



International
Service Organization
of SAA, Inc.

The Outer Circle Mission

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

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

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

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

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

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Where Have All the Women Gone?

BY GARY T.

When I first came into recovery, a group of four women regularly attended my home group. As a gay man, I found the presence of these women extremely comforting and supportive.

Looking back, it's clear to me that my Higher Power worked through these women to help me heal the shame, anger and confusion that brought me into the rooms of SAA.

I didn't know it then, but having this many women in my home group was unusual. It wasn't until they stopped coming to meetings that I really started to understand how important women are to me, and by extension, to us all.

Today, it's rare for a woman to show up to my home group, or any other meeting. When she does, she rarely returns. I've actually overheard other men encouraging women to attend another Twelve Step fellowship. To be fair, these men are trying to be helpful, but it only points out the awkwardness some men feel about having women in meetings — and the difficulty of making women feel welcome in a male-dominated fellowship.

Last issue, I asked, how can we encourage more women in SAA? And gratefully, so many women responded that I had to break this Quick Take into two parts.

I hope everyone reads both parts of these comments and takes them back to their home groups in an effort to encourage more women.

As we grow as a fellowship, it's vital we include the experience, strength, and hope of women. Without it, I believe we're losing out on a key aspect of recovery: the ability to recognize our similarities and heal our differences.

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Four Initiatives Moving SAA Forward

BY JOE H.

This issue, I would like to share with you information about several initiatives we have in progress.

Our first initiative involves upgrading our technology infrastructure. This will allow us to leverage the latest technology in running our service organization and in support of outreach initiatives.

Our second initiative is rewriting our outreach website. The focus of these enhancements are redesigning the website to make it more user friendly, enhancing the content so it is more focused toward the newcomer, enhancing the meeting search functionality and taking advantage of using the newest technology.

The third initiative involves translation of our literature. In 2013, we had a 35 percent growth rate in new recovery meetings outside the United States. We have also received multiple requests for assistance from international recovery meetings over the last several years.

We are developing a translation policy, and once this is done we can begin to let our international recovery meetings know what needs to be done to get our literature into their native languages.

Our fourth initiative is to increase the amount of donations from our members to support the three initiatives I mentioned above. We have begun to accomplish this through our LifeLine Partner initiative which is currently at 73 percent of our goal of \$20,000 per month.

Taken together, these initiatives will give SAA a solid position in the emerging digital world and a stronger international presence.

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TOC Redesign Earns High Praise

I have always enjoyed copies of the ISO newsletter, back when it was *The Plain Brown Wrapper* and then when it became *The Outer Circle*. I am not fond of change, but I really wanted to commend you and everyone involved on their sterling efforts and the wonderful results of *The Outer Circle* redesign. The new look is so attractive and readable, and the content as ever is thoroughly helpful and uplifting, particularly this month, it seems to me. — **Chris X, SAA UK International Representative.**

Quick Take: How Can We Encourage More Women In SAA? (Part 1)

Editor's note: Quick Take invites short responses of around 100 words on an issue of recovery. Next issue's quick take: Part 2 of: How can we encourage more women in SAA? If you have ideas for Quick Takes, please send them to toc@saa-recovery.org.

5 Ways to Encourage More Women in SAA

Here are 5 ideas from my own experience and from years of listening to women's experiences of mixed meetings.

- 1. Create the newcomer process ahead of time.** The newcomer will assume that any uneasiness in the room is about her, so try to avoid a flurry of nervous activity.
- 2. Consider the space.** The actual meeting room is tremendously important. Women often need to be able to slip out without drawing attention. I once attended a meeting in a basement, at the end of a dark hall, in a crowded room with only one door. I felt trapped and panicked.
- 3. Establish temporary sponsors!** All newcomers should be offered temporary sponsors as part of the welcome process. This is especially important for women because women sponsors are dramatically outnumbered by women newcomers, and finding a woman sponsor can take months. Plus, not all women need or work well with women sponsors. What a woman newcomer most needs is a solidly sober temporary sponsor of whatever gender is available.
- 4. Use the newcomer packet to tell them about women-only options.** Telling a woman newcomer about women-only meetings can be tricky, even with the

best intentions, and timing is very important. I've heard many women relate the story of being greeted at a mixed meeting, and then almost immediately told about women-only meetings. What they took away is that they were "sort of but not really" welcome and should have gone to the women-only meeting. Better to give them a list of all meetings in the area and a copy of the *A Special Welcome to the Woman Newcomer* pamphlet in their packet. Keep the focus on answering their questions, which also helps prevent the newcomer from feeling overwhelmed.

5. Use our literature. The *Special Welcome to the Woman Newcomer* and *Safe and Sexually Sober Meetings* pamphlets offer great support for women newcomers. They also make great meeting topics! — **Thea D.**

Abstinence the Best Way to Encourage Women

I believe the best way to encourage women in SAA is to get abstinent, stay abstinent and work the Twelve Steps. I'm a woman, and I know when I'm being objectified and someone is trying to get a hit off of me. I can also feel when members are healthy and safe because they've had a spiritual experience.

