

THE OUTER CIRCLE

Foundations for Success
What does it take for the fellowship to thrive?

PLUS

New SAA Website

Dealing with Triggering Stories

Listening to Relate





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.

March - April 2016

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FROM THE EDITOR

Service, Please

BY GARY T.

**Building a spirit
of service into
meetings is a
great way to
build a stronger
fellowship.**

Recovery is full of paradoxes. When I first started the program, I used to hate those paradoxes. They just seem so... contradictory! Now I see them as spiritual confirmations.

One of my favorite paradoxes is that I can only keep what I give away. From my earliest years of recovery, I learned the truth of that paradox in my first acts of service to the fellowship.

I was amazed at how the tiniest efforts — helping set up chairs or make coffee — gave me so much in return. I then built on those acts of service by chairing a meeting and serving as Intergroup rep. One of the most profound ways the gift of service manifests is through sponsorship.

For me, giving away what I have has been the cornerstone of my recovery.

I'm beginning to take on new service roles that are more about outreach — giving away what I have more on a group level. I believe this work can be profound, not just for me, but for the fellowship as a whole.

But it's going to take a concerted effort throughout the fellowship to instill that spirit of service from the ground up.

The article on page 18 from the Maine fellowship is a great example of how building a spirit of service into meetings is a great way to build a stronger fellowship.

“We have found that by engaging members in service, stronger connections are made, a sense of belonging is created, and recovery is supported,” the author writes.

In other words, what applies to me — that I can only keep what I give away — applies to the fellowship as a whole.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Seeking Input from the Transgender Community

BY JOE H.

**Please share
this letter at
your groups and
intergroups.
Encourage
transgender
members and
others to provide
feedback.**

Fear is a powerful emotion and a roadblock to recovery for many suffering sex addicts. Fear of being discovered, fear of people in the program who we see as different from ourselves, and fear of change in our lives, are just a few of many uncertainties we face each day.

My hope is that when a suffering addict enters one of our rooms for the first time, the group has already worked to create a safe space and has a plan for making the newcomer feel welcomed.

Creating and providing a welcoming environment consistently does not happen easily or by chance. It requires careful thought and planning from the mindset of the newcomer. Are you prepared to welcome anyone into your meeting and our fellowship? Your group may decide to restrict attendance based on gender or require all newcomers to be 12-stepped before attending.

Regardless of such procedures, please have a plan to help anyone, especially newcomers, who shows up feel safe and find the support that is so critical for recovery to take root and flourish.

It is in this spirit that I direct your attention to a brief letter from the General Outreach Committee on page 9. The committee is seeking input from our transgender members. Please help the General Outreach Committee by getting the word out. Share this letter at your groups and intergroups. Encourage transgender members and others to provide feedback.

We look forward to sharing any feedback or information we receive with you. My hope is that you will use this information to make your meeting a safer environment for all who seek recovery.

LETTERS

Article Unfairly Blames Women for Triggering Others

Greetings to the editor, and thank you for serving our fellowship.

I have written once before on this topic, and I feel upset that the topic has reemerged in the current issue of TOC. In the “Dear Will” column, a man writes and complains that: “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.”

These lines are problematic in more than one way, primarily in that the writer is blaming this woman for his difficulties, and that he also is speaking for other members of the group. No egregious behavior on the part of the woman is described, so I wonder if women who are reading this feature are thinking “Gee, just my being in a meeting is triggering?!” The writer of the letter is taking no responsibility for his failure to be sober minded during the meeting.

Publishing this letter (whether a real letter or one that has been made up by “Will”) goes against the welcome that TOC and our organization are purporting to offer to women who come in to SAA, and Will’s response seems less than in support of this welcome, as he says, “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.” This response seems to validate the writer’s observation that women are indeed triggering, and that others are responsible when we resort to sexual preoccupation in the presence of someone to whom we feel attracted.

I wish that, in response, the columnist had written about this phenomenon of blaming others instead of tending to our own difficulties and how to become free from that habit.

I request that you present this other way of seeing this situation, and ask that as editor, you watch for these not-so-subtle attacks on women.

Tim E.

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

ISO NEWS

New Streamlined SAA Website in the Works

The information super highway is here to stay. As we grow at a rate exceeding 10 percent worldwide, there is a challenge to get information about recovery from sex addiction to a worldwide audience and in many languages.

