

THE OUTER CIRCLE

Back from the Brink
Applying the Steps and program
to the ultimate despair

PLUS

Women's Retreat Report

Reflections on Tradition Seven

Dealing with Triggers in Meetings





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. 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.

January - February 2016

CONTENTS

Columns

- 4 From the Editor
- 5 From the Director
- 12 Dear Grace
- 14 Dear Will
- 16 Living in Sobriety

Articles



- 18 **Back from the Brink**
How the Steps and program apply to the ultimate despair

Departments

- 2 TOC Mission
- 6 ISO News
- 26 ISO Announcements
- 28 Contact the ISO
- 29 Calendar
- 30 Submission Guidelines
- 31 Twelve Steps



- 21 **The Gift of Service**
What Tradition Seven really tells us about this spiritual principle



- 24 **Wonder Women**
Reflections on the Fourth Annual Women's Retreat

FROM THE EDITOR

Dying for Attention

BY GARY T.

Even after we come into the rooms, many sex addicts continue to struggle with suicidal thoughts.

Some time ago, I was talking with an SAA member in my home group who witnessed the AIDS epidemic at its worst. During that time, he lost dozens of friends to the scourge before medication made it manageable. Then he made a startling correlation: These days, he said, most of his friends are dying from a completely unmanageable disease — sex addiction.

The deadly effects of sex addiction were fresh in our minds because we were still mourning the suicide of yet another one of our members.

It was a stark reminder of the ultimate end to untreated sex addiction. Even after we come into the rooms, many sex addicts continue to struggle with suicidal thoughts. And while most members feel comfortable talking about the worst moments of their acting out, it seems some are still not comfortable discussing their ultimate despair.

That's why I decided to publish an article in this month's newsletter that confronts suicide head on with an honest look at the problem.

The author writes bravely and clearly about his own struggles with suicidal thoughts. But more importantly, he describes how he uses the Steps and the tools of recovery to overcome those thoughts — and live his life in a new way.

It's a powerful reminder of the promise of the Twelve Steps: That working the Steps and living spiritual principles leads not just to an end to acting out but to a whole new way of life.

It's my hope that the article gives someone in despair new reasons to live another day — and that no matter how far down the scales they have fallen, they will truly see how their experience can benefit others.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Become a LifeLine Partner Today!

BY JOE H.

**By responding
to this appeal,
you will help
underwrite the
capacity of the
ISO to support
initiatives that can
change lives for
many sex addicts.**

For most of us, addiction to compulsive sexual behavior caused pain to us and those around us. Sex addiction destroys spirituality, intimacy, relationships, and families. Our message of recovery – the SAA program – can make a difference. We have seen lives transformed. We have seen hopelessness turned into hope. We have seen relationships restored.

The ISO was established by the SAA fellowship to help our members support each other and carry the message of SAA to the addict who still suffers. We register new meetings, develop literature, maintain active websites, and support vital outreach efforts.

We need your support to help us serve a fellowship that's been growing at ten percent a year for over a decade. None of us can do it alone, but working together, we can have an enormous positive impact. We need more and better resources. We need more literature. We need to help our international members by translating our message into their language.

Without your support, we simply do not have the funds or the volunteers to develop and implement many of these plans and projects. By responding to this appeal, you will help underwrite the capacity of the ISO to support initiatives that can change lives for many sex addicts. Please consider giving what you can. For many, your gift will be a gift of life.

As we close 2015, the ISO wishes to express its gratitude for the many financial gifts and for the many hours given in service. We ask for your financial contributions today to help us expand our reach to many, many more. Please be generous.

You may sign up as a LifeLine Partner or make a contribution online, using our secure server at www.saa-recovery.org.

ISO NEWS

Goal in Sight for LifeLine Grant Challenge Match

As reported earlier, an anonymous donor-member of SAA agreed to match new or increased LifeLines up to \$30,000. A new or increased LifeLine qualifies for a match equal to your first 12 monthly donations. This means a new \$10 LifeLine is immediately matched with a donation of \$120.

The match program began on September 1, 2015 and is scheduled to run until December 2016. How are we doing? In a word, excellent! We have already matched \$27,624 out of \$30,000 leaving only \$2376 left to match! See chart below.



This additional revenue will help the ISO with on-going outreach efforts such as improving the international website, translations of SAA literature, and outreach campaigns. Thanks to all of the SAA members who have responded so generously to this campaign!

Help us finish the job! Remember that your new or increased LL qualifies for a match equal to your first 12 monthly donations. This means a new \$10 LifeLine is immediately matched with a donation of \$120. We only

ISO NEWS

need \$198 in new or increased LifeLines to finish the match: $\$198 \times 12 = \2376 . Here is the link to enroll or increase your LifeLine: <https://saa-recovery.org/LifeLinePartner/>

Double the impact of your Annual Appeal donation!

