

# Group Guide: Handbook for SAA Groups



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## Group Guide: Handbook for SAA Groups

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## **Introduction**

This guide is designed to give groups the basic tools and materials needed to start and nurture an SAA group, thus spreading our message via members of the fellowship. As the fellowship expands to new locations, other sex addicts might be more likely to find the SAA fellowship and program near them.

This guide is arranged in four sections: Starting a Group, Meeting Format and Readings, Service, and Resources for Meetings. Think of this guide as a “buffet table” of possible readings and group formats that may be adopted by an SAA group. The members of each group are free to select the readings and practices they feel will benefit them the most.

No matter a group’s size or level of experience, we hope this guide will be helpful.

“Our groups are dedicated to serving the sex addicts who seek recovery, and the purpose or goal of our service is to carry the SAA message: that freedom from addictive sexual behavior is possible through the Twelve Steps of SAA. Every activity of our groups, and indeed of the fellowship as a whole, is motivated by that one purpose.”

—*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, p. 84

## Starting an SAA Group

### ***What is an SAA group?***

“An SAA group consists of two or more individuals who, using the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of SAA, meet regularly for the purpose of recovering from their addictive sexual behavior. At our meetings, we read SAA literature and share our experience, strength, and hope with each other, focusing on how the SAA program of recovery works in our lives.”

—*Sex Addicts Anonymous, p. 10*

An SAA meeting occurs when sex addicts gather at a specific time and place. An SAA member group is registered with the International Service Organization of SAA (ISO), self-supporting, not affiliated with any other organization or program.

### ***Why start an SAA group?***

Here are some reasons to form a new group:

- There is no group in a given area. Here our twelfth-step work can result in finding other like-minded sex addicts interested in meeting on a regular basis for the purpose of recovery.
- Members of an existing group may wish to meet more frequently or at a different time or location.
- Members of an existing group may wish to start a group that is different than the group(s) they currently attend. (e.g. gender identity specific, sexual orientation, language, open to all wanting to learn more about SAA, or closed—serving only those with a desire to stop addictive sexual behavior).
- Members may wish to use a specific format different than the existing group (e.g. literature study, step study, qualification meeting).

Members may start a group for any reason. Consulting with our sponsors, other fellows, and our own Higher Power will guide us in this decision.

### **Considerations prior to starting a group**

We have found that working the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions with a sponsor was vital for personal recovery and the healthy functioning of our group. These actions prepared us to carry the SAA message.

We have also found an understanding of the Twelve Traditions to be important when considering starting a meeting.

Studying the Traditions with our sponsors and in our meetings is a great way to strengthen our personal recovery and learn how we can help unite our fellowship.

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“Just as the Steps teach us the spiritual principles necessary for healthy individual recovery, the Traditions embody the spiritual principles necessary for the healthy functioning of our groups. Adhering to these principles safeguards our fellowship, thus protecting the recovery of each individual member” [*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, p. 76].

Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of working the Twelve Steps with a sponsor, we now have the SAA message to carry to another sex addict. Our personal story of Twelve Step recovery is our greatest asset when trying to help other sex addicts, sharing during an SAA meeting, or trying to form a new group.

Working the Steps, studying the Traditions, reading this guide, talking with our sponsor, and contacting the International Service Organization (ISO) to find sex addicts in our community are all starting points. When we find a prospective member, we can use our knowledge of the program and our personal experience to decide whether they are interested in joining the fellowship and working the program. If we have had the experience ourselves, we can show the new member how the program brought about a spiritual awakening in our own lives. Thus, the fellowship grows up around us. A meeting naturally forms from working with other sex addicts.

### **How to start an SAA group**

There is no perfect way to start a new SAA group. Some groups have found the following helpful before embarking on this important task.

#### **Attend Established SAA Meetings**

When we were unfamiliar with SAA or twelve-step recovery it was helpful to attend an existing SAA meeting before attempting to form a new group, even if it means extended travel to an established meeting. SAA telemeetings and online meetings are also available if there are no face-to-face meetings in the local area. Many of us found it easier to start a meeting once we established our own recovery through the strength and hope of the existing meetings.

#### **Find Others Who Wish to Recover**

Our recovery strengthens when we look for other sex addicts to help. Frequent contact with newcomers and those already in the fellowship is the bright spot in our lives. Our experience has shown that if we cannot find others to meet with locally, it is better to be part of another group, no matter the challenges, until local members are found. For example, one group got started when a fellow regularly drove five hours to a meeting in another city. When a second person started traveling with that person, they realized they had enough people to start a local group.

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A group needs a minimum of two people. It takes a strong commitment to get an SAA group to become fully self-supporting.