I've been to weekly meetings that seem to be a check in of the latest acting out experience. At those meetings, I'm concerned that I'm going to be the object of the members' next fantasy. Meetings that focus on solution, the steps and a connection with a Higher Power provide me a safe haven to share my truth, fears, and questions around the steps, a Higher Power and my recovery program. What works for me is for members to share their experience, not direct me on what I need to do. I'm an addict, and I don't take well to directives.

My home group is a mixed meeting of men and women. There are usually members with 20 years of sobriety along with newcomers. Members share their struggles in a non-explicit way that I don't feel triggered by. They regularly share tools that are working for them, experience with particular steps, and their relation with their personal Higher Power. I've grown along with this group of people of many years, and together we learn to walk the path together. — **Shelly K**

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

Ambassadors, Speakers Welcomed for 2015 Convention

The Northeast Region is grateful and excited to host the 2015 ISO International Convention! We are blessed to have a group of people who are generous with their time and who are committed to making the 2015 ISO International Convention the very best that it can be.

How can you get involved? You can serve as an ambassador for your group or Intergroup. The very best way for us to let members in the fellowship know about the convention is to spread the word from one member to the next.

Ambassadors are a network of individuals across the country who have volunteered to act as our mouth and ears in their local communities. Ambassadors will receive monthly emails to keep them up to date on the convention. If you are interested in becoming an ambassador just let us know, and we will put you on our monthly email list.

You could also consider nominating someone from your meeting or local fellowship to serve as a workshop presenter at the convention. (Please, get their permission first.)

We invite you to come and join us. Early (discounted) registration ends on April 30th. Contact the 2015 Convention Committee to get necessary workshop forms or for more information at RecoveryBringsSerenity@yahoo.com.

Financial Review Reveals Where Funds Spent, Still Needed

Dear Fellow Members,

As Treasurer, I would like to take this opportunity to share information on the ISO finances, how they are monitored, how we did in 2014, and how our net surplus in 2014 is being used to support the ISO vision, mission, and strategic goals.

The ISO finances are one of the most scrutinized areas in the ISO. There are three committees that review the ISO finances each month. The Office Oversight Committee (OOC) which is made up of local Houston members and the board Treasurer. These members have extensive knowledge of business and include experience in accounting, finances, auditing, economics and logistics. This committee meets monthly to review the financial reports including our budget vs. actual report, balance sheet, banking account transactions, and our spending on the American Express credit card.

A second oversight committee is the Internal Standing Committee of Finance and Operations, which is made up of board members. This committee also reviews our monthly financial reports and has the authority to approve expenditures up to \$5,000.

The full Board of Trustees (BOT) is ultimately responsible for sound financial management of the ISO and the board is sent the same monthly financial reports and graphs that the previous two committees receive. The board is responsible to ensure our financial needs are in alignment with our strategic goals.

The ISO has received tremendous financial support from our fellowship in 2014. Thank you for your Seventh Tradition donation. The profit and loss report shows that by carefully managing expenses and working hard to increase donations through our lifeline partner initiative, we are now able to devote an additional \$98,701.41 to fund a number of needed projects that have been languishing.

We have done very well in keeping our expenses low and through our lifeline partner initiative, thereby increasing our revenue over the last several years. If we have a surplus during the year, we move these funds into reserve accounts that were set up by previous boards. These reserve accounts are used in areas that will enhance our ability to perform outreach while supporting our strategic goals on a global scale such as:

1. Upgrading our information technology (IT) infrastructure
2. Translation of our literature to bring our message of experience, strength and hope to the many suffering addicts in other countries
3. Re-write of our website to focus the website's message for the suffering addict looking for help and to enhance our meeting search capabilities.

The areas I mentioned above are our major projects for 2014 - 2015 and will be funded using both our reserve funds and some of our net surplus. We also have many smaller projects on the books that will need financial resources. An estimate to fund these projects runs into hundreds of thousands of dollars to complete them.

I would like to share a few examples of how we are using our new resources. We are in the process of re-ordering our SAA Green book and had reserved an amount we thought would pay for the new books but due to increases in cost
Continued on page 10

that were unexpected we are paying about twenty percent more than we had budgeted. Some of the increase in our reserves will be used to make up this difference (around \$7,000). We are also setting funds aside to help with the first printing of our meditation book, our IT infrastructure upgrade, website re-write, and ongoing translation of our literature.

We currently do not receive enough financial contributions from our members to meet the financial needs of many of our outreach projects. We also need reserves to cover unexpected shortfalls that could occur in the future due to unanticipated fluctuations in our donations, other revenues, and cost. There are some months in which we have seen costs exceed our revenues by several thousand dollars. There are several events held by local fellowships (Giving Thanks Events) that contribute close to \$50,000 each year. The ISO does not sponsor these fundraising events and thus there is a risk of these events going away if a local member does not step up to coordinate and spearhead these fundraising events. Due to the risk involved in reliance on these Giving Thanks events and several yearly anonymous donations equaling \$24,000, we have focused on increasing our regular monthly contributions from our membership using our LifeLine Partner program. Our LifeLine partners contribute a steady stream of revenue, which allows us to plan and budget for projects that will help us meet the ISO vision and mission statement.

Vision Statement: "Our vision is to be a premier global resource for recovery in support of SAA and the sex addict who still suffers."

Mission Statement: "The ISO serves member groups by helping carry the SAA message of recovery to the sex addict who still suffers."