The 2015 Annual Appeal is now in full swing during the \$30K Match Challenge. You can double the impact of your Annual Appeal donation by making it in the form of a new or increased LifeLine Partner! You'll help SAA complete the \$30K match and contribute to the Annual Appeal!

A Look Back at 2015 ISO Activity

Here's a look at the activity the International Service Organization performed last year:

Office Communications

- » Outreach emails sent: 325 per month
- » Incoming phone calls: 955 per month
- » Voice mails returned: 42 per month (about 90 percent of telephone calls answered live by a staff member)
- » The outer circle newsletter now sent electronically to over 6800 members on our e-mail list

SAA Store

- » SAA green books sold: 995 per month
- » Convention workshop and speaker audio sales: 180 per month
- » Pamphlets and booklets sold: 7,700 per month
- » Chips, medallions, key chains and bookmarkers sold: 2,900 per month

Free Outreach Activity

- » Printed outreach literature (mostly to prisoners): around 60 per month
- » *The Outer Circle* newsletter (printing and mailing costs):

ISO NEWS

- » Mailed to prisoners: 471 per issue
- » Mailed to members upon request: 688 per issue
- » SAA literature pages (free online views) – 4,130 per month
- » SAA green book available to the blind (from the national library service)

Website Activity

- » Visitors to our outreach website: 46,970 per month

Visitors Page Views

- » Meetings: 16,705 per month
- » For Women's page: 3,613 per month
- » Self-assessment: 5,099 per month
- » *The Outer Circle*: 1,273 per month
- » Group guide: 487 per month
- » SAA literature pages (free online views) – 4,130 per month

Additional Web-based Services

- » Service website
- » Convention website
- » Direct support for Board and LitCom committees

Volunteer Support

- » Total ISO volunteers: 726
- » Volunteer subcommittees (email list count): 78
- » Average volunteers on a committee: 16
- » Average volunteer serves on about 2.4 committees

ISO NEWS

Board Approves Financial Audit, \$10K for Website Update

In the months of October and November, the ISO Board of Trustees approved an independent financial audit of the ISO, beginning with audit year 2015. It also approved \$10,000 for an update to the SAA website. Here's a look at all the Board's actions:

October

- » Approved a new translations policy.
- » Approved a revised travel policy.
- » Approved policy on restricted funds: A. Board policy will be to not permit the acceptance of restricted funds; B. Existing restricted fund accounts will be wound up as soon as feasible.
- » Approved funding for annual independent financial audits of the ISO of SAA, Inc. beginning with an audit for the year 2015.
- » Approved permission to the NYC SAA Intergroup to use the SAA logo on a banner to be hung in the group's new "Intergroup Center."
- » Approved alternates to be reimbursed up to a maximum of \$500 per person for the May 2016 face-to-face Literature Committee meeting that coincides with the 2016 Conference and Convention. There are currently six alternates. Alternates who take the place of a voting member would receive full funding, if the voting member were not able to attend.

November

- » Approved an annual mid-year caucus meeting of the Great Lakes Region for the following purpose: To elect a new Litcom representative.
- » Approved the ISO of SAA Inc. budget for 2016.
- » Approved funding of \$10,100 to revise our outreach website (*saa-recovery.org*).
- » Approved draft version of a *Sponsor's Guide to Service*.

ISO NEWS

Financial Report: Funds Go to Multimedia Outreach Initiatives

In the month of November, we had a budget surplus of \$12,819.11. We had budgeted for a surplus of \$65.40. This increase in surplus was due in part to an anonymous donation of \$12,000 that was not in the budget.

Our gross sales revenue for the SAA Green Book exceeded our estimate by \$1,979.26 in November and has exceeded our estimate by \$11,141.71 for the year. This year, we have outreached or sold an average of 1,000 SAA Green Books per month.

Our pamphlet and booklet sales were below our estimate by \$461.10 for November and are below our estimate by \$1,571.35 for the year. Our bronze medallion were below our estimate by \$47.59 in November but have exceeded our estimate by \$2,874.29 for the year.

Our total sales for November exceeded our estimate by \$1,181.46.

Individual donations exceeded our estimate by \$20,096.12 for November and has exceeded our estimate by \$51,612.73 for the year. The large increase in individual donations were due to an increase in lifeline partners and an anonymous \$12,000 donation. Group donations were below our estimate by \$2,701.96 in November but have exceeded our estimate by \$16,368.58 for the year.

Our product inventory is valued at \$57,528.93.

Our expenses exceeded our estimate by \$4,643.84 in November. The increase in expenses was due in part to the cost of funding pilot outreach projects.

Summary of the annual budget (January 1, 2015, to November 30, 2015):

- » Gross sales have exceeded our estimate by \$14,223.24.
- » Donations have exceeded our estimate by \$67,981.31.
- » Expenses are over our estimate by \$37,540.91.

