

THE OUTER CIRCLE

The Woman in the Rooms

**A series of articles explores the question: How can we
make space as a fellowship for women in SAA?**

PLUS

Working Step Two

Convention Update

Who is Grace?





**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. 29. To have an article considered for publication, see our Submission Guidelines on page 31.

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

July - August 2016

CONTENTS

Columns

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

Articles



18 Womanpower

Women coming out in SAA creates visibility and opportunity for recovery

Departments

- 2 TOC Mission
- 6 Letters
- 7 ISO News
- 26 ISO Announcements
- 28 Group Inventory Form
- 30 Calendar
- 31 Submission Guidelines
- 32 Twelve Steps



22 Found in the Labyrinth

A surprising way to move forward with Step Two



24 Close the Gender Gap

Men working with women is a powerful service that leads to healing

FROM THE EDITOR

Honoring the Traditions

BY GARY T.

The steps are the spiritual solution, but the traditions are as much a part of the 'principles' we seek to practice in Step Twelve as anything else.

Progress, not perfection. Over and over again, that's what I witnessed as 2016 SAA convention delegates grappled with the realities of a radically changing governance of the fellowship.

In short, the SAA delegate meeting is moving from group representation to area representation by 2020. So, instead of the 130 or so group delegates who represented the 1,600 or so SAA groups worldwide, areas are expected to yield 40 to 60 delegates. It's a dramatic shift, but guided by spiritual principles, including the Concepts and Traditions, the fellowship seems to be taking the necessary steps to make it as smooth as possible.

Sure, there's some fear and future tripping about what it all means. We're only human, after all.

But just imagine how contentious such a move would be in other circles. There would be power struggles and power grab, rather than reliance on a Higher Power and group conscience; personality conflicts and personal vendettas rather than a trust in principles; concerns over money, property and prestige trumping what's best for the overall group.

What often saves us from these typical pitfalls? Our traditions.

But as valuable as these principles are, I wonder how many in the fellowship really know them. Yes, the steps are the spiritual solution, but the traditions are as much a part of the "principles" we seek to practice in Step Twelve as anything else.

Do your meetings honor the traditions? Do you? Why not start working the traditions, just as you've worked the steps? That's my next recovery aim. Based on what I saw at the convention, it will be time well spent.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Convention Sets Record, Calls for Service Volunteers

BY JOE H.

**The Women's
Outreach and
Prison Outreach
committees both
have a need
for volunteers.
Please consider
attending a
meeting to see
if you would be
interested.**

Our 29th ISO International Convention was held over Memorial Day in Chicago. This was my ninth ISO Convention and, as always, it was a great experience! We had around 45 workshops, a new record, given during a two day period. It also included a Spanish workshop and several panels, including two women's and two Intimacy and Avoidance panels covering different topics. I felt our speakers did an outstanding job and I would suggest getting a copy of the audio recordings so you can share in their messages of hope.

Many of our service committees use the convention to present their outreach work and to look for members willing to volunteer to be a committee member and provide service. Women's Outreach and Prison Outreach were two of the most active committees in sharing their messages. Both of these committees have a need for volunteers. Please consider attending a committee meeting to see if you would be interested in this service work or, in the case of Prison Outreach, sign up as a letter writer to help our incarcerated members work a program of recovery.

There were several motions passed during the Conference, but the one I want to mention is the motion to gain Conference approval of the Third edition of our SAA Green Book. This motion passed by a vote 136 to 7. We began work on the First edition of our book in 2000 and printed it in March, 2005. My gratitude goes out to all of our members who worked on our book over the last sixteen years, including the tremendous work done by our Literature Committee to keep improving it. The Conference Approval was a resounding "Stamp of approval." Thanks to our 2016 Delegates for Conference Approval.

LETTERS

Retreat Recommended for New and Old in Recovery

At this time last year, my life totally imploded right before my eyes. My wife of 22 years had discovered my secret life of extra-marital affairs and occasional hookups with acting-out partners, some of which were total strangers, current or former colleagues, and family friends alike. In that moment, I knew my life as I had known it could and would never be the same.

Shortly thereafter, I enrolled in an intensive two-week therapy program for sexual addiction. At that point, I had never considered myself an addict but was open to the possibility that I had some kind of problem. As a part of the program, my sexual-addiction therapist recommended that I attend the New York City 2015 SAA Summer Retreat that is done every August.

I remember hearing about the retreat at SAA meetings and was excited and nervous about the event. I didn't know it at the time, but the retreat would mark a turning point in my life.

Importantly, I met dozens of people that had similar but unique stories, which helped me understand that I was in the right place and not alone.

I studied and worked through the Twelve Steps for the first time. I also listened to the testimonials of others that revealed their pain and powerful spiritual transformation in a very authentic and transparent way. I met one of the conference leaders who inspired me and, ultimately, became my sponsor, helping to facilitate my healing and recovery.