The Internet can be a challenge, so how does a recovery organization such as SAA put up a website? Who decides what content to post? What happens when technology changes and a website is out of date?

A new website is coming later this year! Even if you have never been involved in designing a website, maybe you can imagine some of the decisions that must be made.

When you Google SAA, what kind of website should you get? As a newcomer what information is important? What if I don't know if I am a sex addict?

The voting members of the Information Systems and Online Presence Committee are two members each from the ISO office, the Literature Committee, and the Board.

The committee also has non-voting members who may offer technology, recovery, and other viewpoints. This committee works in conjunction with the website developer to design a landing page and other content for the entire world.



ISO NEWS

The committee decided that SAA needs a landing page that has less information than the current web page. All the current information is still going to be there, just in a slightly different spot.

The landing page has fewer places to click than the old page, which had many choices. What shape are the buttons? What color are the buttons? Where are they positioned on the web page? What do the buttons say to a newcomer or to a current SAA member? The ISOPCOM decides all of this content.

How do conventions, events, literature, and announcements get posted on the website? The ISOPCOM has approval to post Literature Committee approved material. Events, such as retreats, are screened for content, then posted. Many event announcements are returned to the author for edit if they need personal contact information or an address where an event is going to be held.

The new website will give the ISO the ability to better carry the message to the addict who still suffers by being faster, less complicated, mobile-device friendly, and easier to use.

\$30,000 Match Challenge Completed in 4 Months

Last September, SAA announced its first ever donor matching gift challenge. An anonymous member of SAA offered to match new or increased LifeLines up to \$30,000.

The match dates were September, 2015 - January, 2016, or 16 months. Our fellowship responded immediately with enthusiasm and generosity and completed the match in December, 2015 — in only 120 days!

The ISO received 78 new LifeLines and 46 increased LifeLines for a total of 124 responses to the match. The monthly dollar amount of LifeLines increased by \$2,219, from \$16,950 to \$19,169.

Our member-donor was impressed by the way our fellowship geared up and worked on the project. He also stated that he would be willing to participate in another matching gift campaign in the future. Thanks to everyone who made this campaign so successful!

ISO NEWS

Outreach Committee Seeks Feedback from Transgender Community

The General Outreach Committee of the ISO (International Service Organization) would like to hear from any transgender members of our fellowship willing to share their experience, strength, and hope in recovery. We as a committee are seeking ways to improve the safety and the comfort level in meetings, retreats, and other venues for all of our members.

One area that we need input from is the transgender community. In your meetings and your recovery, what is working and what could use improvement?

Our goal is to take your feedback and put it in a form that could be shared with the fellowship as a whole so that we may continue to support each other in our recovery from sexual addiction.

Please send replies to: outreach.feedback@saa-recovery.org

On behalf of the General Outreach Committee, I would like to thank you for your service and willingness to share your experience, strength, and hope.

Clif G.

Chair

Board Approves CSC Face to Face, Raises Allowed Gift Amount

In the months of December and January, the ISO Board of Trustees approved funding for a Conference Steering Committee face-to-face meeting in Houston. It also agreed to raise the gift limit allowed to 3 percent of the ISO's annual budget. Here's a look at all the Board's actions:

December:

- » Approved hotel contract for the 2017 Convention.
- » Approved the Executive Director's Performance Review Process.
- » Approved funding for up to nine Conference Steering Committee members for two and a half days of mid-year face-to-face meetings to be held in Houston, Texas, on February 5 and 6 and the morning of the 7th, 2016, with arrival on February 4 and departure on February 7 — or at another time if more appropriate. Standard travel reimbursements are requested.

ISO NEWS

January:

- » Approved motion to increase the gift limit of members and member groups to the ISO to 3 percent of the annual budget of the ISO at the date the gift is given.

Budget Surplus Lower than Expected in January

In the month of January, we had a budgeted surplus of \$17,560.57. We had estimated a surplus of \$28,866.50. The reduction of \$11,305.93 of our budgeted surplus was due, in part, to our donations being below our estimated budget by \$14,962.42, with \$8,630 of that due to the Houston Giving Thanks coming in under budget.

Our gross sales revenue for the SAA Green Book was below our estimate by \$342.16 in January. Our pamphlet and booklet sales exceeded our estimate by \$742.31 and our bronze medallion exceeded our estimate by \$1,407.31.