Our operational reserve is fully funded.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

ISO NEWS

In Your Service,

Joe H.

Executive Director

Literature Committee Reports Accomplishments in 2015

The Literature Committee reported numerous accomplishments in 2015, including:

- » Approved 13 audios for continued sale on SAA Outreach website
- » Approved another 35 meditations for SAA Daily Meditation Book (Total 238 approved to date)
- » Completed index for *Voices of Recovery II* and sent draft to ISO Office
- » Reviewed *Public Information Handbook* and returned to authors with suggested changes
- » Submitted final version of *Getting Started in SAA* to ISO Office
- » Continued work on motion to obtain Conference Approval of Green Book
- » Reviewed all pamphlets and identified material from other fellowships that needs to be either removed or properly cited
- » Approve motion to include a “Featured Audio” in *The Outer Circle*
- » Reviewed Speaker’s Manual and returned to authors with suggested changes
- » Wrote article for *The Outer Circle* listing changes in most recent version of The Green Book as well as information regarding motion for Conference Approval
- » Added additional guidelines to Literature Committee Guidelines for Convention Recordings
- » Began work on fellowship literature needs survey

DEAR GRACE

Planting Newcomer Seeds

BY WOMEN'S
OUTREACH
SUBCOMMITTEE

**We give back
what was given
to us, celebrating
our new life and
freedom from a
deadly disease.
When we do this,
we plant a seed
that may take a
while to grow.**

Dear Grace:

Our meeting gets a lot of newcomers, but they don't seem to stay. Most of them come to one or sometimes two meetings, and then we never see them again. I'm getting discouraged. You know, Grace, frankly, I just don't have the energy to be all welcoming to women I will likely never see again. Any advice for me?

Discouraged

Dear Discouraged,

We hear you. Sometimes, service can feel frustrating, especially when our efforts at attraction appear to be failing. Many of us have started meetings in our towns and done significant outreach, but then sat in the empty room and prayed for addicts to find our meeting. Or we have walked into meeting rooms, straight from a hectic day, wanting just a simple, serene, uplifting meeting, and have found a frantic, weeping newcomer. In all honesty, our very first thought is not always "How can I be of service?" Sometimes it is not so generous.

However, that first thought is a symptom of our disease, is not helpful, and most importantly, can be surrendered. We have learned — through working the steps — the principle of surrender. Faced with a change to "our plans" for the meeting, we surrender what we wanted and maybe even thought we "deserved." (Ha!) No matter what step we're working, we can always seek to know God's will and ask for the power to carry it out. Our self-will can be replaced with compassion and empathy within seconds or minutes, and that's a miracle of recovery.



Our Green Book tells us that service is a paradox. It helps us stay sober ourselves, regardless of the other person's response. "We have learned that the best insurance against relapse is helping another sex addict." *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 75. We give back what was given to us, celebrating our new life and freedom from a deadly disease.

When we do this, we plant a seed that may take a while to grow. Sometimes we help harvest a seed planted by someone else who did the same. Many of us have seen women come into meetings, leave for months or years, and then return when they are ready. It may be helpful to keep that in mind when faced with a newcomer. We don't control the outcome. Our job is to serve.

If that all sounds too difficult, work the steps with your sponsor. Ask other, sober members how they practice surrender. Remember that you too wanted someone sitting in that room at your first meeting. Above all, humbly enlist Higher Power's guidance in all your service efforts.

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

Dealing with Meeting Triggers

BY WILL

Showing others that by working the program, you do not have to act out whenever someone triggers you in a meeting is a powerful act of service.

Dear Will:

I go to a meeting on a night when there is a second meeting in the same room shortly after the conclusion of the first one. A woman whom I had never seen before came to the earlier meeting, and I was triggered by her. I had a hard time focusing on the meeting. I wasn't the only one who was triggered, as several of us shared at the later meeting how difficult a time we had at the meeting. What do I do in a situation like that?

Out of Options

Dear Out:

First, your signature tells me that you have much to learn in recovery. Working the Twelve Steps of SAA shows that we have more options and choices than we ever knew before. One choice is to set a boundary recommended in the Green Book: "A meeting is not a place to meet sexual partners."

That said, we cannot live a happy, joyous, and free life if we live in fear of possible triggers. You were quite fortunate that you had your group right there to support you and help you work the program when some shaky moments came up. Usually, I have to make the effort to pick up a phone and call someone in my group and talk to them about whatever situation I am going through.

Our recovery groups are about tolerance and acceptance and trying to "help out the sex addict who still suffers." The woman in question was probably in the meeting for the exact same reason you were — to get help. I know it is hard, but in times like that, she should be looked upon as a sick person needing help trying to get well rather

than as a sexual object. This is not an easy leap to make, but I have found, with the help of my Higher Power, I can do the right thing.

While praying to my God only for knowledge of His will for me and the power to carry that out, I can stay surrendered to Him and actually have the strength to do the next right thing.