I hope the information above helps you to understand a little bit more about the ISO finances. Your continued financial support and volunteer hours are needed to help us reach and share our collective experience, strength and hope with others suffering from sex addiction.

In Grateful Service,

Wayne K., Treasurer, Board of Trustees

ISO of SAA, Inc.



Director Reports December Board Actions, January Financials

Here are the December 2014 Board actions:

- Approved the hotel for the 2016 International Convention
- Approved the 2015 ISO budget
- Approved a pay increase for the Executive Director effective April 1, 2015
- Approved a new employment contract for the Executive Director for the years 2015-2016

Here are the financial results for January, 2015:

- In the month of January we had a surplus of \$19,786.47. We had budgeted for a surplus of \$17,067.
- Our gross sales revenue for the SAA Green Book was below our estimate by \$510.88.
- Our pamphlet and booklet sales exceeded our estimate by \$1,449.82 for January. Our bronze medallion sales exceeded our estimate by \$469.60 in January.
- Our total sales for January exceeded our estimate by \$977.67.
- Individual donations exceeded our estimate by \$55.03 for January. Group donations exceeded our estimate by \$3,141.97 in January.
- Our product inventory is valued at \$43,747.92.
- Our expenses were below our estimate by \$1,414.74 in January.

Our operational reserve is fully funded.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

In Your Service,

Joe H.

Executive Director

Are Sponsors Always Right?

BY WOMEN'S
OUTREACH
SUBCOMMITTEE

Taking the time to consider and pray about what your sponsor is suggesting is a good idea. Sponsors are human, and they do make mistakes.

Dear Grace,

Do I have to listen to my sponsor's suggestions? Some of the things she suggests that I do (for example, waiting a year or more before dating) seem really extreme! I'm not sure if it's truly what is best for me.

Sincerely,

Confused

Dear Confused,

In a nutshell: In the SAA program, sponsors are other addicts, willing to share how they worked the steps and how they found recovery. Sponsors are not experts, but fellow travelers in recovery, who carry the message as part of their own program of recovery. Sponsors share their experience, strength and hope, in the hope that others will find the same freedom from addictive sexual behavior. That said, you are always free to get a new sponsor.

However, and this is a very big however, you did choose your sponsor to guide you through the Twelve Steps. You may have chosen her based on something she shared that resonated with you. The pamphlet *A Special Welcome to the Woman Newcomer* advises: "A good general guideline is to choose a sponsor whose recovery you respect." We are encouraged to listen in meetings for a member who "has what we want" and ask that person to be our sponsor. If you followed these suggestions, you are now working with someone who has what you want, and is willing to share with you how she got it. Given that, this may be an opportunity for you to practice letting go.

The Tools of Recovery booklet tells us that "Honesty, commitment, openness and willingness are im-



portant attitudes for a sponsee." If you are hesitant, it is important that you at least give your sponsor's suggestions and guidance serious consideration. Later the booklet continues, "You may not understand or like all the suggestions he or she makes, so we encourage you to ask questions. Try to stay open; they have traveled the road you are on and speak from experience."

For example, it is fair to ask your sponsor why she is suggesting certain things, if she took similar actions, and how it worked out for her. Perhaps she is suggesting something that will help you avoid a mistake she made!

The process of recovery takes time and sometimes feels frustrating because there are no quick fixes. Taking the time to consider and pray about what your sponsor is suggesting is a good idea. Sponsors are human, and they do make mistakes.

Sometimes we may need to change sponsors for a variety of reasons. Be careful

when doing so that you are not changing sponsors to avoid difficult or challenging tasks suggested to you by your current sponsor. Our experience shows us that this is a "we program"— that we recover together, that we need each other. It is a good idea to discuss the decision with other sober members whom you respect before taking action. Ultimately, it is your decision as to whether to listen or not. After all, it is your recovery.

In Service,

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.**

DEAR WILL

What Makes Someone a 'Real' Sex Addict?

BY WILL

All that is necessary is a 'desire to stop,' and not that one be able to say without any doubt or hesitation, 'I am a sex addict.'

Dear Will,

I recently did my First Step at an SAA meeting. I've only been in the program for a few months, and I didn't really like the idea of telling my story in front of a bunch of people, some of whom were strangers. To make matters worse, somebody came up to me afterwards and said he didn't think I was really a sex addict, just somebody who did a couple of stupid things. I don't know; is he right? Maybe I should just drop out of the program and go find a shrink or something. I know I'm messed up, but maybe I'm really not a sex addict. What do you think?

Failure at Everything, Even at Being a Sex Addict

Dear FAEEABASA,

Congratulations on completing your First Step. Will feels that you are definitely in a better position in terms of your recovery than the folks in the program who go to their first meetings or read some SAA literature and then start figuring out the reasons why they must not be sex addicts. Some of those folks left the program after a few meetings or less, and Will has heard at least some of the ones who made it back share at meetings that they considered themselves fortunate to have done so.

One thing that Will definitely does not recommend is that you go back out there and try some new activities with the hopes of proving to this guy that you really are a sex addict. Some of those might end up being more than just "stupid things," and have longer-term consequences.