Our total sales exceeded our estimate by \$2,146.40.

Individual donations were below our estimate by \$11,881.58 for January. This was mainly due to the Houston Giving Thanks coming in under budget. Group donations were below our estimate by \$3,080.84 in January.

Our product inventory is valued at \$58,022.49.

Our expenses were below our estimate by \$4,240.70 in January.

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

- » Gross sales have exceeded our estimate by \$2,146.40.
- » Donations were below our estimate by \$14,962.42.
- » Expenses were below our estimate by \$4,240.70.

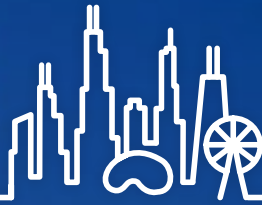
Our operational reserve is fully funded.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

In Your Service,

Joe H.

Executive Director



29TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

WE ARE NOT ALONE



To receive the special ISO hotel room rates,
PLEASE REGISTER ASAP!

DEAR GRACE

Dealing with Triggering Stories

BY WOMEN'S
OUTREACH
SUBCOMMITTEE

It is very easy to blame the story and say it is 'offensive' or 'triggering' when in fact, our reaction is yet another manifestation of our disease.

Dear Grace:

I recently attended a telephone meeting with about 30 men, and it appeared that I was the only woman on the call. I introduced myself and was welcomed. For the topic they read a story out of the back of the green book which I felt gave too much detail of a man's acting out. My first thought was, "Why in the world did they read that? Don't they know how triggering it is?" I felt it was not my place to speak up, being the first time I had attended that particular meeting. I chose to hang up. Am I the only one who finds stories like this triggering? Why didn't anyone else seem uncomfortable?

Sincerely,

Sick of Stories

Dear SOS,

It is understandable for stories to be triggering, especially when we are new. One recovery sister said, "When I was a newcomer, I could be triggered by a shadow. It didn't take much." As we grow in sobriety and the program, though, we learn how to listen with empathy.

In SAA, sexuality is discussed between members openly and frankly and usually without the degrading humor, which often comes with our addiction. Newcomers who aren't accustomed to this can feel surprised and uncomfortable when they hear sex spoken of in such a way and may experience culture shock. We may ask ourselves, "Why is that person talking about this? Don't they know that they're not supposed to talk about those things in a group setting? Is this normal? Do I

have to share this openly? Is anybody else uncomfortable? Should they be embarrassed? Shouldn't I be embarrassed? I think I need help, but OMG I'm not sure I can handle this!!!" Then we do what sex addicts do best: get stuck in triggering obsessions about sex. At that point, it is very easy to blame the story and say it is "offensive" or "triggering" when, in fact, our reaction is yet another manifestation of our disease.

Each of our stories might be considered triggering. When we first hear stories, many of us think, "Well, I am not as messed up as that person! I've never done THAT horrible thing!" With time and sobriety, though, many of us find that our Higher Power gives us the ability to empathize with the pain of the person sharing, and we find we have more in common than we originally thought. We realize we are all hurting, broken sex addicts — human beings who have hurt and been hurt by other human beings — and we are all people who desire recovery. The field becomes level.

It can take some time for men and women sex addicts to learn to relate to one another in a safe and healthy way. The best way to get to this point in sobriety is to start building recovery in the program with meetings and people who are safe for us. The Green Book suggests, "If we don't feel comfortable



at a particular meeting, we can try another." (Sex Addicts Anonymous, page 11). There are a wide variety of both in-person and telemeetings in SAA, with various focuses, formats, and attendance, including women-only, speaker, step, topic, check-in, LGBT, and intimacy-avoidance meetings. Try different meetings until you find the right one for you.

Blessings,

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

Addressing Unwanted Dreams

BY WILL

**One thought
for dealing
with triggering
objects is to
say, 'Thank you
God for making
something so
beautiful,' and
then letting it go.**

Dear Will,

Each night, I feel entrapped in sexual desires (even after nine years of no touch of a woman). I despise having these desires. But surrounded by the pictures of women the inmates post or the shows they watch on television, I know how they are triggered.

How can I eliminate or have a change of thought as these triggers appear before me? I try to reject my thoughts immediately or walk away. But nothing seems to keep me from falling into sexual dreams.