If just praying alone does not give you the strength, then you can call on your brothers and sisters in the program. They can help you out, and even the fact that they felt the same as you is comforting.

However, make sure recovery comes first whatever action is taken. Showing others that by working the program, you do not have to act out whenever someone triggers you in a meeting is a powerful act of service.

My recovery has told me that surrendering and doing the right thing, even with no knowledge or control of the results, is enough to keep me sober today.

Will

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

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.

LIVING IN SOBRIETY

Practicing Service, Humility Keeps Him Sober

BY JOHN W.

Meetings taught me about a sober life and a new kind of friendship. I replaced the time I used to spend acting out with developing a spiritual practice.

Muriel Barbery in *The Elegance of the Hedgehog* writes “I find this a fascinating phenomenon: The ability we have to manipulate ourselves so that the foundation of our beliefs is never shaken.” In a nutshell that is why I waited until I was fifty-eight to join SAA.

As a professional religious worker, I thought it was enough to keep my addiction to porn private. I thought my ability to manage it was all God needed from me. I even thought agreeing with God to keep it secret was my bargaining chip: if God did not rip out my compulsion, then God must approve of it.

Believing I had God’s okay made me feel like a sophisticated insider. Enjoying porn with a twist was no different from liking gourmet cooking. Lost in my self-centeredness, I had no time to notice anything wrong in my life. It took me a very long time to realize I did not want to expose my family to porn focused on pain and humiliation. How could I explain that and risk computer viruses that could attack my family’s financial security? Efforts to nuance my computer use with my wife just earned me membership in the lying-sex-addict-club with a lifetime renewal clause attached.

The day I knew I was powerless was when I saw myself for what I was: an addict sitting at the computer downstairs exposed, ready to masturbate to yet another image while my girls waited upstairs for me to take them to school. This was the first gift of insight from a power greater than myself.

A call to SAA intergroup hotline gave me a sense of relief. But it still took me two months of white-knuckling and my wife’s intervention before I attended a Sunday night meeting. From then on, I never missed my Sunday meeting. Later, I even add-

ed a weekday meeting as a backup for a Sunday night that might be impossible. This has been the key to maintaining my abstinence for more than 10 years: faithful participation in weekly meetings.

Meetings taught me about a sober life and a new kind of friendship. They also gave me basic tools, like being rigorously honest, working the steps with others, seeking a sponsor, using the three circles to set hard and clear boundaries. I replaced the time I used to spend acting out with developing a daily spiritual practice and beginning a life focused on service to others in and outside of the recovery rooms.

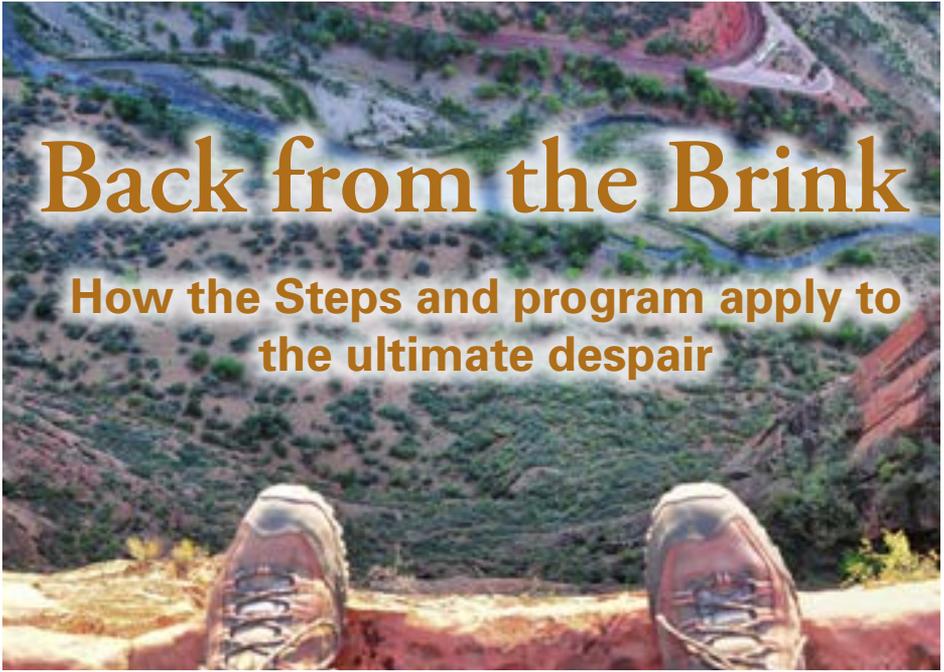
So after many years of trying to sober up on my own, I now live each day abstinent as a gift from my Higher Power. Being abstinent frees me to become sober; sobriety brings serenity based on doing the best I am able. More importantly perhaps, sobriety allows me to focus on the addict who still suffers and the ones in full recovery. Each day is better when I intentionally look outward, which ironically serves to make me keenly aware of how self-centered I can be. Having many years sobriety one day at time teaches me recovery often comes in small steps. Mostly, all I have to do is make sure those steps are on the path to recovery.

