I have done. But the gift of humility has me pointed in the right direction. ●

Reprinted from the The Outer Circle, March-April 2012

DEAR WILL

How Do I Know if I'm in the Bubble?

BY WILL

See if some of the specific situations you find yourself in correspond with some of the general descriptions in the SAA pamphlet about the bubble.

Dear Will:

I have been hearing and reading about “The Bubble.” How can I tell if I am in the bubble?

Attempting to Get Out of the Bubble, If I Am in It

Dear Attempting,

The thing about the bubble is that it was only when he started getting recovery that Will realized how many times he had been in it. He congratulates you on trying to figure it out now.

Will thinks that the first paragraph of the SAA pamphlet, *The Bubble*, is important to getting a basic idea of what it is: “Imagine a little child dipping a plastic paddle into a solution and blowing bubbles. The child keeps doing it over and over, and eventually blows so long and hard that a giant bubble emerges and engulfs the child.”

The pamphlet then describes the effects of being engulfed in the bubble, mostly speaking in metaphorical terms. However, Will would like to give his own experience, strength, and hope around specifics involving his own bubble.

Will’s preferred acting-out spot was roughly fifty miles away from where he lived, and his preferred time was the middle of the night. That great of a distance, which took him roughly an hour to traverse, provided him plenty of time and opportunities to change his mind, turn around and go home. But that never happened. Once he started the car, it seemed to have a mind of its own.

Once Will got to where he was going, he would resolve not to stay for more than an hour and then he would go home. Of course, one of the corollaries

to Will's being in the bubble was that he lost all contact with any sense of time, just as he did anything else outside of the bubble. So one hour would turn into five, and then Will would have to rush home to get ready for work.

Once Will almost caused a serious accident because of being so firmly ensconced in the bubble. He signaled the driver of another vehicle, and the driver misinterpreted the signal as an indication that it was safe to change lanes. Will failed to notice the vehicle in the change lane and, because of the relative sizes of the vehicles, the resulting crash could have been fatal for that driver. Fortunately, there was a shoulder the driver could move into. Will temporarily snapped out of the bubble, having been spared the guilt he would have carried had he caused that driver and anyone else in the car to be killed. Otherwise, he learned nothing from the experience.

As Will began changing his modus operandi and frequenting bars closer to home to act out, he became so focused on going to these places that sleep was often out of the question. He would look at the clock every few minutes and either eventually give up and head out or else be awake until closing time, and then he could go to sleep.



These are some examples of how Will's addiction regularly threw him into the bubble, where he was completely unaware of people around him, lost any sense of time, and was unaware what he was doing to himself.

He suggests, Attempting, that you read or re-read the SAA pamphlet "The Bubble" and see if you can come up with instances of specific situations you found yourself in which correspond with some of the more general descriptions contained in the pamphlet. As mentioned, Will didn't recognize these bubble situations until he had been in recovery for a while. He hopes you can recognize them now.

Will

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

STORIES OF SERVICE

Keeping What You Have by Giving it Away

BY NINO M.

I began to slowly understand the true power of service to others and what that can mean to my own sobriety.

When I first entered recovery I had done service work outside the program through volunteer work, but it was never on an ongoing basis. I was content to make myself feel good by offering a few hours of charity here and there, but I never stuck to a non-profit for any length of time because, like so many other things, I was too consumed by my addiction to let the goodness of works of charity touch me in that way. It didn't give me quite the same hit as the rush of acting out.

That started to change when I entered recovery and began giving up my addiction to God and meeting others in fellowship. I began to slowly understand the true power of service to others and what that can mean for my own sobriety.

I spent more than a year as a secretary of a meeting, helping create a safe weekly environment for others to share. That privileged position gave me a front row seat to the experiences of others — and showed me the true value of sticking with service as I made myself available to others in ways I never had before.

Today I am looking at new ways to do service in SAA. It has been tough of late with a busy work schedule. But I'm determined not to let that sense of giving to others slip beneath the waves of distraction. Being of service is a fundamental part of my program, I now realize, and it always will be.

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

FROM THE BOARD

Reflections on the 2016 Convention

BY PAUL M.

**Making SAA
material more
digitally available
and new teen
meetings were
just some of the
topics discussed.**

Another service year has started and it will be 17 months long this year. Another change in our fellowship with many still to come. I think we had very productive meetings as the board and the conference in May. This was the last time the conference and convention were both held together. Next year's convention will be in California in the spring of 2018. The conference will meet in the fall of 2018, near the ISO office.

At the board meeting we had a presentation on a new thing we have been thinking about for easy access to recovery material including, podcasts, our literature, past convention workshops, and video. We now have a working title called SAA Connect. More will come on this as the business plan is created and we get a timeline for implementation.

We talked more about teen meetings and we approved a draft of a letter that will be sent out to any group that is thinking about starting a teen meeting. All meetings are autonomous and can have teens in their meetings if they decide to, but a teen-only meeting may be safer for both groups. Contact the ISO office for more details.