Fortunately, FAEE, which is now Will's nickname for you, your question is addressed succinctly on page 81 of *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, in the second paragraph



of Tradition Three: "No one can judge whether or not another person is a sex addict, or make decisions about someone's fitness for membership in SAA." This in itself is more than enough reason for you to let go of any concerns you might have over what this guy told you.

Please take a look at the wording of the Tradition itself: "The only requirement for SAA membership is a desire to stop addictive sexual behavior." The wording of the Tradition actually reminds Will of the first time he attended a meeting of a Twelve-Step group other than SAA, after it had been suggested to Will that he might want to look at some of his other addictive behaviors that might have been triggering his sexually addictive behaviors.

While Will probably did not share the bottom-line behaviors of some of his cohorts in the other program, he definitely had the "desire to stop" that behavior as well. And that is "the only

requirement." The Tradition doesn't say that one must have wound up in prison. There is even a statement on page 82 of *Sex Addicts Anonymous* that backs up this idea: "Although it has become customary for members to identify as sex addicts in meetings, it is not required that we do so." Once again, all that is necessary is that "desire to stop," and not that one be able to say without any doubt or hesitation, "I am a sex addict."

Anyway, FAEE, congratulations once again on completing your First Step. And best of luck as you proceed through the rest of the steps.

Will

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

LIVING IN SOBRIETY

Keeping Recovery Fresh

BY BEN B.

Life is a celebration today. Sadness and joy all in one. One day at a time. I practice meditation, study recovery, and do service work.

I am very happy and grateful to be a member of the SAA Fellowship. This year, I celebrate 11 years of abstinence in SAA.

My journey started in in the mid-'90s. I came in to the rooms of SAA with long-term sobriety from alcohol and drugs, but a lot of delusion and confusion in relation to sex addiction. I worked a few steps in SAA and left the program.

After the breakup of a relationship, I came back to the program in 2001. It took me three years to get one year of continuous abstinence from my inner circle behaviors. During those three years I worked Steps One through Three over and over and over. But I didn't think I really needed to do a Fourth Step or the rest of the Steps, since I had done them all in the past through my alcohol and drug programs.

DELUSION!

During those three years I went to meetings, saw a therapist, and met with a sponsor. But my acting out kept progressing.

In 2004, it had reached a frightening place. My suffering seemed all pervasive. I was in the realm of the hungry ghosts, the land of the living dead. I was confused and scared and thought that doing IV meth sounded like a good idea.

A Higher Power had a better idea.

I went to an inpatient sexual recovery program. It was not a lightweight program. But I had been suffering for so long from the negative consequences of sex addiction that I became willing to do anything that was asked of me. I signed a celibacy contract in treatment and began to experience withdrawal. Masturbation was part of the problem, and my de-

lusion was too great for me to admit it. For awhile, my inner circle meant no sex with self or others. It was crucial to go through this period while working the Twelve Steps of SAA with a sponsor.

I found freedom from my addictive sexual behavior through the Twelve Steps of SAA. I sponsored others, and put together a plan with my sponsor and therapist for healthy sex.

But I don't confuse abstinence with sobriety.

Abstinence for me is concretely defining behaviors that I abstain from as part of my recovery. Sobriety is abstinence combined with personal and spiritual growth that focuses on the healing work of recovery. Sobriety is a process that transforms my sexuality, part of which is cultivating my sexual self. There is no recovery without sobriety.

The pay off for all this work is serenity and feelings of contentment and happiness that were impossible to imagine during the times I was acting out. I did not go from sobriety straight to serenity. I had to do a lot of work in connection with my sexuality. Nurturing my sexuality is an ongoing part of my sobriety.

Life is a celebration today. Sadness and joy all in one. One day at a time. I practice meditation, study recovery, and sponsor others. It's my job to keep my recovery fresh. I have to keep hearing the

message of recovery, contemplating the teachings of recovery and mixing them with meditation and prayer and service.

Today, I'm working on my life vision. My Higher Power is at the epicenter of all of this, constantly creating, giving and expanding. There is a lot of joy and energy that flows from my Higher Power.

I maintain my abstinence and sobriety by committing daily to recovery. It is a commitment to reality at all costs.

The most powerful tool I have found is gentleness, and that's what most of us have lost our trust in. I believe that gentleness plus strength equals wisdom.

Some of the obstacles and challenges in my recovery have been complacency, spending my time in meaningless ways, or just passing time.

My recovery is about living the Steps and connecting to awakened energy, having a good strong life force, and being kind. I have come to realize that I am intact and whole, worthwhile, precious, valuable, and strong. I am so thankful to be a member of SAA!

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.



The Forgotten Steps

Steps Six and Seven are the keys to moving from 'Shame to Grace'

BY STEVIE G.

In many ways Steps Six and Seven are the keys to moving from “Shame to Grace,” and into God’s love. They are, together, the short, modest, quiet fulcrum in the great arc of the Twelve Steps, the often ignored center, the lynchpin in the middle, and, as my sponsor firmly believes, the glue that holds our program together.

So let’s review them now:

Step Six: Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character. Step Seven: Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

On the face of it, they may sound forgettable. At least, they did to me. After the Everest-like peaks of Step Four – with its searching and fearless moral inventory – and Step Nine – making amends to those we harmed, Steps Six and Seven seemed like this peaceful valley where I could rest a bit and regroup before the pre-dawn assault

on mount “I’m-sorry-I-did-this-and-it-hurt-you-Step-Nine.”