### **Here are suggestions for finding group members:**

- Work the Twelve Steps and then try to carry the message to others in the community.
- Seek guidance from our Higher Power, sponsor, and members who have started groups.
- Announce the desire to start a new group with others in the local fellowship.
- Ask the local intergroup to help spread the word and list the new group on the local website (if available).
- Register the group with the ISO and request to list it on <https://saa-recovery.org>.
- Offer local therapists or clergy your contact information for those who they feel may benefit from a Twelve Step recovery program. It can be helpful to make a simple recovery group business card they can hand to potential new members. Additionally, the ISO can provide a client referral packet to leave with these professional contacts.
- Ask the ISO to help connect you with others in the area interested in joining a group.
- Check the SAA networking lists for members listed in the area. e.g. SAA Men's list, Women's Grace list. Email [info@saa-recovery.org](mailto:info@saa-recovery.org) to get more information.

Since members will sometimes leave a group, it helps to start a group with more than two people. Over time, group membership grows as others continue to attend regularly, work the steps, and carry the SAA message.

Many new groups struggle in their first year. It may help to ask founding members for a six-month commitment. Do not be surprised when some people do not fulfill that commitment, nor when others decide to step up for service. Attendance can be rather unpredictable during this time.

### **Find a Location**

When starting a group, one of the first tasks is to find a meeting place. If you are meeting with unfamiliar people, you may choose a quiet, safe public place, such as a coffee shop. To take root and grow, however, a meeting needs a regular time and place. Identify churches, social service organizations, AA/NA clubhouses, neighborhood community centers, colleges, or hospitals with a reputation for reaching out to the community. Places with other twelve-step or self-help groups may be more likely to be open to hosting an SAA meeting.

We found it easier to find a location when we made many calls to a variety of venues. The more calls we made, the faster we found a location. Restaurants, coffee shops, parks, or

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members' homes should be a last resort, but can be used until a more permanent location is established.

The initial contact with the facility may be by phone or email. If the reception seems favorable, we recommend making an appointment for two members to meet with a facility coordinator to discuss the details. Find a place where the group is comfortable with the reception received. The group may need to decide if and how the group will be identified on the facility's schedule. Our traditions of anonymity are a useful consideration for this process. Many groups identify themselves openly as Sex Addicts Anonymous; however, others use other names such as Serenity Group, Shame to Grace Group, Service Organization, or Support Group. The group conscience will decide how the group wants to be identified.

Groups who wish to offer a hybrid meeting for individuals who are not able to attend in person should consider the technology-based needs of a hybrid meeting when choosing a location. Some of these considerations may include internet availability, the ability to store hardware, and room acoustics for web conferencing services.

When beginning a group that meets only via phone or video, it is important to consider how Seventh Tradition donations will be facilitated. Visiting an existing phone or video meeting and asking for information and tips or contacting the ISO for guidance may be helpful.

### **Establish a Way to Contact the Group**

Many groups establish a live-answer phone number, P.O. Box, voicemail service, or email in the name of the group rather than in the name of an individual. These services are generally inexpensive and help ensure that the group is available to newcomers. Operating the phone or some type of mailbox on the group level protects individual members' anonymity and is more reliable than using the address, phone, or email of an individual who could leave the group. A group mailing address or email address also gives the ISO a place to deliver the group's copy of the ISO newsletter, *The Outer Circle*, and other literature, such as the annual "Call to Convention," group registration update reminders, and other helpful communications.

Alternatively, several free and low-cost phone forwarding services exist to create a virtual phone number that forwards to multiple members at once or adheres to a predetermined schedule.

Whatever the method of communication, please remember to check it often. It can be discouraging to potential new members if calls or emails are not returned promptly.

### Get SAA Literature

Obtaining SAA literature is an important way to ground the group in the program and focus on the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. Many find literature indispensable, e.g. the SAA basic text, *Sex Addicts Anonymous*; and the SAA meditation book, *Voices of Recovery*. Our experience shows that reading and studying SAA literature as a group helps members learn about the program and how it works for us. Literature is also a direct link to the experience, strength, and hope of those who have come before us.

A starter kit has been specifically designed for new meetings. It contains a wide variety of pamphlet literature that has proven helpful to new groups. The starter kit can be purchased from the ISO office directly. SAA literature is also available to view online via the ISO website (<https://saa-recovery.org/literature/>).

If you cannot afford a starter kit when the meeting first gets established, let the ISO office know, and they will send you one free of charge. Our Seventh Tradition states: “Every SAA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.” As a fellowship, we are far more interested in seeing that a new group has the materials it needs than we are concerned about the cost of the starter kit. All they ask is that when the meeting is better established and fully self-supporting, that the group remember the ISO with future donations.

### Register with the International Service Organization of SAA

Register the group with the ISO office to make it easier for the addict to find the group through referrals. A group registration form may be found at the back of this guide, with step-by-step instructions. Forms can also be downloaded from the SAA website (<https://saa-recovery.org/meetings/registration/>) in the “Find a Meeting” area, or requested by calling the ISO office (1-713-869-4902). A group registration form requires the signatures of two members in order to register the group.

### Reach Out to Local Support Networks

Many groups have experienced a great benefit by having open meetings where we can share our experience with others in the community. Many groups contact local therapists or clergy in person, by phone, email, or through mailings, informing them of the existence of SAA and of our local meeting times and locations. The ISO has free postcards designed specifically for this purpose. Crisis counseling agencies in the local area may be able to refer people to the group on a cooperative basis. If other twelve-step fellowships exist in the area, consider networking with these groups to let them know that SAA is available.