Unnecessary Dreamer

Dear Unnecessary Dreamer,

Step Six says, "In taking this step, we acknowledge that many of our feelings, thoughts, and patterns around sex are beyond our ability to manage and won't disappear overnight. Our part is to become willing and ready for our Higher Power to move us toward healthier ways of being with our sexuality."

For some of us, being incarcerated limits our ability to manage our environment, and it can feel as if our minds will also remain prisoner to our addictive thoughts. However, it sounds as if you are moving in a positive direction when you walk away from triggering situations and tell those addictive voices in your head, "NO!"

One thought my sponsor shared with me in my recovery for dealing with triggering people was to say, "Thank you God for making something so beautiful," and then letting it go. I found this practice helped me humanize the individual and moved them away from an image of objectification and into a reflection of my fellow human being.



It can be a challenge to identify as a sex addict in prison; doing so can open you up to harassment or violence. However, you can be honest about being an addict. I have spoken with several members of the program who have also been incarcerated in some capacity. The consensus was to be as honest with your fellow inmates as you can in order to protect your safety and to be fully honest with your Higher Power, your sponsor, and your self.

If you haven't done so already, contact the SAA Prison Outreach Program and ask for a sponsor with whom you can be honest. Attend available Twelve-Step meetings and share about your addictive behaviors.

And continue to remove yourself from triggering situations (television shows, images on walls, inappropriate conversations, etc). When you do so, take

solace in your recovery and working the steps. One suggestion for dealing with unwanted thoughts resides in Step Eleven, which says, "Some of us felt resistance when we tried to meditate. Learning to be quiet and pay attention can often be quite difficult for us. In addition, we may be disturbed by unpleasant thoughts and feelings rising to the surface. We can be gentle with ourselves, gradually getting used to the experience of being still and attentive. If we are patient and stay with our meditation, we also find that the disagreeable emotions eventually pass..."

In recovery,

Will

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

LIVING IN SOBRIETY

Continuous Sobriety, One Day at a Time

BY ANONYMOUS

**What I experience
today is a gift.
With the gift of
sobriety comes a
responsibility to
continue to
make steady
effort as if my life
depended on it.**

I have been abstinent from my inner circle behaviors for more than fourteen years.

How have I achieved sobriety?

From one point of view, I haven't, exactly. All I have is today. I haven't graduated or earned something like an advanced degree or a black belt. What I experience today is a gift. With the gift of sobriety comes a responsibility to continue to make steady effort as if my life depended on it.

I use the words "as if," but, in fact, my life does depend on my sobriety. Without my sobriety being a top priority from day to day, I wouldn't be alive. My addiction has fatal consequences if it is not arrested.

How does my addiction show up? What behaviors do I avoid? My inner circle includes, but is not limited to: pornography, compulsive masturbation, sex outside of a committed dating relationship and pursuit of unavailable persons

I have honored my inner circle for five-thousand-two hundred-ninety-two days — more than fourteen years.

When I began recovery from sex addiction in 1996, I was already familiar with the Twelve Steps. Sexual recovery wasn't my first, or even second, program. After two years of complete abstinence from masturbation, I had a slip, and I had lots of difficulty putting together any consecutive sobriety time.

One evening, I was attending a sexual recovery meeting of another fellowship and met a gentleman who suggested I try a meeting for newcomers in SAA. I went, and I stayed. I kept coming back. To this day, I attend meetings and have a home group. If I am ever wondering if I should attend a meeting, I put an end to my mental debate, and I go.

I have worked the Steps with a sponsor, and I sponsor others to work the Steps. I volunteer for service positions and support business meetings. I read and study SAA literature and encourage others to do the same. I have attended some International SAA Conventions and many annual retreats in our region. I've even had the pleasure of attending SAA while overseas for business.

After more than three years in SAA, I met with my sponsor to address the option of adding healthy masturbation to my outer circle. He encouraged me to use “outside help” to clarify what that activity would look like for me. The insights from a professional sex therapist were invaluable. My healthy experience involves self-respect and prayer. The therapist also emphasized the importance of balanced self-care: rest, nutrition, exercise.

To this day, I strive for adequate sleep at night (and quick naps at points in my active day, if they are ever an option), a nourishing diet, and cardiovascular/strengthening activity for my body.

For years, I've emphasized these three components of healthy living with sponsors. Working with another addict is a very rewarding experience that also strongly supports my own sobriety.