Sure, I can be “ready to have God remove all these defects of character.” I don’t really have to do anything to be ready, right? I don’t have to write any more Fourth Step lists of my resentments and fears and self-seeking ... and their causes ... and the part of me that was hurt or threatened by this ... and where I was to blame for it.

And “humbly ask”? Well, I can “humbly ask him to remove my shortcomings” all day long because it doesn’t involve making another Eight and Ninth Step list of people and then apologizing to them does it?

But as I’ve worked my program, I’ve come to think of Steps Six and Seven as a crucial “middle path” — a daily set of practices that allows me to open up and accept grace.

While the idea in Steps Six and Seven of learning to be “entirely ready” and “humbly asking” seem simple, they should definitely not to be confused with easy. If we focus on them with a moment-to-moment awareness, that soon becomes clear. But doing the work of Steps Six and Seven also pays huge dividends in working through, and even sometimes removing, shortcomings and defects of character.

Just as it says in the Seventh Step prayer: “My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove

from me every single defect of character that stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. God grant me the strength as I go out from here to do thy bidding.”

Notice that after the phrase “every single defect of character” the prayer goes on to say: “that stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows.” So, in effect, I’m not asking for every defect of character to be removed, but rather only the defects that block me from God, from my Higher Power, and from my service to others.

I’ve come to think of Steps Six and Seven as a crucial ‘middle path’ — a daily set of practices that allows me to open up and accept grace.

So what blocks me from “humbly asking” and being “entirely ready” to move from shame to grace? The answer, for me, is a tiny little word with a million cunning, baffling and powerful faces. It’s called “ego” — also known as “Edging God Out.”

This happens with egos that aren’t necessarily the inflated self-delusion we associate with “big egos.” In fact, ego can simply be thought of as our conscious mind, our brain, our thoughts

with which we identify so closely. Put another way, character defects are ego at work. Even our own program language talks about many other “wrongs” as they’re called in Step Five. It is these defects that kept us from God. But, paradoxically, I believe they become my very path to God.

Look at the second verse of our own Serenity Prayer – which I wasn’t even aware existed until not too long ago: “Living one day at a time; enjoying one moment at a time; accepting hardships as the pathway to peace.” As the prayer says, hardships offer a pathway to peace. (And I’d define hardships here as both our defects of character and their fallout, their “wreckage” in program language.)

But how? The question becomes how can we engage these “hardships” productively on our pathway to peace? How do we open up and get our ego out of the way so we can move from Shame to Grace? Again, it comes back to Steps Six and Seven and being “entirely ready” and “humbly asking.”

To me, the “entirely ready” means opening to reality, through stilling, if only for a few moments a day, the tyranny of “conscious” thought in a daily practice of prayer and meditation, and becoming mindful and aware (again simple, not easy!) on a whole different level than just my ego state. Simply accepting what is, just the way it is.

This is also where humility comes in, and remembering that we can be

humble without being humiliated. That way, we can make mistakes and use our defects as teachers. We can be humble without being stuck in toxic shame about our “unskillful” behaviors and actions. We can accept our humanity.

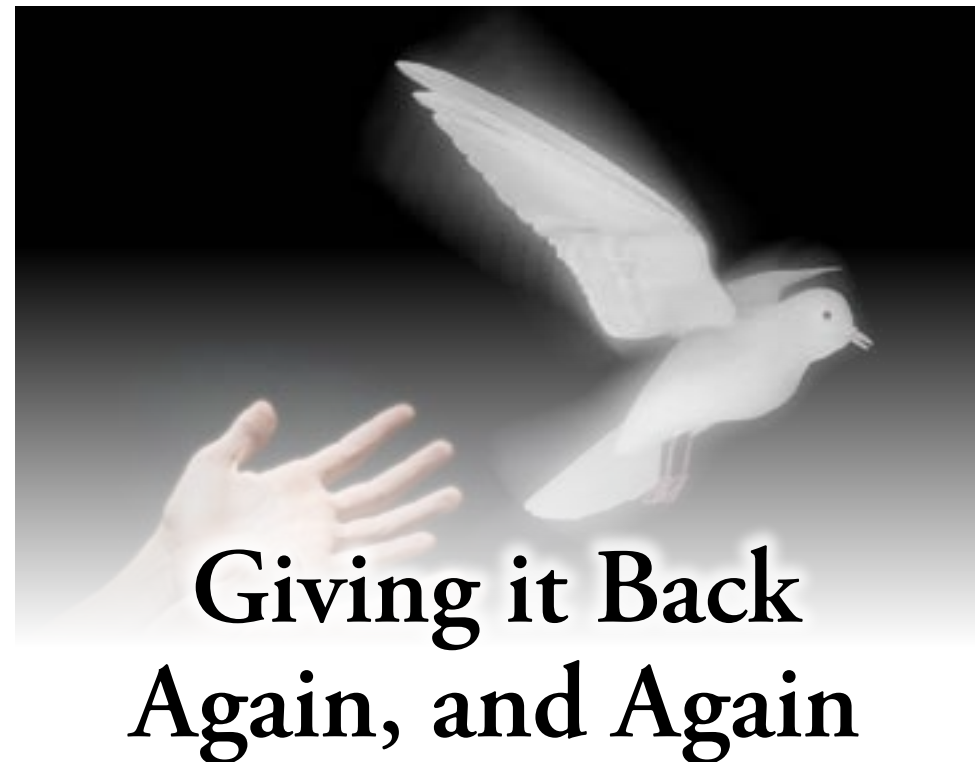
Like the First-Step paradox of gaining

We can make mistakes and use our defects as teachers. We can be humble without being stuck in toxic shame about our ‘unskillful’ behaviors and actions.