I also established enduring friendships that continue to grow and be a place of support and encouragement. I am grateful to have attended the retreat at such a critical early stage in my learning of and accepting my addiction. It laid the foundation for the healing and recovery journey that I have been on for the last year. It worked for me, and I would highly recommend the retreat for newcomers and for long-tenured fellows alike.

Ron S.

Editor's note: *New York City SAA is sponsoring the 6th Annual Summer Retreat at Stony Point, NY, August 5-7. This is an opportunity to work the Twelve Steps in two days with a temporary sponsor. For more information call the events coordinator at 347-815-4722, or email events@nycsaa.org.*

ISO NEWS

Convention Approves ACC, Financial Oversight, Green Book

Delegates to the 2016 SAA Convention overwhelmingly approved a number of motions aimed at addressing a coming move toward area delegate representation, financial oversight — and a long-awaited approval to a key piece of literature. Motions with less unanimity centered on limiting ex officio delegates. Here's a look at all the motions that were approved:

1. Conference approval of the SAA Green Book, Sex Addicts Anonymous.

Delegates overwhelmingly approved the third edition of the book, which included a new forward, changes to the Eleventh Tradition, addition of the “Steps are the Spiritual Solution,” deletion of an old story, and the addition of a new story. Although the Green Book was Literature Committee approved in 2004, it wasn't conference approved — the highest approval of the fellowship — until this year.

2. Creation of an Area Coordinating Committee. The ACC will consist of six voting members with one-year terms: three at large members to be nominated by the Conference Steering Committee and affirmed by the conference; two, CSC members to be named by the CSC, and one ISO staff member to be named by the executive director. The ACC will be responsible for:

- » Reviewing and evaluating proposed areas.
- » Coordinating any assistance needed to help with the formation and alignment of areas, including the possible development of regional and international subcommittees.
- » In cases where the groups have been unable to form areas, assigning those groups to areas.
- » Approving the composition of areas and recommending them to the conference for a vote.
- » Reviewing and addressing appeals.

3. Changes to the Bylaws to create an Area Formation Process. The process is designed to:

- » Describe the role of the Area Coordinating Committee.
- » Provide a mechanism for conference approval of a slate of proposed areas that meet the area guidelines and those proposed areas that require reasonable exceptions to the guidelines.

ISO NEWS

- » When a proposed area does not meet the guidelines and the exception is not approved by the ACC, this process specifies when and how such proposals may be made to the conference, in accordance with the Concept V “Right of Appeal.”

4. Change the bylaws to allow Board of Trustees to engage a CPA firm that is not associated with any member of SAA to provide an audit or financial review. The board may also request an audit or financial review when a principal employee who handles money leaves the organization.

5. Resolution to affirm the voice of the fellowship. To assure that the voice of the fellowship at large is adequately represented within the ISO, delegates elected by area assemblies should at all times make up at least two-thirds of the delegates voting at any meeting of the conference. This motion goes into effect with the first conference or meeting of exclusively area delegates, currently scheduled for 2020. The motion seeks to reduce the number of ex officio delegates from the Board and Literature Committee (LitCom). Prior to this, members of these two bodies were automatically voting delegates of the conference. As areas shrink the delegate count at future conferences, concern has arisen that these ex officio delegates could overwhelm the voice of area delegates.

Delegates Approve New Nomination Committee

As part of the 2016 Convention, delegates approved the election of officer to the new Nominating Committee (NomCom). The Committee is related to the move toward area delegate representation rather than group delegate representation.

The Nominating Committee is a six-member group, which will be responsible for finding and vetting at-large members of the Board, LitCom, and Conference Steering Committee (CSC).

The NomCom consist of:

- » Three NomCom members elected by the Conference from an open slate of candidates nominated by Conference delegates
- » One current Board member elected or appointed by the Board
- » One current LitCom member elected or appointed by the LitCom
- » One current CSC member elected or appointed by the CSC

NomCom members serve three-year staggered terms, with one member to be elected each year. NomCom members from Board, LitCom, and CSC serve one-year terms.

ISO NEWS

The NomCom seeks candidates with the special experience or expertise needed to fulfill the specific missions of the Board, LitCom, and CSC.

The NomCom encourages and works towards vibrant diversity on the Board, LitCom, and CSC, reflecting the diversity of our fellowship and recognizing the importance of that diversity. Diversity might include but is not limited to:

- » Geographical location
- » Age
- » Gender
- » Sexual orientation
- » Race and ethnicity
- » Types of experience
- » Thought and opinion

Board Approves Identity Review Costs

The Board of Trustees passed two motions in April, including expenditures to review the fellowship's visual identity. Here's a closer look at both motions:

1. Approve the expenditure of \$10,000 to \$12,000 to cover the cost of visual identity review with Softway, which includes the following steps and activities:

- » Review of current website content
- » Recommended new site map
- » Updated copy for recommended web pages
- » Does not include search engine optimization (SEO) elements

2. The Board finds that seating area delegates as "members of the corporation" and allowing them to vote in meetings of the Conference prior to implementation of the Bylaws amendments ratified in 2014 would establish a voting procedure that would be in violation of the Bylaws of the ISO of SAA.