Fellowship activity with other SAA members — whether enjoying some casual dining, taking a hike, watching events, playing board games — these have

all helped me live a more engaged and fulfilling social life. I replace destructive isolation with new experiences altogether, walking briskly to my outer circle.

My greatest outer-circle activity has been pursuing a life-long dream of working as a musician. Outside of my current professional career, I have outfitted a music studio space, and I continue to grow as a musician. I have Twelve Step recovery to thank, as these experiences would have been literally impossible to accomplish on my own.

My life in recovery as a musician is closely interdependent with my respect for a Power greater than myself, and the quiet time I spend daily is a fundamental piece of my sober living.

Prayer is an experience I live and breathe, and I am very attracted to it throughout my day. I am never shy to mention prayer and the abundance of the universe with my colleagues in recovery.

I continue to be amazed how any efforts we make never go unnoticed by the universe; they are always rewarded. My plan for recovery continues: Keep coming back and showing up, one day at a time!

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

Foundation for Success



What does it take to create a thriving fellowship? One group shares its ideas

W

BY REGIS L.

e are writing this narrative in order to share with others in SAA recovery the culture, focus, and practices of our Maine groups, which we believe have led to our growth and success in helping reach and support those who suffer from sexual addiction. We hope sharing our story with the ISO and other groups from around the country

can open a dialogue that will benefit all of us as we strive to serve those who are still sick and suffering. By sharing our successes and challenges, we hope to learn from each other and, in so doing, better serve our members.

The first SAA meeting in the State of Maine took place on January 8, 2007, at a church in downtown Portland. There were four people attending, all of whom were members of other “S” programs.

Since January of 2007, SAA of Maine has grown to six meetings in four cities, serving approximately 100 members per week, in a state with a population of just over one million people

In 2014, SAA of Maine created an Inter Group (IG), with each group selecting a representative, and with its focus on being a mechanism to exchange ideas, best practices, share services, and to help organize and support two retreats per year. We now conduct one overnight retreat in the fall and a one-day retreat in the spring.

We hope sharing our story with the ISO and other groups from around the country can open a dialogue that will benefit all of us.

As the IG began to meet, one of the subjects that came up was why SAA was growing and attracting new members while other “S” groups in the state appeared to be shrinking. This led to numerous discussions of how SAA operates, its culture, and how we seem to be meeting the needs of our members. We came to some conclusions, and although we do not claim to have all the answers, we would like to share what we believe has worked for us in Maine.

We believe there are four legs to the stool that is a successful SAA group.

- 1. We are inclusive, seeking all who suffer, just as the Green Book states on page 1.**
- 2. We go out of our way to serve newcomers.**
- 3. We focus on sponsorship and working the Steps.**
- 4. We believe strongly in and encourage our members to be of service to their groups.**

These four legs seem pretty simple, but we believe it is how we implement them that make the difference. Below is a brief outline of how we have taken steps to emphasize the four legs of the stool.

Inclusiveness

All of our meetings are closed and require a short phone interview through our state-wide information line. This not only affords us a certain level of safety, but also affords an opportunity to let the potential member know they are not alone, that we are a judgment-free zone, and that all who suffer are welcome. Our phone person is encouraged to be compassionate, caring, and welcoming. We do not just hand out meeting information and call it good. We try from the beginning to make a connection.

The feedback we have received from newcomers is that the first phone call, although scary to make, was encourag-

ing and full of hope. We also make it a point in business meetings to emphasize the need to be inclusive, and to talk through any misgivings members may have around gender, orientation, or acting out behavior that may be holding them back from fully participating.

By engaging members in service, stronger connections are made, a sense of belonging is created and recovery is supported.

Service to Newcomers

We have all experienced meetings in which a newcomer attends, never to be seen again. Often, it appears the person is in the right place but for some reason, chooses not come back. We strive for an atmosphere that is welcoming, and we have put practices in place to try to help with connection. We conduct newcomer meetings for all newcomers. We follow a format in which members volunteer to tell a short version of their story, what brought them to SAA, and what the program has meant to them. We then give the newcomer an opportunity to share why he/she has come to SAA, of course completely voluntarily.

We do not require any newcomer to speak if they do not wish to. We encourage newcomers to ask questions either during the newcomer meeting or after the meeting in a more relaxed setting. We also give all newcomers a welcome packet which includes a welcome letter, meeting places and times, a member phone list, and a full assortment of SAA pamphlets.