power over our addiction by admitting our powerlessness over our addiction, the Seventh-Step paradox of “humbly asking” allows our controlling ego to step aside, just enough to let reality in and awaken to our Higher Power’s love.

So instead of Edging God Out, it all becomes about edging ego out, leaving shame behind, and letting God’s grace in. Or put another way, we take the moment-by-moment stance of “Letting go and letting God.”

This article was excerpted from the 2014 ISO Presentation, “Learning To Live Loved” available at <http://saa-store.org/audiol>.



Giving it Back Again, and Again

How working Step Three gives addicts the permission to stay sober

BY MIKE L.

I was really at the end of my rope by the first time I attended an SAA meeting. All my efforts to say, “I’ve never done what that person has done,” and all my attempts to look for the differences between myself and the folks described in the little bit of sexual recovery literature I had read, no longer worked for me. I listened carefully to the others who shared at my first SAA meeting, and by the end of the meeting, I had this strange sense that I was being given permission by the group not to act out any more. I’ve never heard anybody else ever say it quite that way, and yet that is how I felt at 7:30 p.m. on that Saturday in April in 1991.

The first time I read through the Steps, I encountered a minor stumbling block in the concept of “a Power greater than ourselves,” which turned into a major pothole with the words “God as we understood God” in Step Three. I didn’t want anything

Voices of Recovery

“For sex addicts, resentment is one of the most stubborn obstacles to our spiritual growth.”

—*Sex Addicts Anonymous, page 34*

I nursed a sullen, bitter resentment towards my father for decades. He took up three pages of my Fourth Step the first time through it. He had been a rage-aholic, with an explosive temper. He likely belonged in our club, having had serial affairs with my mother’s friends.

For this last offense I painted him the villain and swore that I would never be like him. As I became more and more like him through my own addiction, I began to feel compassion for him. Through my recovery in SAA, I began to see our linked patterns and, perhaps more importantly, how my resentment and silence towards him had driven my life and blinded me. In the subsequent steps, I began to let go. On my second time through the Fourth Step, my father did not even make it on the list!

I am grateful for the miracles of recovery.

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.

to do with God at that point in my recovery. Fortunately for me, there were wise folks in the program who told me that I could choose my own concept of God. I had a feeling that a doorknob was not going to work for me, but I did think that I could make the group my Higher Power, which is what I did. I didn’t hear about the circles right away in meetings. Maybe they were a new concept back then; at any rate, I don’t recall anybody, even my sponsor, talking about them. So I developed a program of “sobriety” on my own. I was such a perfectionist back then — I say that as though I am not now — that I broke my sobriety dozens of times a day; the least little thing meant that I had to take a new desire chip.

I finally did learn about the circles from a guy who hadn’t been around the program much longer than I. I had things that I put in my inner circle, and things that I put in my middle circle; the outer circle seemed a strange concept, and I didn’t spend much time focusing on it.

I did however focus plenty on my addiction. I may have gone too far in the other direction once the circles provided me with a way to let go of my sobriety-related rigidity, and I found myself taking back my will and spending the evening in my middle circle a couple of nights a week. I was often “unsuccessful” in my efforts and would go home at 4:00 a.m. or so feeling sleepy and horrible, not to mention hopeless, but not having gone into the inner circle.

Page 31 of *Sex Addicts Anonymous* says, “As long as we believe in the process of recovery, and have the willingness to learn and grow, we can return to Step Three and recommit to our spiritual program.” I rephrased that concept as, “I really don’t need to keep doing this.”

Eventually Sunday evening would roll around and I had the opportunity to go back to my home group again, an opportunity I normally took, even if I had spent most of Saturday night in the middle circle. My Higher Power, in the form of the SAA groups, and my memories of the shares I had heard, kept me from going into the inner circle most of the time.

I didn’t often openly recommit to the SAA program at these meetings, but each time I went, I did so internally. The great gift of the groups, be it the Sunday night group or another one, was the re-experiencing of the sense of having permission not to act out again.

I needed more than a couple of those spiritual experiences to get sober. Nevertheless, eventually I got to a point where, half a mile into my journey one evening to spend the night in the middle circle, I said to myself, “I really don’t want to do this,” and headed home.

The same paragraph on page 31 of the Green Book says “We need not be discouraged by these [“taking back” our will] experiences.” Despite feeling somewhat discouraged, I did still keep going back to my Higher Power in the form of the group and turning over my will yet once more, until I finally internalized the groups’ permission not to act out.

Like a Slave

By Paul P.