Despite Donation Shortfall Budget Still at Surplus

In the month of April our budget showed a deficit. \$11,071.2. We had estimated a deficit of \$8,155.5. The increase in our budget deficit was due in part to reductions in our estimated total donations by \$4,610.69.

ISO NEWS

Our gross sales revenue for the SAA Green Book was below our estimate by \$391.93 in April and is below our estimate by \$1,742.94 for the year. For January through April, we are at 94 percent of our estimated SAA Green Book sales.

Our pamphlet and booklet sales were below our estimate by \$1,185.46 for April and are below our estimate by \$722.13 for the year. For January through April, we are at 97 percent of estimated pamphlet and booklet sales.

Our bronze medallion sales were below our estimate \$815.06 in April and are below our estimate by \$707.81 for the year. For January through April, we are at 93 percent of our estimated bronze medallion sales.

Our total sales for April was below our estimate by \$2,851.55 and are below our estimate by \$4,410.30 for the year. For January through April, we are at 95 percent of our estimated sales.

Individual donations were below our estimate by \$73.55 for April and are below our estimate by \$4927.22 for the year. For January through April, we are at 96 percent of our estimated individual donations.

Group donations were under our estimate by \$4,537.14 in April and are below our estimate by \$9,764.45 for the year. For January through April, we are at 79 percent of our estimated group donations.

Our product inventory is valued at \$53,165.75

Our expenses were below our estimate by \$3,825.75 in April and are below our estimate by \$4,579.68 for the year. We are at 98 percent of our estimated expenses.

During our first four months of operations, our budget shows a net surplus of \$5,359.39.

Our operational reserve is fully funded.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

In Your Service,

Joe H.

Executive Director

Green Book Translated into Spanish; Committee Formed

The Third Edition of the Green Book was translated into Spanish. This new translation includes a strong emphasis on making the language more faithful to and inclusive of all Spanish-speaking countries. Basic terms, including the name of the fellowship, were modified.

This translation inspired the creation of a Spanish Translation Committee. Our first point of order was to make an inventory of all the literature that had never been translated, as well as the literature that was outdated in content and language.

The second action established:

- » A clear transparent process to include the input of a professional translator to provide a first draft.
- » A reduced committee to do a first revision with members from at least six different Spanish speaking countries to review each translation.
- » A process to make sure no term is unclear or has an incorrect interpretation in a specific country.

After the translation of the first three pamphlets that had never been translated — *Finding a Sponsor, Safe and Sober meetings and Welcome to the Women Newcomer* — we are glad to share that the process has proven to be an outstanding success.

In the next couple months, we hope to complete one booklet, and we have a second booklet in the pipeline.

All these efforts have resulted in us having in our hands two of the most valuable pieces we could have:

- 1) A glossary that can be handed on to anyone else who attends the committee to keep the terminology clear and consistent across all future translations and in line with the Green Book.
- 2) A proven, successful process that will continue to be effective in achieving faithfulness to the authors' intent and well-defined transparency.

DEAR GRACE

Who is Grace?

BY WOMEN'S
OUTREACH
SUBCOMMITTEE

We try to answer from the perspective of a long-sober woman member who has experienced a spiritual awakening and is active in service.

Dear Grace,

Just who is Grace? Are you an individual? Can I be Grace?

—Curious

Dear Curious,

These are great questions! “Grace” is a *nom de plume*, or pen name. It was adopted by the Women’s Outreach Subcommittee of SAA (WOSC) for use in two different outreach efforts: this column and the Women’s Outreach List. It’s also a word for our group conscience.

This column is written by a work group, a subset of the members who serve on the WOSC. For each issue of *The Outer Circle*, we create an answer to a question, collaboratively through group conscience.

We try to answer from the perspective of a long-sober woman member who has experienced a spiritual awakening and is active in service. Although “Grace” isn’t one individual, her “voice” represents both our group conscience and the grace that is available from working the Twelve Steps.

The other outreach effort that uses “Grace” as a pen name is the Women’s Outreach List. Some people call this the “Grace list.” This is a contact list of women in the fellowship who agree to support one another. (It’s like the phone list of a face-to-face meeting.)

To join the list, a woman sends a request to the e-mail address grace@saa-women.org. The person who answers the e-mail is a woman serving on the WOSC who meets certain guidelines. She must have two years’ continuous abstinence from inner



circle behaviors and have worked the Twelve Steps with an SAA sponsor. She must have working knowledge of the Twelve Traditions, the endorsement of her home group, home internet access, and working knowledge of e-mail and Excel.

The position of “Grace” is a one-month, rotating service position. Although none of these women is actually named Grace, we think of them all as Grace. They are supported by a different WOSC work group, which has written guidelines and holds regular meetings.