Some personal results: I do not have to white-knuckle staying abstinent. I can work the steps in a more relaxed way

to create a better life for others and me. I get more freedom from saying “I am wrong” than explaining how I am right. I find recovering addicts have a funny bone. For example, when my group was struggling with a concept, I realized I had forgotten I knew something relevant, so I exclaimed, “I am an idiot.” Before I could get to the point, another sex addict said, “Sorry, that meeting is down the hall.” The laughter that followed was deep, healing medicine for a full recovery we could share. On exceptionally clear days, I see that a person I cannot stand is just human. More embarrassingly, that person’s faults often embody my own character defects. (Is irony just flattened humor?) I remember that all information is good if used rightly.

Just as plants use rich black dirt — humus, from whence comes the word “humility” — to grow strong, so to be grounded in modesty does not mean keeping clean but rather getting down and dirty in humble service. Today, knowing my flaws is no longer a cause for shame. It is just part of the garden of recovery. “No flaws, no flowers” is another way of saying my most-applied SAA slogan, “Progress, not perfection.”

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.



Back from the Brink

How the Steps and program apply to the ultimate despair

BY ARON K.

W

ithin two months in the summer and autumn of 2013, two of my brothers in recovery died by suicide. I wish that I was surprised when I heard the news of both of their deaths, but I was not. I was angry and sad, but not surprised. Sadly, there is nothing surprising about a sex addict dying by suicide. Ours is a disease that stems from and

leads to isolation, loneliness, self-hatred, fear of living, and fear of consequences; suicidal behaviors thrive under these conditions.

While I was mourning their deaths, I was also thinking that I knew why they had suicided. I (over-) confidently told myself they were relapsing; they weren't going to meetings or working a program; they hadn't admitted powerlessness. Instead of mourning the deaths of my friends from a place of love and grief, I was tarnishing their memories in my mind. By masking my sadness and grief with grandiose beliefs of superiority, it took another six months for mourning to begin.

By that point, my sadness and grief had mixed with my own feelings of isolation, and I found myself experiencing some of the same suicidal feelings I had experienced

before getting sober more than three years earlier. I thought my problems were unique; I magnified my mistakes; I believed my friends had lost interest in me; I believed a few quality problems in my life would cause my demise. My character defects had flared up and they all pounced at the same time. I started thinking suicide was an option again, just like before I got sober.

What follows is a description of how, through working the Twelve Steps, I found relief from suicidal thoughts at that time. I am nervous writing this because I know I can only know what my pain was like. I know that other people's pain is different than mine. I know that other people have struggled for longer with problems much deeper than mine. I have benefited from professional help and many effective therapies exist to help people find relief from suicidal thoughts.

When I was acting out, I was powerless over sexual acting out—once I started, I could not stop. Similarly, I have come to learn that powerlessness applies to many other areas of my life. Step One in the Green Book says that recovery is possible when “we honestly admit that we don't have all the answers and that we need help.” When I am feeling despair, I cannot think my way out. My thinking only increases despair. When I admitted that I was powerless over my despair and suicidal thinking, I had a chance to get better.

I became willing to share about my suicidal thinking with my friends in

recovery. This is not the first time I had done this, and in fact, earlier practice at sharing with brothers and sisters in recovery about suicide helped me share when I was feeling even lower. Even knowing that I could talk about suicidal thoughts with friends didn't relieve me from thinking they might distance themselves from me if they knew.

I felt like I was working Steps Two and Three when I shared with friends and became willing to accept invitations for fellowship even when I felt depressed, exhausted, and buried in my own negative thinking. Even though I thought that I was going to be depressing company, I showed up when I was willing and allowed myself to be in contact with others in recovery who could be a source of strength for me, even when I didn't exactly know what kind of strength I needed.

On one particular evening, I could not say with complete certainty that I felt safe crossing a bridge alone. This was honestly terrifying. I asked for and accepted the help of a brother in the program who was willing to stay on the phone with me while I walked home across the bridge.

My negative thinking continued after this point, but I began to identify patterns and offer my Higher Power the “problems” I was obsessing about. Some were practical problems and others were “problems” my mind created and made worse, even though outside circumstances didn't change. I wrote notes about my

problems and put them in my God box. When I would start obsessing over those problems, I could remind myself I had actually given those problems to God. As time passed, I found more relief.

I don't pretend like this will be the last time I struggle with suicidal thoughts and feelings. But I do know that each time I make it through difficult situations, I am strengthened in my ability to face similar circumstances in the fu-

ture. Today, I have people in my life who know that both in the past and recently, I have grappled with suicidal thoughts.