*Feeling unrestrained
Not bound to rules,
Am I free to act this way?
No adherence to any tools.*

*“It makes me feel better”!
My addict voice screams
Distracts and numbs,
An instant pain reliever it seems.*

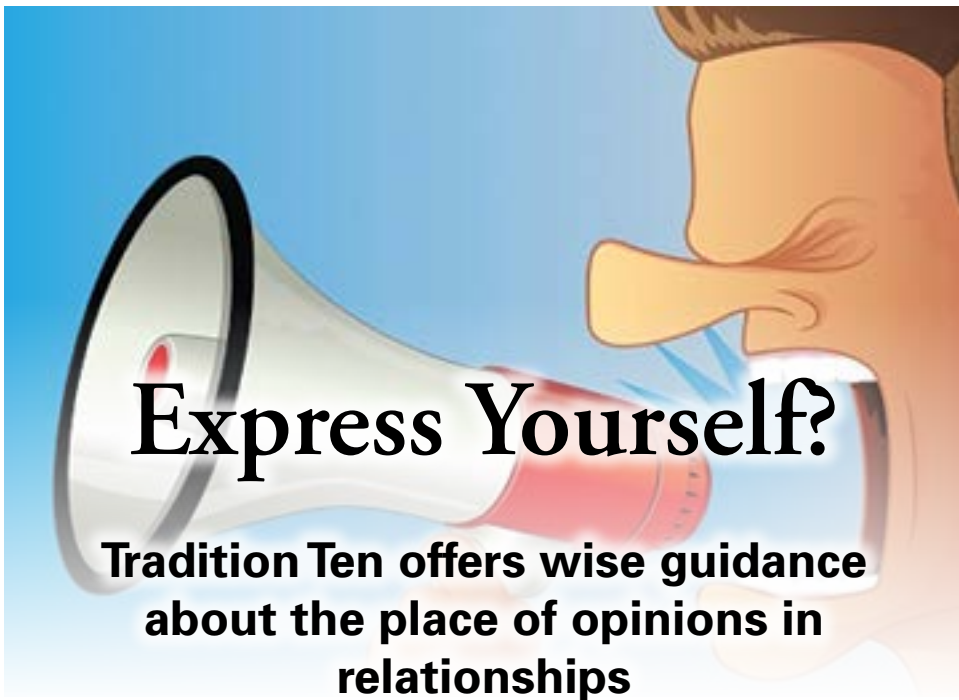
*I’m free to act as I please,
It’s my self will I exclaim
Is this truth or denial?
Addiction isn’t to blame.*

*Like the bondage of a slave,
Tied by chains and rules
Disguises itself so well
So many of us it easily fools.*

*Recovery changes our mindset,
No longer imprisoned in this way
A new way of life
Realized In practice day by day.*

*Slave no more,
Higher Power’s grace
Freedom to act with dignity,
Problems we bravely face.*

*Abandoning false beliefs,
Practicing with all our heart,
Incorporating into our lives
It’s never too late to start.*



Express Yourself?

Tradition Ten offers wise guidance about the place of opinions in relationships

BY FREEMAN D.

Tradition Ten: Sex Addicts Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the SAA name ought never be drawn in to public controversy.

The Green Book tells us on page 92, “Our fellowship ... has really only one issue or concern: recovery from sexual addiction through the program of Sex Addicts Anonymous. Further we’re informed, “Anything else is considered an ‘outside issue.’”

As I contemplate SAA and our singular focus, I ask myself if I have ever given the impression that SAA does have an opinion. While chairing a meeting have I spoken on a topic without letting all in attendance know what was my personal opinion and what came from SAA literature? Have I told my personal story without clarifying whether what I share is not an “SAA opinion?”

On page 93, our Green Book is clear we do have personal opinions. “The Tenth Tradition does not mean that as individuals we can’t have or express opinions on outside issues.” However, we are warned that one should be cautious while in a meeting to

keep personal opinions to a minimum. And we should clearly state they are one’s personal opinion when shared. Page 94 of *Sex Addicts Anonymous* states, “... such opinions expressed within meetings could drive away other members or cause dissension within the meeting.

By keeping our primary purpose at the forefront, the Green Book goes on to tell us, “...we keep the focus on the experience, strength, and hope that the program offers to us all.

Tradition Ten — Relationship Form:

We are each entitled to our own opinion on outside issues; hence our name(s) ought never be drawn into public controversy.

In my relationship I am careful about expressing an opinion. I rely heavily on the philosophy of “live and let live.” With my mate, I avoid heated arguments by taking time to wait, stop, and cool down. This way neither of us says anything we’ll regret and can’t take back.

My personal opinions, while in the heat of anger, are not always long lasting, and are often fueled by ignorance, hate, and bias that I can do without.

Love and tolerance is my code. Even in the dark tumult of our chaotic lives. I continue to be kind, loving, and patient. I accept my mate just as he is. Nothing about him scares me away from my commitment to our relationship. Patient, tolerant, courteous, kind — that’s what we are all about now.

When expressing my personal opinion to those outside of my relationship, I am cautious to let others know that it is “my” opinion, not “our” opinion. Nor do I speak ill of my relationship or friends in public. They have their own choices to make. I stand out of the way of the consequences, fully aware that we all choose our actions. And none of us are able to choose the consequences of those actions. Over time, I’ve come to realize that oth-

With my mate, I avoid heated arguments by taking time to wait, stop and cool down. This way neither of us says anything we’ll regret.

ers can express their own opinions and I am not being rejected. We can disagree without being disagreeable.