To become involved in either of these outreach efforts, please contact the ISO for information about how to attend a meeting of the WOSC. Getting

involved there would be the first step to finding out more about serving as Grace.

—The WOSC “Grace” workgroup, known collectively as “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

Belief in 'God' Not Necessary for Recovery

BY WILL

The Third Tradition states, 'The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop addictive behavior' ; there is nothing about having a certain belief.

Dear Will:

I've been coming to meetings for about two months and I really like most of what I hear. The one thing that makes my skin crawl is people talking about their so-called "Higher Power." And "God"? I don't even want to go there. I had all of that when I was growing up and I really don't want to hear any more about it. I'm afraid that this whole "Higher Power" thing is going to keep me from getting what I came to SAA for. Can you help?

Driven Away

Dear Driven Away,

Will is glad that you haven't been so driven away that you are still coming to meetings. And he trusts that your crawling skin isn't causing you to crawl out of a meeting when somebody mentions "Higher Power."

Now, Will is not going to sit here and tell you that you have to believe anything in particular in order to get recovery. And SAA certainly doesn't teach that. The Third Tradition states, "The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop addictive behavior"; there is nothing about having a certain belief. And if you think that Will is preparing to tell you, "But one day he is confident that you will believe as he does, and then you will truly be as one of us," think again. So read on...

Will can actually identify with a lot of your feelings. He was one of those "with a faith that was damaged," as is described on page 26 of *Sex Addicts Anonymous*. He came into his first meetings — as in "first few months" — as an agnostic, leaning towards being an atheist. The only thing that kept



him from declaring himself an atheist outright is that he didn't feel confident enough to take such a stand.

On the other hand, Will did feel a sort of power — that word again — surrounding him from the very first time he walked into a meeting. For the first time in many years, he felt like he had permission not to act out; that, in itself, was a very powerful sentiment that kept bringing him back.

He had read the Steps before and he knew that the dreaded G-word was in there, and he decided to forget all of that for the moment and go with this first-time feeling he was having: “a Power that can free us from the bondage of our disease” (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, p.

26).

Will was “open-minded enough to try something new” (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, p. 26) and he supports you in going with whatever source — it was a “Power” for him and you may experience it differently — is bringing you back to the meetings. He believes that if you trust this process, this source could lead you to all sorts of places, including to your 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

Surrender Leads to Sobriety — and Freedom

BY EZEKIEL C.

**After giving
everything I had
to stop my acting
out and failing, I
started coming
to the rooms
and took the
one action that
saved my life:
I surrendered
everything.**

Today, I am free! I have recovered the power of choice. I have a new confidence self-esteem and above all, my abstinence is effortless. There are no words to express the gratitude I have. It has now been five years since the last time I acted out.

It might seem cliché, but I literally owe my life to this program. In my acting out, I destroyed many relationships, exposed myself to sexually transmitted infections, alienated healthy friendships, stalled my career, placed my life at risk, and worst of all, crushed my self-esteem. The saddest part was that the outlook was becoming darker as the days and months passed by.

I always considered myself independent, successful — able to handle every aspect of life. After giving everything I had to stop my acting out and failing on multiple occasions, I started coming to the rooms and took the *one* action that saved my life: I surrendered everything I thought I knew. I did not question any suggestion and followed diligently what my sponsor and others in the program proposed. Whatever consideration I was given, I would go above and beyond. I was carrying one of the most beautiful gifts that I see in newcomers — desperation! My focus from day one was to work the Twelve Steps. I completed them, however imperfectly, within the first four months. I began to see improvements in my life and I started sponsoring others who wanted what I had.

With the help of my Higher Power, I have stayed away from my inner circle for all these years. I sponsor more than a dozen sponsees, continue to go to five meetings a week, and have a fulfilling relationship with my partner who has stayed by my side. I am now thriving in my career and I've been promoted beyond anything I ever thought possible. To top it all off, I was recently recognized at work for my values, was able to re-establish a healthy relationship with my family (who

actively supports my recovery), and I am witnessing a fellowship grow and prosper.

One of the most powerful tools I use today is writing a short morning guidance and a nightly review in which I answer some questions. One of the questions is, “Have I kept any secrets?” To help me be accountable, I share both exercises with my sponsor every day. Nothing is better at preventing me from going into isolation. This is how I work Steps Ten and Eleven. Some days I’m in bed when I remember that I did not do my evening review, and many times I think, “It’s ok if I don’t do it tonight. It won’t kill me.” As soon as I hear that voice, I jump into action and write my evening review.

Today, I work to free myself from character defects and to live a life based on selflessness instead of selfishness, honesty instead of dishonesty, and forgiveness instead of resentment. Currently, my effort has been to live in the opposite of fear, which is faith. For many years, I thought the opposite of fear was courage or valor. Now, I know courage is not the absence of fear but having fear and walking through it.

I have noticed that my assets continue to grow with each passing day. Though others may cause me harm and I may sometimes get angry, I have learned to let go and forgive. I understand that dishonesty can hurt me as much it can hurt other people. My grandfather used to say, “The truth hurts, but lies poison.”