The conference was attended by about 120 delegates and they elected me as the chair of the conference. This was my first time chairing the conference and it was a rewarding experience. We ratified the bylaw change to allow the board to conduct independent financial reviews and audits.

LitCom brought two motions forward about rescinding conference approval of the *First Step to Recovery* pamphlet and the *Abstinence and Boundaries* booklet. After some discussion LitCom may rethink the process of editing conference-approved literature, but both motions passed.

FROM THE BOARD

The conference did approve the deadline for motions to be changed to June 30 in 2018. This will allow time in the future for area assemblies to meet and discuss the business before the conference.

The Conference Steering Committee (CSC) proposed to change the election of their members from regional elections to at-large just like the board and LitCom are doing. The first vote did not reach a 2/3rds majority.

After much discussion, the motion failed on a simple majority on the second vote. The CSC led a small table discussion the next day to get the opinions of the delegates as to the next step for the CSC.

We did elect five board members and five LitCom members to at-large positions for three-year terms. This is the first change from regional elections to all at-large positions.

We also elected six members to the Area Coordinating Committee (ACC). The elections took a long time to count and next year there will more counters that will not slow down the proceedings and the count will be taken offline.

We elected one person to the Nominating Committee (NomCom). NomCom is very important as we move forward in at-large membership of our committees. Please get your service

resumes in to the ISO office. We had a limited number of candidates this year because we had not received very many service resumes from people that could server.

We had a very good discussion around an ACC presentation that hopefully fired up delegates to bring the word back about area formation.

The ACC's work will be very important this year as they are required to present a draft proposal to fit every meeting into the area structure by the 2018 conference.

It is very important that all groups start thinking about how they will fit under the area structure and how they align with other groups by geographic location, language or modality. The more area proposals they get, the easier their work will be and the groups will have their voice in the draft.

These are my opinions from the bottom of the inverted pyramid and not specifically the view of the board of trustees.

I am very grateful and humbled that the board elected me as the chair again for this service year which will be my last on the board. I have served the last five years to the best of my ability and look forward to this next year with hope of carrying this fellowship into the future.

Delegates Share Issues of Concern at Conference

Once the business of the conference was finished, the board chair allowed time for delegates to share what was going on in their groups, the good and bad, and what the ISO could do to help. Here are some highlights of those shares along with proposed solutions from conference chair, Paul M.:

1. Questions about insurance.

The *Intergroup Guide* has a section on insurance that might be helpful.

2. Questions about locations of meetings.

The *Intergroup Guide* also has some information of finding locations. Kaiser Permanent locations may help.

3. Sponsors needed.

The men's list and Grace's list are resources for finding sponsors. It is highly suggested that people sign up for these lists and current sponsors support sponsees to join the sponsor list when ready.

4. Men welcoming women into the meetings.

Women's Outreach Committee is working on this issue. One comment was: mixed meetings with a healthy balance of women seem to be successful without the presence of 'women-only' meetings. They feature a male and female greeter at their meetings. Newcomers, regardless of gender, are twelfth-stepped separately prior to first meeting. Newcomers get special brochures and phone lists by gender: three phone numbers for women and three phone numbers for men.

5. The fellowship needs a SAA step work guide.

LitCom is working on that now.

6. Rotating trusted servants is an issue.

Sponsors need to encourage sponsees into service.

7. The availability of resources for delegates from meetings is a concern. In the past, copies of by-laws, the charter, and agenda items were in packets and made available.

The decision was made not to print everyone a copy. Next year some copies will be made available, if requested. The agenda is too fluid to print copies as shown by the extra time we spent talking about CSC. There may be a general agenda made available, but it will not be an official agenda.

8. Excitement about “SAA Connect” for millennials.

The ISO is in the early stages of this idea, and as the business plan and content are further discussed the fellowship will be advised.

9. ISO sponsored formal outreach campaign. It was very well received in Vancouver and created lots of excitement for both participation and reaching out into the community to the still suffering sex addict.

Outreach to the professional community is a high priority and needs to be done on a local level. The *Public Information Handbook* on the service website is a good resource and Phillip B in the office can help.

10. Despite this being the “International” Service Organization there is minimal international representation here. We are also not addressing the U.S. or North American bias that exists. Would like to see money spent in sponsoring international delegates.

Travel money is always a concern. We hope the area assemblies will be able to help in the future and we may be able to meet electronically in the future as well.

There was great enthusiasm and appreciation for this ninety minutes of sharing. We hope to have this every year in the future after we finish the business at hand. These were three-minute shares.

We do have the most diverse group of members on the Board Executive Committee than I remember. One Caucasian male, two females, an African-American male, and one member of the LGBT community.

ISO NEWS

Houston Teen Meeting Listed, Materials to Start Others Available

The SAA Teen Meeting in Houston is now listed on the SAA meeting website. The files Max and Carol Ann use have been uploaded to the ICC wiki page in case any intergroup wants to consider starting a teen meeting. Those can be accessed at http://www.saa-iso.org/wiki/tiki-list_file_gallery.php?galleryId=9

It is suggested that anyone wanting to start a teen meeting, contact Max at saatm@texsys.com.