Sponsorship and the Steps

The third of the four legs of the stool is sponsorship and working the Steps. In newcomer meetings and regular topic meetings, the subject of working the Steps with a sponsor is reinforced on a regular basis. Most of the Maine meetings have a temporary sponsor program in which all newcomers are offered a temporary sponsor at their first meeting.

Volunteer temporary sponsors are on a list and the next sponsor up takes the newcomer if the newcomer agrees. This may mean simply someone to call with questions or for support, up to actually beginning to do Step work. Our intention is to not let a newcomer leave the room without an offer of help from an experienced member.

Our groups have an expectation that all sponsees will become sponsors as soon as they are able. Our experience has shown that we benefit from helping others, so we encourage all our members to become sponsors.

Most of our groups also hold anniversary meetings for members celebrating a

year or more of sobriety. We have found these celebrations a significant motivator for new members who see that long term sobriety is possible. They are not only a celebration for the member but for the program as well. Each celebration is evidence that the program works.

Service

The fourth leg of the stool, and by no means the least, is service to the group. All our groups offer numerous service positions ranging from greeter, chip club, secretary, treasurer, etc., and we encourage everyone to be of service to their fellow members. Sponsors encourage their sponsees to participate early in recovery. Our groups rotate positions on an annual basis so no one becomes entrenched. We also request volunteers to help organize retreats and to help with anniversary celebrations. We have found that, by engaging members in service, stronger connections are made, a sense of belonging is created, and recovery is supported.

Challenges

With all the good news our efforts have created, we continue to have challenges in some areas. The most significant is retaining women members. The vast majority of our meetings are all men.

When women attend, in spite of our best efforts, retention is a problem. Through our information line, we encourage women to make use of ISO support with the Women's Outreach Program, electronic, tele-meetings, and

long distance sponsorship. Nevertheless, we feel we are lacking in being of help to women in need.

Retention in general is still a challenge. Our phone line statistics indicate about half the people who call seeking help actually attend a meeting. Although we do not track attendance, it appears, anecdotally, that of those who attend one meeting, few make it to six months. We wish we could do more in the area of retention.

Finally, we face challenges in attraction. Although, in the last couple of years, more and more therapists have recommended SAA to their clients and even some enlightened probation/parole officers, we believe we are just scratching the surface of those in need in our communities. We are open to new ways of thinking in this regard.

Conclusion

We hope this narrative is of use to the ISO and SAA groups around the world. We welcome feedback and suggestions on how other groups have found success in their efforts to support recovery, and we hope some of our ideas and practices are of help to others as well.

Share Your Thoughts

What are you doing to grow your local groups? Send your ideas to toc@saa-recovery.org and we'll share them with the fellowship!



Listen Up

Listening to others in meetings helps us relate to them — and ourselves

BY BERNARD E.

I started an SAA meeting in my area a couple of years ago. I have always tried to be aware that this is not “my” meeting and to surrender control of the meeting to my Higher Power. Since its inception, the meeting has grown quite a bit, with many newcomers joining. I have tried to teach the newcomers the traditions I have learned about the fellowship through example: how to share experience, strength, and hope at meetings; the importance of service and fellowship; how to welcome newcomers, etc.

During this time, I have found myself sometimes getting agitated during others’ shares, because they weren’t doing it in the “right way.” Some examples of sharing in the “wrong way” include:

- » Using the word “they” or talking in the third person, instead of using “I” or “we.”
- » Ranting or venting during a share.
- » Dragging out a share and depriving someone else of the chance to share.
- » Giving unasked advice during a share.
- » Quoting outside literature or a religious scripture during a share.

Listening to one of the SAA conference talks, I heard someone recommend that I

listen to each share during a meeting to find something I can relate to. On this topic, the Green Book also says on page 11: “At meetings we discover that we are not unique. If we listen to the experiences and feelings we have in common, we will find that we can trust others to know who we really are, and still be accepted by them.” It also says: “We listen respectfully to what others have to say and share our experience as seems appropriate.”

After hearing this, I started trying to “listen to relate” when someone shared during a meeting. When I start to feel judgmental about someone during a share, I remind myself that I’m not in control of the meeting, my Higher Power is, and that my only job is to listen respectfully and to find something in the share that I can relate to.

I discovered that when I do this, it changes the way I feel when I listen to somebody share. I find my judgmental attitude diminishes. I find my empathy for the person increasing. I find I’m much more at peace during other people’s shares, and I experience the presence of my Higher Power more during those moments.