For the longest time, I thought the poison was something that I was administering to the person I was lying to. In reality, I was hurting them — and my own spirit.

I used to strive for perfection, and that ‘quality’ was to be my Achilles heel in this program. It took me a few months to come up with a twist, or loophole, that would satisfy my desire for perfection. In order to work this program perfectly, there had to be imperfection. This simple thought is something that has carried me past the difficult times when I’ve fallen short of my ideals.

Lastly, working with others is the highlight of my day. I learn to explore intimacy on a completely different level — where honesty, love, and unselfishness are present. I have learned to move away from looking to control someone’s life and simply be a GPS. I try to give the best possible directions, based on my own experiences, that lead me to serenity. The guidance is not always followed by my sponsees, but I keep re-routing if they are willing to continue working the steps. I know that if they do, they will ultimately experience the miracles of the program and the wonderful gifts that this new life has to offer.

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.

Womanpower



Coming out as a woman in SAA creates visibility and opportunity for recovery

BY LAURA T.

I remember walking into my second meeting of SAA at the end of 2013: it was me and about forty men sitting in a huge circle, in a huge room, in a huge new universe of recovery. I remember asking myself, “Where are all the women? And what the hell am I doing here? *What’s wrong with me?*”

I knew what I was doing there: I was a sex addict. I had finally figured that out at age 57 when I was still in Greece, waking up abruptly to my problem, then finding the SAA website on line and reading the literature and a few books by women sex addicts. I decided then that I was going to return to the United States, to my adopted home of Portland, Oregon, and start attending meetings. I was going to get well, and my life was going to change. What I didn’t expect was not finding any other women in the rooms.

My home group quickly became the new LGBTQI and women’s-supported meeting: it was a small group, and, even in my broken condition, I was able to find safety and support among the mostly gay men, many with good sobriety, including my sponsor. But again, no women. From time to time, a woman would make a single foray into the group, a newcomer or even an old-timer reaching out for support, but I rarely saw her again.

So where were they? I discovered by accident, when my sponsor suggested phone meetings to make up for missed meetings, that there were dozens of women on phone meetings, reading the steps, telling their stories, and sponsoring each other. But something was missing for me in these meetings.

Primarily, I felt a need to be visible and to see other people; I was isolated enough in my early recovery and brokenness and I wasn't great at using the phone. So I just kept going to two local meetings every week, my LGBTQI-W meeting and a Sunday step meeting where a large contingent of that group also went. The men welcomed me, and the trust, warmth, and comfort grew between us as we met, meeting after meeting, year after year.

In the spring of 2015, my sponsor suggested I apply for the Annual International Women's Retreat which was being held in Washington State. I wasn't sure I wanted to go; I didn't know what to expect and I was scared. But I trudged on and applied, bolstered by the enthusiasm of my sponsor for SAA retreats, and I received a full scholarship. (I learned later that the Women's Outreach Subcommittee used nearly its entire budget to fund scholarships, and additional travel stipends came from groups nationwide — men and women — in the spirit of Tradition One. I know I could not have gone had it not been for a scholarship at that time.)

Then a miracle happened: I came face

I kept going to two local meetings every week. The men welcomed me, and the trust, warmth, and comfort grew between us as we met, meeting after meeting, year after year.

to face with approximately fifty women sex addicts from all over the United States and Canada. It was a revelation, it was a revolution, it was a coming out, where women were sharing their experience, strength, and hope face to face. Several women met sponsors they had for years for the very first time; it was a moving experience.

We went to meetings, we trained, we meditated, we ate, we played, and we dreamed side by side. We developed relationships that continue to have reverberations throughout the fellowship to this day and helped all of us stay sober and grow in our recovery.

My enthusiasm became boundless when I connected with women who were the first ever in the SAA program in 1981 and I learned what they bravely did, without any predecessors, to reach out to other women. They sponsored each other from the outset, creating a microcosm of support that turned into a macrocosm of healing. They empowered

themselves and each other and made close friends for *life*. I learned there was an epoch in this program when there were lots of women's face-to-face meetings. And I knew profoundly that, somehow, this was a direction I wanted my own recovery to take.

I had given my First Step one year before, but it was at the retreat that I also heard my first First Step from another woman. I was overwhelmed with compassion and love — for her, for myself, for all women in and out of the program. Our stories are uniquely women's stories, some unbelievably painful and brutal, and I just felt instinctively that women needed to come together in safe and gentle ways to heal ourselves. Nobody else can do it but us... with the SAA program and Higher Power's help and love to guide us.

So I came back to Portland and I held on to my chair and I prayed. New women began to appear at the LGBTQI-W group. Some kept coming back, and we began to call each other regularly for support.