My recovery has given me increased willingness to share that these struggles are a part of me. I have learned that if I give myself a chance, it gets better. Better might be messy sometimes. Better might be painful. And better might not always feel better. But with sobriety, fellowship, and the steps, better is always possible.

4 Suicide Prevention Tools to Consider

I have learned several tools that have helped me make it through these difficult times and allow me to work the steps around suicidal thoughts without putting myself at greater risk:

- 1. Take suicidal thoughts seriously.** Addiction clouded our judgment. Even if we consider ourselves strong enough to resist the thoughts, acknowledging that we have them may be a first step to healing.
- 2. Share about the topic of suicide.** Some members share on the topic of suicide during meetings, while others choose to talk about suicide only with their sponsor or in one-on-one conversations with other members of the fellowship. You may be surprised to find out how many other members have had similar thoughts.
- 3. Find a suicide prevention partner in the program.** Some members have made agreements to connect with each other any time they think about the topic of suicide, consider suicide, or hear about suicide in the media.
- 4. Use outside help.** Many outside organizations and professionals offer help to people who are considering suicide or are in active crisis. While SAA does not endorse outside organizations, it is important for members to know about the existence of suicide crisis hotlines that exist in many countries. But remember, the operators on these hotlines might not be trained in sex addiction. So for legal safety, you may not want to share all of the details of your addiction with the crisis worker. Those caveats aside, many members of SAA have received help by accessing crisis hotlines.



The Gift of Service

Tradition Seven underlines the importance of this spiritual principle

BY BOB L.

A

s the Chair of Prisoner Outreach, service is a subject that is near and dear to my heart. As part of my efforts, I am finding it difficult to have all the regions represented at each monthly meeting because there aren't enough people willing to step up and do service. The group is also setting some very lofty service goals. We are not letter writers only; we are trying to contact all the prisons in the United States, and in the future, to contact those outside the borders of the United States.

Our goal is to start meetings and to work with institutions to help the addicts within the prisons have a release program that will give them a chance to use our program so they do not re-offend and cause another victim. All of this is a profound service commitment. Prisoner Outreach needs people to step up, to attend monthly

meetings, to be trained in letter writing, and also to be trained in public speaking since we will be working with the staff of prisons and with the public.

But there is a great need for service within our fellowship as a whole.

Just being sober is like being a dry drunk; knowing recovery is, for me, a sense of life. To serve is a gift. To experience this gift, I must give it away.

Pondering this need got me thinking about the Seventh Tradition, which gives a lot of guidance on the subject of service. Tradition Seven from our Green Book states: “Every SAA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.”

Sometimes I hear members refer to the Seventh Tradition as the “money” tradition, but I really feel this is a total misunderstanding of what this tradition is about. When I try to grasp the fullness of Tradition Seven, I am struck by the words from our Green Book and how this relates to my own recovery.

In the first paragraph, I read how every group takes “full” responsibility for “its” own needs, which includes, but is not limited to, expenses. This sentence actually

talks about the overall needs of the group before it says anything about money.

This paragraph goes on to say, “As addicts we were often all ready to shirk responsibility and allow others to take care of us, clean up our messes, and attend to the necessities of life.”

Wow! This was me in my addiction. In recovery I am trying to get out of my Higher Power’s way and to see that others in the fellowship can help me see and feel these truths about myself. They are serving me. Can I pass this service on?

This tradition goes on to say: “In the program, we learn to be accountable for ourselves and our recovery. On the group level, this means accepting complete responsibility for the maintenance of our meetings and not looking to anyone outside us to help pay our bills or facilitate our groups.”

When I hear the words, “accepting complete responsibility,” I feel I am being asked not only to let my Higher Power work through others but also to be willing to help others through service. In the Green Book and in some of our literature, we read that we make one decision in our recovery by ourselves: to admit we are powerless. After that, we are never alone unless we choose to be, because there are others in the fellowship to serve us and to help themselves by helping us.

There are many ways to do service.

Working a step is a service to the fellowship. As we continue to work a step, we

send a clear message to our groups that we care, that we want to get stronger in order to be a healthy part of the fellowship.

When we walk into the meeting room early, we send the message that we care enough to be on time and to build a friendship based on recovery. In the tradition, it says, “Each group must meet certain basic requirements in order to sustain itself. We need members who are willing to meet together and share experience, strength, and hope on a regular basis.”

This statement says that we are here to serve, not to be served, as we used to think we needed to be. No matter how many years someone has in recovery, they can inspire others to do service by being active in service themselves. We are best when we share our recovery with others — and service is a great way to do this.

Later in the tradition, it says: “Each group needs not only money in the basket to pay the rent and buy literature, but members willing to fulfill service commitments.... Being fully self-supporting means being aware of the responsibility of every member for supporting the group.” Where is it asking for money? Does it ask us to serve others? What does responsibility mean?