The work of a relationship is never over. I practice these ongoing actions to enhance my life. Love is an action. If someone loves another, people are able to tell. They know it. For myself in my relationship my heart knows my mate loves me; he treats me with love, I feel love, and I am loving in return. Living one day at a time, I amend any harm immediately, and treat myself and others with dignity and respect.

ISO ANNOUNCEMENTS

LGBT Outreach Subcommittee Seeks Fresh Volunteers, Suggestions

Although few in numbers, we are “Endeavoring to Persevere” in achieving our Project Goals as listed in the Sep/Oct 2014 issue.

We are in need of volunteers in the following areas:

- transgendered members to respond to email inquiries related to transgendered issues/sponsorship
- to coordinate any PSA ideas received
- input/attendance at monthly teleconferences

The one-page flier and web page projects are on hold as other ISO committees work on issues relative to them.

We respond to an average of (6) email inquires a month and are still seeking suggestions on making the subcommittee more visible to the fellowship.

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

New Compulsive Sexual Avoidance Meetings Available

The Compulsive Sexual Avoidance (Anorexia) Outreach Committee has a variety of projects in the works, as well as some documents that are in the process of being created for future submission to the ISO. The Committee is looking forward to having a presence at the 2015 Convention!

Intimacy in Partnership Telemeeting: We have begun a phone meeting that supports recovering sex addicts and sexual anorexics who are working the SAA program in order to gain deeper connection and intimacy in the context of their committed relationship. The telemeeting is on Tuesdays at 9:00 a.m. Eastern at 605-562-3140. The passcode is 599840.

Finally, our subcommittee meeting time has changed to the second Saturday of the month at 9:00 a.m. Eastern. The next meeting will be March 14. See the Calendar on page 29 for more dates and times.

ISO ANNOUNCEMENTS

Submissions Sought for SAA Meditation Book

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



A short quotation should be taken from SAA publications that are Literature Committee or Conference approved (see below). 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.

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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CALENDAR

Here are meeting times for March and April. All times are Central Standard Time.

March 1 LGBT Outreach Committee, 7:00 p.m.

March 1 Conference Steering Committee — Area Formation, 1:00 p.m.

March 14 Author's Group, 4:30 p.m.

March 14 Women's Outreach Committee, 4:00 p.m.

March 14 Compulsive Sexual Avoidance Committee, 8:00 a.m.

March 8 Literature Committee, 2:00 p.m.

March 8 General Outreach Committee, 6:30 p.m.

March 17 Conference Steering Committee — Nominating, 4:00 p.m.

March 21 2016 Convention Committee, 7:00 p.m.

March 21 2015 Convention Committee, 7:30 a.m.

March 21 Inter-Fellowship Relations, 3:00 p.m.

March 15 Information Systems and Online Presence Committee, 2:00 p.m.

March 15 Conference Steering Committee — Policy & Procedure, 1:00 p.m.

March 15 SE Region Committee, 6:00 p.m.

March 17 Prisoner Outreach Committee, 8:00 p.m.

March 17 Seventh Tradition Committee, 6:00 p.m.

March 29 Conference Steering Committee, 2:00 p.m.

March 29 Meditation Writing Workshop, 5:00 pm

April 5 Audio Review Committee, 2:30 p.m.

April 5 LGBT Outreach Committee, 7:00 p.m.

April 5 Conference Steering Committee — Area Formation, 1:00 p.m.

April 5 Compulsive Sexual Avoidance Committee, 8:00 a.m.

April 11 Author's Group, 4:30 p.m.

April 11 Women's Outreach Committee, 4:00 p.m.

April 12 Literature Committee, 2:00 p.m.

April 12 General Outreach Committee, 6:30 p.m.

April 12 Conference Steering Committee — Nominating, 4:00 p.m.

April 21 Prisoner Outreach Committee, 8:00 p.m.

April 21 Seventh Tradition Committee, 6:00 p.m.

April 16 2016 Convention Committee, 7:00 p.m.

April 16 2015 Convention Committee, 7:30 a.m.

April 18 Inter-Fellowship Relations, 3:00 p.m.

April 19 Information Systems and Online Presence Committee, 2:00 p.m.

April 19 Conference Steering Committee — Policy & Procedure, 1:00 p.m.

April 19 SE Region Committee, 6:00 p.m.

April 26 Conference Steering Committee, 2:00 p.m.

April 26 Meditation Writing Workshop, 5:00 p.m.

Apr. 24-26 Gulf Coast Region Intergroup Retreat

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

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

SAA TWELVE STEPS

Get Your Story Published in The Outer Circle

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

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

Here are some general writing guidelines:

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

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

Deadlines for Submission

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

General Release Form

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

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

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

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Printed name: _____

Witness: _____ Date: _____

Printed name: _____

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

THE OUTER CIRCLE

The Forgotten Steps
Steps Six and Seven are the keys to moving from
'Shame to Grace'

PLUS

The State of SAA Finances

2015 Convention Update

Step Three and Sobriety