With another prompt from my sponsor, I started raising my hand to sponsor women, and one of the original women members of SAA in Minnesota, with whom I had connected at the retreat, offered to help me sponsor. What a blessing to have her decades of experience behind my first forays into sponsorship! She later connected me with a young woman she had

I felt instinctively that women needed to come together in safe and gentle ways to heal ourselves. Nobody else can do it but us ... with the SAA program and Higher Power's help and love to guide us.

met when she visited the new women's meeting in the UK. Three of us who attended the retreat are now sponsoring women in London on Skype — face-to-face across oceans! — and there is talk of a meeting in Norway!

Locally, I started showing up at our Portland Intergroup meetings and talking about women's outreach. I told the men I was only praying about what to do and I asked them to pray too. Eventually, we added a women's page to our local website, including my email address, and several emails started to arrive, most asking if there was a woman's-only meeting in the area. I began to hear the answer to our prayers: We would have a woman's-only meeting once again in Portland.

In March, Portland Intergroup brought two of the women SAA pioneers from Minneapolis to Portland for our

quarterly speaker's meeting, including my new friend and mentor (who was just coincidentally celebrating 35 years of sobriety in the program!) and her longtime friend and sponsee (with 34 and a half years of sobriety!). We had a wonderful participatory workshop on what constitutes safe and welcome meetings for the whole fellowship.

The next day, with our Minnesota guests, we had an SAA women's-only meeting, which included both a newcomer and a COSA member, followed by a women's outreach meeting open to the entire fellowship. There, we launched the idea of a women's newcomer-supported meeting, which would include orientation and temporary sponsorship. On Monday, June 6, at 7pm, we had our first official women's meeting, which will continue weekly.

The men in the local program were so supportive and also relieved. They had tried for years to figure out how to reach out to women sex addicts who were still suffering. They had watched for two and a half years as I sat in those mixed meetings alone; they had shared their souls with me and I with them. I will never regret what I learned in these mixed meetings: that we are all sex addicts, that we share deep stories of pain, and that the Twelve Steps of SAA can lead us out of that pain into a new story. They are my brothers in recovery forever and I am grateful.

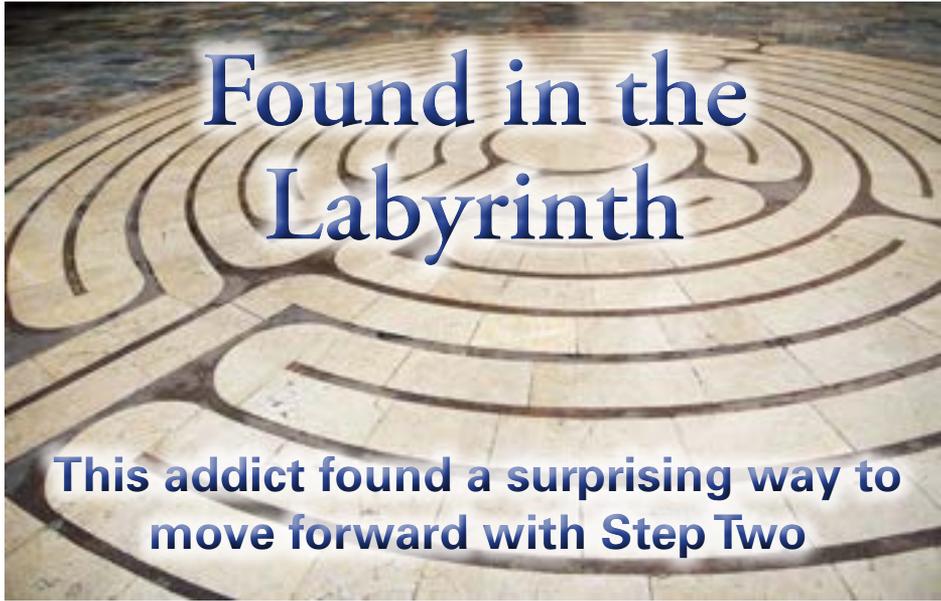
Moreover, they were willing to do whatever it took to let the women find

their own way and their place in this program. They held themselves back at times while still providing prayers, encouragement, and tangible support. I am so grateful for this willingness, and my recovery grew immeasurably during this period. I was learning to stand up for myself, to stand up for my sisters, and to take care of myself. This is my new journey after a lifetime of looking for someone else to keep me safe and to do it all for me.

Finally, in a unanimous vote I will never forget, the members of Portland Intergroup seeded the new women's meeting with \$300, enough funds for our initial literature, coins, supplies, and a few months rent. Flyers have been hung in Alano clubs and battered women's shelters all over the city. Our doors are open to all women seeking relief from addictive sexual behaviors, whether they are lesbian, straight, bisexual, transgender or intersex. All women are welcome.

I believe we are in a renaissance of women becoming visible again in SAA, who are there when other women come into the rooms for the first time or the next time, who offer spaces for women who feel they need a women's-only meeting, women who may be traumatized and on the edge or who simply want to join with other women in the journey of recovery.