This tradition ends this way: “Some of us have a natural tendency to sit back and let others do all the work.” Some of us tell ourselves that we are making room for others. Where is our heart? Is this truth or are we looking for an easier, softer way as we get complacent in our recovery? Or is it time to take hold of a position and do some service?

“Others are only too willing to take on service positions and hold them indefinitely. Although this might seem to create a perfect balance between those who take over and those who sit back, in actuality, such action works against becoming self-supporting. A group works well when all members are encouraged to serve in line with their abilities and when service positions are regularly rotated among the group’s members. We are fully self-supporting when we all take ownership of our common welfare, secure in the knowledge that, even if certain members leave, the group will be strong enough to continue to carry its message.”

I believe this message is service to the true self, the inner child, to awaken it and to become ready to make amends to ourselves by doing service for others in order to help us grow.

Service helps me to be alive and to have a sense of self that I did not have as an addict. Service is the Higher Power helping me to get out of myself and be something for others. It is to care enough to do *my* part in this fellowship. Just being sober is like being a dry drunk; knowing recovery is, for me, a sense of life. To serve is a gift. To experience this gift, I must give it away.

Thank you for taking the time to read this article. If you like any of it, use it. Think about your own need to serve this fellowship. Think about the role of being a sponsor and showing what service is by encouraging others to share their excitement for service with the fellowship.

Wonder Women



Reflections on the Fourth Annual Women's Retreat

BY DEB W.

Attempting the 4th International Women's Retreat was not in my budget. However, when I discovered that financial assistance was being offered, I did what I learned to do in Step Seven: I humbly asked for help. I'm very glad I did!

The women's retreat was like a family reunion for me. Because I rely on the phone for meetings and sponsorship, it was a rare treat to hug some of the wonderful people in my support network. I finally met some sisters in the program whom I've been talking with on the phone for months but had never seen before. I also practiced making new friends.

I felt especially honored to meet some program "ancestors" who have been instrumental in the creation of this life-changing program. How lucky I am to have joined this fellowship while the pioneers who founded it are still with us! Hearing what things were like for them in the early days of SAA filled me with an immense sense of appreciation for the technology we now enjoy. Giving and receiving support is much easier with today's computers and cell phones than it was for members who struggled to pay the high cost of long distance phone calls and often communicated by writing letters.

We had several SAA meetings as part of the retreat. The experience of looking into the faces of my program sisters as they shared their experience, strength, and hope was delightful for me. At the end of each meeting, I had the opportunity to join hands with others and say either the serenity prayer or the unity prayer. Unlike phone meetings where there is a lag time between when words are spoken and when they're heard,

which makes praying together messy and disjointed, in person we said the words in unison. I felt so much power, emotion, and connection that my eyes welled up with tears each time, and I felt less alone than ever before.

The retreat gave me opportunities to be taught and to teach, to give and receive, to serve and be served. I attended workshops and shared during discussions. I pitched in and helped with various chores when I could, which gave me opportunities to work alongside others and get to know them a bit better. I gave and received written or verbal affirmations.

During meetings, activities, and my interactions with others, I tried to be emotionally and mentally present by listening with empathy and sharing my thoughts and feelings. Because I was trying to remain open, I felt a sense of unity and connection with the participants. Even though the attendees were from a variety of geographic locations and backgrounds, I knew we shared the desire to stop addictive sexual behavior (Tradition Three).

The retreat also highlighted a couple of my recovery areas that still need healing. I had to admit powerless over my continued inability to relax and participate in some of the fun group activities, such as drumming. I watched others expressing themselves with music, dance, and art, and I found myself wanting to be more like them. I was grateful for their demonstrating what I am working towards as I become willing to allow my Higher Power to remove my character

weaknesses that inhibit my ability to join in the fun.

Receiving is difficult for me too, whether someone gives me material gifts or takes time to give me attention. I'm still undergoing the evolution "from shame to grace" that we talk about in SAA, so my typical reaction is a feeling that I'm unworthy or undeserving when people want to give to me. Thus at first, I felt uneasy accepting financial help to attend the retreat, but while I was there, I learned that many of the donations came from men as a Step Nine gesture of amends to women in general.

In addition, there were men who donated hours of service in planning, preparing, and helping with an event that they would not be attending. One of those men arrived to help with transportation while we were having a meeting on the last day. He was invited inside, where we gave him a standing ovation. He put his palms together, fingers touching his lips, and tearfully nodded acceptance of our thanks. The way he responded made a deep impression on me, and since that experience, I've tried to be more like him as I practice humbly receiving love or gratitude from others.

I left the retreat with many gifts that couldn't be put in my luggage but that I still carry in my heart. I'd connected with several people. I'd learned about program tools and principles from workshops, meetings, and conversations. I'd learned things I still need to work on. Best of all, I'd learned a lot about graciously receiving.