The board approved listing the meetings as a boundary meeting. The board does not have a policy about minors in our meetings since each meeting is autonomous. The Office Oversight Committee (OOC), the Information Systems and Online Presence Committee (ISOPCom), the Fellowship Internal Standing Committee (ISC) and the board have all approved listing this meeting, and we may consider more of these. Policy ISC may get involved to create a policy, but for now listing these meetings will need to be reviewed.

Members Encouraged to Submit Twelve Step Guides

There has been substantial talk of a step guide being produced that consolidates the Green Book's wonderful message. This prospective guide could potentially have many different suggested ways to take the Twelve Steps of SAA, all of which are drawn from us, the SAA fellowship. So here's your invitation!

We welcome you to share your experience, strength, and hope with us! Write it down — exactly what you've done to work through the Twelve Steps of SAA. Step guides can be sent to the SAA Literature Committee and/or the International Service Organization of SAA, both of which can be contacted at saa-recovery.org.

Board Approves Name Change for Women's Outreach Committee

The board of trustees had a lighter action list than normal leading up to this year's international conference and convention. Here's what it did in April:

- » Approved changing name of Women's Outreach Sub-committee to Women's Outreach Committee as the committee originated in 2003 at the 2003 ISO of SAA Portland Convention and at this time remaining under General Outreach.

ISO NEWS

Budget Deficit Continues in April Due to Low Donations

In the month of April we had a deficit of \$13,359.50. We had budgeted for a deficit of \$7,850. The increased deficit of \$5,509.50 was due to our donations being \$3,319.68 below our estimate and our sales being \$2,058.12 below our estimate.

Our gross sales revenue for the SAA Green Book was below our estimate by \$442.39 in April. For the year we are at 94.9 percent of our estimated SAA Green Book sales.

Our pamphlet and booklet sales were below our estimate by \$1,157.19 for April. For the year we are at 94.1 percent of our estimated pamphlet and booklet sales.

Our bronze medallion sales were below our estimate by \$130 in April. For the year we are at 124.2 percent of our estimated bronze medallion sales.

Our total sales for April were below our estimate by \$2,058.12. For the year we are at 98.6 percent of our estimated sales.

Individual donations were below our estimate by \$3,702.89 for April. For the year we are at 101.1 percent of our estimated individual donations.

Group donations exceeded our estimate by \$383.21 in April. For the year we are at 106.2 percent of our estimated group donations.

Our product inventory is valued at \$32,948.92.

Our expenses exceeded our estimate by \$494 in April. For the year we are at 100.5 percent of our estimated expenses.

Our operational reserve is fully funded.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

In Your Service,

Joe H.

Executive Director

ISO NEWS

Host Needed for Sixth International SAA Women's Retreat

The ISO Women's Outreach Committee (WOC) is accepting proposals from local fellowships to host the Sixth International Women's Retreat in 2017 or 2018. Hosts will have full support of the WOC, including financial assistance for start-up funds. The host fellowship will be responsible for planning the retreat and making all local arrangements. It is anticipated that the retreat will be self-supporting, so that start-up funds will be available for future retreats.

For more information, contact the ISO office at (800) 477-8191 or (713) 869-4902. You can also email the office at info@saa-recovery.org.

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

First Sunday of the month

Nominating Committee: 11:00 a.m.

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

Intergroup Communications: 3:00 p.m.

LGBT Outreach: 5:00 p.m.

CSC: Policy & Procedure: TBA

Prisoner Outreach: 8:00 p.m.

First Saturday of the month

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

Second Saturday of the month

Intimacy and Sexual Avoidance: 8 a.m.

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

Second Sunday of the month

Literature Committee: 4:00 p.m.

General Outreach: 6:30 p.m.

Third Tuesday of the month

CSC: Conference Committee Structure: TBA

Third Wednesday of the month

Area Coordinating Committee: TBA

Third Saturday of the month

CSC: Twelve Concepts Work Group: TBA

Third Sunday of the month

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

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

SE Region: 6:00 p.m.

Fourth Sunday of the month

Conference Steering Committee: TBA

Fourth Tuesday of the month

Seventh Tradition: 6:00 p.m.

CONTACT THE ISO

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

Office

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

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Website: www.saa-recovery.org

The Outer Circle

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Prisoner Outreach: Jonathan C.: outreach@saa-recovery.org
Administrative Assistant: Harvey A. harveya@saa-iso.org
Publications Manager: Cody S. cody@saa-iso.org

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

Board of Trustees and Literature Committee

Great Lakes

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

Intermountain

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

North Central

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

Northeast

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

North Pacific

Board: Cliff G.; Alternate: Bob L.
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LitCom: Les J.; Alternate: Ben B.
LitComNP@saa-litcom.org

South Central

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

Southeast

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

Southern Pacific

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

At Large

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

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Get Your Story Published in *The Outer Circle*

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

Deadlines for Submission and Topics

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

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

Here are some general writing guidelines:

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

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

General Release Form

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

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

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

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Printed name: _____

Witness: _____ Date: _____

Printed name: _____

SAA TWELVE STEPS

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