I want to be a woman who is visible to these women and I feel an almost indescribable joy to be part of a fellowship where there is a chair for everyone.



Found in the Labyrinth

This addict found a surprising way to move forward with Step Two

BY EMILY D.

The problem with my spirituality before I came to recovery was that I acted spiritual but I felt so empty. When I first started working Step Two — came to believe that a power greater than myself could restore me to sanity — I was skeptical. It was mostly because I felt like I had already asked God to keep me sober, and it had failed.

For a long time, I desperately wanted to be abstinent from my addictive sexual behavior, but I was always bitterly disappointed. I didn't understand that I was an addict who is powerless over her sexual behavior. I believed in a God but I was sure God loved everyone except for me.

My sponsor suggested that I try walking a labyrinth as part of my Step Two. A labyrinth is not like a maze. A maze has passageways, which lead to dead ends. A labyrinth, by comparison, has one path to the center. It is meant to be a metaphor for life or for recovery.

Just like my spirituality before the program, I felt the same skeptical attitude creep into my thinking about this. I am very weary about trumped-up ultra-emotional spiritual experiences. I've had many of them and they have faded into obscurity.

When I shared this with my sponsor, she said to me, "This experience might be some-

thing or it might be nothing. It was a significant experience for me but it might not be for you.” This helped me approach the labyrinth with a bit of an open mind.

I located a labyrinth in a nearby suburb. When I arrived there at 6:45 in the morning, I noticed that the bricks that outlined the path were overgrown with layers of grass. I decided that I could see the path fairly easily and that, since I was already there, I would give it a shot.

I entered the labyrinth with an open mind. About five feet along the path, past the first turn, I realized that the path wasn't as clear as I thought it was. I didn't know which way to go. I had to get down on my hands and knees in order to feel the bricks. I felt frustrated and afraid and alone. I started tearing grass out of the ground, trying to uncover the bricks. It seemed like I wasn't making any progress.

I took my scarf off, even though it was uncomfortably cold outside. I also took my shoes off. I could feel bricks, which were difficult to see under the grass, with my feet vulnerable to the ground. I got turned around. I forgot which way I was going. I kept hitting the same dead-end over and over. I knew I was making mistakes, missing a turn, or turning somewhere I wasn't supposed to. I went back to the beginning several times.

It wasn't until I let go of my past attempts and tried walking a different way that I found a different path that eventually lead to the center of the labyrinth.

What I didn't expect was how closely the

I kept hitting the same dead-end over and over. It wasn't until I let of my past attempts and tried walking a different way that I found my way.

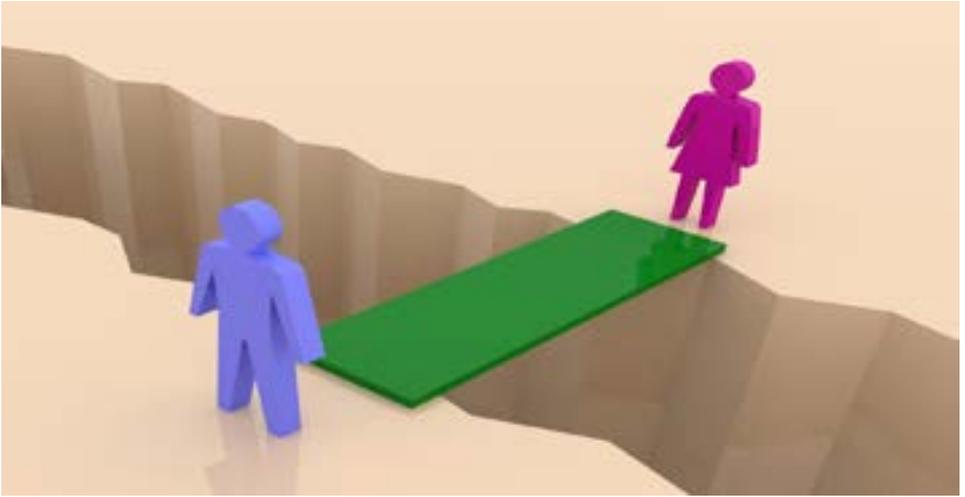
labyrinth walk mirrored my recovery. I have relapsed many times in my program and had to start over at the beginning. At times, I have felt so lost that I haven't known whether I am going forward or backwards. I have hit the same deadend over and over because I have made the same mistake over and over. I felt frustrated and scared and alone. I started to think that recovery was possible for everyone else but not for me.

What I have learned and experienced and what I experienced in the labyrinth is that sometimes the only way forward is on my knees in surrender. I don't need to be discouraged when my progress seems small. I have to allow myself to be vulnerable so I can experience the things that I am not accustomed to feeling.

I must be willing to encounter uncomfortable situations to make progress. Most importantly, in order to recover, I must let go of my past mistakes and be willing to try a different way, which is where I am today.

I'm trying a different way, and that way is the Twelve Steps.

Close the Gender Gap



Men working with women is a powerful act of service that leads to healing for everyone

BY MIKE K.