I’m still unsure at times about how much guidance I should give to newcomers and my sponsees about how to share. I feel very hesitant to talk to group members or my sponsees and give advice or criticize their way of sharing, as this is such a sensitive thing and people are opening up their hearts.

I have started thinking that a workshop for our fellowship might be the best

platform to talk about this subject. How to share in a meeting is something that you have to learn. It does not always come naturally, and people do not always just “pick it up” from the people who have been in recovery a long time.

Outside of meetings, I have discovered that I can take the idea of “listening to relate” into my everyday life. I can listen to relate when people talk to me. I can find the good in what they are talking about, instead of analyzing what they said for any sign of weakness.

I am quite analytical and approach life with a critical eye but, in recovery, I have discovered that I cannot apply this attitude to people. When I listen to people and try to relate, I find that I feel more positive towards them, and that I tend to like them more.

I have always been very careful to show my approval of people. But when they are saying things I do not agree with I find it hard to show approval of anything else they are saying. I have come to realize that this is one way I try to control people. By looking for the good in what they are saying, I am validating them, and not trying to control them by my reaction to what they are saying.

Meetings have taught me that I can find a connection point between myself and any other person, no matter how different from me they seem. I can do this by practicing “listening to relate.”

Editor’s Note: This article is from an SAA member in South Africa.



What Goes In?

What our attitudes toward giving says about our recovery

BY TIM T.

Imagine I am at a meeting and the donation basket is about to be passed to me. What thoughts come to mind? I may be thinking one of the following:

- » “I’ll give my usual dollar.”
- » “I don’t have any money this time.”
- » “They are always asking for money. I wonder where the money goes?”
- » “What are other people giving? I usually use that as a guide.”
- » “I’m already giving to Lifeline Partners so I don’t have to give here.”

But when the basket comes around, do I think about my group’s primary purpose? Tradition Five states: “Each group has but one primary purpose, to carry its message to the sex addict who still suffers.”

Do I think about giving to our group, intergroup, and ISO to help with outreach? Or do I think, “I just want to be at my meeting and get help with my sobriety?”

Whatever I am thinking may be based on a variety of reasons, such as my ability to give and the value I place in the program. It is my own personal choice, and there is no requirement to give.

However, perhaps I could consider this: The ISO recently stated, “We currently do not receive enough financial contributions from our members to meet the financial needs of many of our outreach projects.”

Clearly, more generosity is needed. So the next time the donation basket comes around figuratively or literally, ask yourself, “How has SAA helped me?”

There is no dollar amount that can be placed on a saved marriage or a restored quality of life. The simple act of giving at a meeting is in its own way an amends for the harmful acts I committed during active addiction. I keep that in mind when thinking about how much of a donation to leave. Other Twelve Step groups suggest that \$3 a meeting is appropriate. Should members of SAA consider the same amount? Should I?

What was my attitude about money when I was using it to act out? How much did I spend? Is it anywhere close to my current contribution to SAA?

So, here is the basket. What goes in?

Editor's Note: Tim T is the Seventh Tradition Committee Chair

Acceptance By Paul P.

When my spirits are down
Things aren't going my way
Am I really angry at him?
I can take a minute to pray

Others moods change like the weather
Sunny then suddenly erratic it appears
Am I willing to accept a person?
A situation, an event, long held fears

I cannot change the past
Things that traumatized my view
A new attitude of acceptance
Tolerance patience and love too

Anything that troubles the soul
It's my thinking that creates the pain
Can I adjust to what's happened?
Ill feelings may not remain

People places and things
History cannot be erased
A newfound sense of responsibility
Serenity and recovery based.

Acknowledging my part,
Learning from my mistakes
One day a time
Acceptance is all it takes.

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: oocchair@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.

April

The Gulf Coast Region Intergroup of SAA is planning their annual retreat for April 22-24, 2016, at Chatawa, Mississippi. The retreat center provides a serene place for quiet reflection and recreation. For more information, contact Hank C. at 985-285-0072.

The third annual Dallas-Fort Worth spring men's retreat will be on April 23-24, 2016, in Denton, TX. Workshops, speakers, fellowship, meals, and bunk provided on Saturday and Sunday at very low cost. For more information email steel.onsteel@yahoo.com.

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.