ISO ANNOUNCEMENTS

IASA Outreach Submits new Guide to Literature Committee

The Intimacy and Sexual Avoidance Outreach Committee is pleased to announce that the *Intimacy and Sexual Avoidance First Step Guide* has been submitted to the Literature Committee of SAA. In addition, we'd like to make available our contact email for anyone interested in finding out more about intimacy and sexual avoidance recovery. The contact email is avoidance@saa-recovery.org. To see when the IASA meets, go to p. 29.

SAA Pamphlets Now Available to Read Online

The ISO is pleased to announce the availability of SAA pamphlets on the SAA website (saa-recovery.org). The pamphlets may be found by following the "SAA Literature" sub-tab from the home page. Also included are the pamphlets in Spanish and the "Pathway to Recovery" pamphlet in French.

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

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

Submissions Sought for SAA Meditation Book

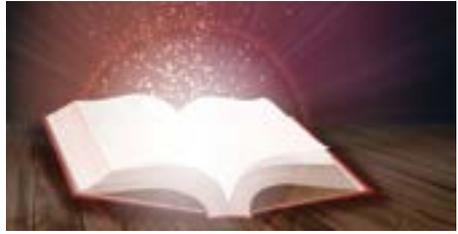
The ISO Literature Committee welcomes submission of entries from the fellowship-at-large for possible inclusion in the SAA Meditation Book. The Meditation Book will consist of 366 entries, one for each day of the calendar year.

To ensure consideration, submissions should contain the following:

- » A short quotation taken from SAA publications that are Literature Committee approved or Conference approved (see list below). The quote must include the source and page number using the following style: Sex Addicts Anonymous, page 20. Quotes from other sources will not be considered.
- » The main body is an expansion of the topic or principle, ideally including perspective on a particular aspect of SAA recovery through your experience, your strength,

ISO ANNOUNCEMENTS

your hope, and your voice. Please note that we have found that using “I” rather than “we” in the body of the meditation makes for a stronger message. This is the critical component of your submission. We can add a quote or an affirmation, but only you can provide your ES&H.



- » At the bottom of the page, a concise statement to summarize the main idea of the meditation or to offer a poignant challenge or affirmation.

Each entry should be 200-350 words including the quotation and the closing affirmation (1.5 - 3 sides, handwritten). Submissions must include your name and contact information to be cross-referenced with your release form.

Sources for Opening Quotation:

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

Release Form: The ISO must have a signed release before a submission can be considered. 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.

Please send a digital copy of your submission (attached as .doc, .docx, .rtf, .txt, or in the body of the email) to: meditation@saa-recovery.org.

Include complete contact information and, if possible, a signed scanned release. All submitters must send or have sent a release form - one per author - before submissions can be considered.

You can also send your meditation, contact information, and signed release by postal mail to: Meditation Book, ISO, PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270.

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:

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

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CALENDAR

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

First Sunday of the month

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

LGBT Outreach — 1:00 p.m.

Conference Steering Committee (CSC) -
Policy & Procedure — 2:00 p.m.

Prisoner Outreach — 8:00 p.m.

Second Saturday of the month

Intimacy and Sexual Avoidance — 8 a.m.

Author's Group — 4:30 p.m.

Women's Outreach — 5:00 p.m.

Second Sunday of the month

CSC - Area Formation — 2:00 p.m.

CSC - Nominating — 3:00 p.m.

Literature Committee — 4:00 p.m.

General Outreach — 6:30 p.m.

Third Tuesday of the month

CSC - Policy Structure Work Group — 5:00 p.m.

Third Thursday of the month

Seventh Tradition — 6:00 p.m.

2016 Convention — 7:00 p.m.

Third Saturday of the month

CSC - Twelve Concepts Work Group — 12:00 p.m.

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

CSC — 2:00 p.m.

Meditation Writing Workshop — 5:00 p.m.

Intergroup Communications — 8:00 p.m.

To attend a committee meeting, you must be a member or be invited. If you're interested in joining a committee, email info@saa-recovery.org or call the ISO office.

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

January

The Shoreline Monday Night SAA group is offering the "Basic Recovery for SAA Workshop-Twelve Steps in One Day" in Shoreline, WA, on Saturday, January 9. The workshop will also be available via teleconference. More information at www.pugetsoundsaa.org/basics.

February

The Toronto Area Intergroup of SAA is hosting a winter conference on Saturday, February 27, 2016. This one-day event is open to anyone desiring to stop addictive sexual behavior. Activities include speakers and interactive small group sessions.

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 at least two months in advance of the event.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Get Your Story Published in *The Outer Circle*

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

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

Deadlines for Submission

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

Here are some general writing guidelines:

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

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

General Release Form

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

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

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

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Printed name: _____

Witness: _____ Date: _____

Printed name: _____

SAA TWELVE STEPS

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