There have been some interesting discussions of late in *The Outer Circle* about men and women in meetings. It would appear that there is still much growing for many of us to do. (I include myself in this category.) What I haven't seen in the discussion is the missed opportunities when men think of women as "triggering them" at meetings.

First of all, as an aside, this seems to me to be a little like saying that someone opening a beer in front of an alcoholic is the reason that the alcoholic wants to drink! Not so; an alcoholic wants to drink because they are an alcoholic. Are they expected to never go to the grocery store again because alcohol is sold there? Do they have to hide from all circumstances where alcohol is consumed?

Before I came into this program, I had a fear of women, especially a fear of being rejected by them. As I worked my program, this slowly started to change. As a

few women started coming to the local meetings, I began to “have” to check in with them in my check-in group. I was most uncomfortable, did not want to do it, but did it anyway. This was huge for me. My shame slowly started to melt away more and more.

When I heard a woman share her First Step, her honesty and courage helped me to become honest enough to realize that, in my shame, I had left significant parts of my sex addiction out of my First Step. I became brave enough to share about the exact same issues in my second First Step.

There were women at my second First Step presentation. I knew this going into it, so I was very fearful about giving it. I felt sure the women there would hate my guts after I gave it. At the same time, something told me it was important for me to tell my story to the mixed group. To my relief, instead of rejection, I got acceptance. Very healing! I will forever be grateful to the women who heard my story and accepted me.

After some time, I began to feel my Higher Power urging me to reach out to women in the program. It was very uncomfortable at first, and it didn't always go very well, although all involved maintained their sobriety. My fear came out in self-defeating ways that surprised me, and I had some significant growing up to do.

I persisted, prayed, meditated, shared about it, and tried again, and gradually,

Revealing my true self to women without experiencing rejection has greatly accelerated my healing and recovery.

my fear lessened. I began to be able to have recovery friendships with women. This started a critical phase in my recovery. I began to be able to offer to women the healing that comes from friendship and acceptance and to receive these things from them. Revealing my true self to women without experiencing rejection has greatly accelerated my healing and recovery.

To the extent that I can be of service to a woman who is my sister addict, I believe that her recovery is enhanced too. And if I can be of help to one of my sisters, that helps my own recovery enormously. Giving away whatever healing I can is the most healing thing I do for myself. Since my ability to have healthy relationships with women needed healing badly, being of service in this way is particularly helpful to me.

Overall, if it weren't for the women in this program, my recovery would be very much poorer and slower. So when a man only thinks of a woman in terms of her “triggering him,” he is really missing out on some amazing healing!

The next time a woman joins the meeting, welcome her as the sister she is. You won't regret it.

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. 30.

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.

ISO ANNOUNCEMENTS

SAA Group Inventory Form

Take time to reflect on your group's strengths and weaknesses in each of the following areas. Briefly mention one or more concrete examples in answer to each question.

1. Staying rooted in the Twelve Steps

- » Are the steps being discussed in the group?
- » Does the group give adequate time for First Step presentations?
- » Are we emphasizing practicing the steps?

2. Knowledge of, adherence to, and fidelity to the Twelve Traditions.

- » Are principles being kept above personalities in our group?
- » Are we providing adequate financial support for our group and fellowship?
- » Are we always mindful of anonymity?

3. Newcomers

- » Are twelfth-step calls being answered in a timely fashion?
- » Is attention being given to the needs of the newcomer?
- » Are we taking temporary sponsorship seriously?

4. Primary purpose: Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the sex addict who still suffers (Tradition Five).

- » How is outreach being addressed by our group?
- » Are we using attraction rather than promotion?

5. Tools of the program: How are these tools being used by the group?

- » Sponsorship
- » Literature
- » Service
- » Phone list
- » Medallions
- » Other

6. Meetings (write in suggestions for improvement)

- » Topic or step presentations
- » Membership attendance
- » Format

7. Other areas where we are doing well or need improvement

- » Group's sexual sobriety
- » Fellowship outside meetings
- » Other

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.

Board of Trustees and Literature Committee

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(*The Outer Circle* editor)
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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.

Intergroup Communications — 3:00 p.m.

LGBT Outreach — 1:00 p.m.

CSC - Policy & Procedure — 2:00 p.m.

Prisoner Outreach — 8:00 p.m.

First Saturday of the month

Author's Group — 4:00 p.m.

Second Saturday of the month

Intimacy and Sexual Avoidance — 8 a.m.

Women's Outreach — 5:00 p.m.

Second Sunday of the month

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.

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.

August

On Aug. 13, the North Carolina Triangle Area Intergroup is sponsoring a workshop featuring a speaker on a recovery topic of interest.

The Jacksonville, NC, "Coastal

Serenity" retreat will be held on August 19-21, in Arapahoe. Five workshops will be offered in addition to regular SAA meetings and recreational activities. Scholarships are available. step.retreat@gmail.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.