Phone or video meetings will need to decide if the access information will be posted online or if newcomers will be required to contact a group representative via phone or email. Having the access information online poses some security risks, but it is easier for newcomers to attend, and there are ways to keep virtual meetings secure.

### Network with Other Local SAA Groups

We have benefited by connecting with other SAA groups in the area. This will let other addicts in the area know about the new meeting. Participating with the local intergroup or networking with more distant intergroups via the Intergroup Communication Committee (ICC) are ways to receive support and learn from the experience of others.

(See the sections of the guide entitled “What Is an Intergroup?” and “Intergroup Representation.”)

### ***Welcoming new members***

Each group decides for itself how to welcome the newcomer. Many groups encourage the prospect to come to a meeting and welcome the person there. Other groups choose to meet with prospective members individually before they attend their first meeting. In the following paragraphs we will share several methods of carrying the message to other sex addicts that we call “Twelfth Stepping.”

In some groups, when someone new arrives at a meeting, the group leader asks two experienced members to take the prospective member into another room and share their stories, as well as share information about SAA and the group. The newcomer can ask questions about the program and share their story. If the newcomer decides to join the group, the members bring them into the meeting and introduce the newcomer to the group. They may also serve as temporary sponsors.

Some groups prefer to “twelfth step” prospective members prior to the meeting, at a mutually convenient time and location. This method preserves the anonymity of the other members and the meeting location should the person simply be an interested individual and not a sex addict. This method also allows for meeting with the newcomer as soon as possible if the regular meeting is still a few days away. If the newcomer decides to join the group, the two members can accompany them to the meeting.

In other groups, the group breaks from its regular meeting format for the benefit of the newcomer and asks some members to share their story of sex addiction and the solution they have found. Some groups have a service position where a sober member of the group presents our foundational beliefs—that we are powerless over our compulsive sexual behavior and that this program will help the newcomer find the power they need, though working the Twelve Steps which leads to a “spiritual awakening.”

Many newcomers have commented that such welcoming methods helped them feel that they are not alone with the problem of sex addiction and that a solution is available in SAA. Any of these approaches can help us “carry this message to other sex addicts” and remind us all that the newcomer is the most important person in the room.

## ***Types of meetings***

Many types of meetings have been developed by SAA group members to meet the needs of the local fellowship. These include:

- In-person meetings: SAA meetings held in a public or private location such as a place of worship, community center, club, hospital, or correctional facility.
- Telemeeting: SAA meetings held via a telephone conference call.
- Online/web meetings: SAA meetings held in real time over an internet connection.
- Hybrid: SAA meetings hosted in a public or private location that offer a simultaneous teleconferencing or web conferencing option for virtual attendees.

Characteristics of meetings include:

1. Mixed versus gender-specific or non-gender-specific meetings: Most SAA meetings are mixed meetings, meaning that the meeting is open to all who have a desire to stop addictive sexual behavior, regardless of gender identity. Some meetings decide to segregate themselves by gender identity, sexual orientation, sexual anorexia, or language. We respect this need. Our experience has taught us that we gain much by attending meetings that are as open and diverse as possible. The Twelve Traditions and group conscience can guide the group with these decisions.
2. ‘Those seeking help’ versus ‘Open to visitors’ meetings: Meetings characterized as “those seeking help” are available only to those who have a desire to stop their addictive sexual behavior. “Open to visitors” meetings are for anyone interested in learning more about the SAA program and fellowship. In an open meeting a person does not need to identify as a sex addict. Examples could include partners, students, and someone who isn’t sure they want to stop but wants to learn more.

## Meeting Format and Readings

### *Meetings*

“Meetings are at the heart of the SAA fellowship. At meetings we emerge from our shame, secrecy, and fear, into a community of people who share the common goal of freedom from sex addiction” [*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, p. 10].

At an SAA meeting we find members of the fellowship who can help others recover from sex addiction. These are called sponsors. These sober members will help newer members understand the disease of sex addiction and can show them how to get well. The sobriety, peace of mind, serenity, and happiness of the group members provides the hope that recovery is possible.

Tradition One of SAA emphasizes that “personal recovery depends upon SAA unity” and the group meeting is where members of the fellowship will see a tangible expression of that unity. It is in the group that we learn to be honest with ourselves and others, to identify with other sex addicts who share our common problem, and to respond to the needs of others. We begin to understand that our unity is much greater than simply identifying with a common problem (sex addiction). The cement that holds the fellowship together is that we have found a common solution. Our solution is found in the Twelve Step program of Sex Addicts Anonymous.

It is through meeting together as a group of suffering and recovering addicts that we can find a spiritual solution to the problem of sexual addiction.

Members respond to meetings in different ways. Some do not talk much; they are content to listen, finding comfort in identifying with others. Some members talk a lot in order to effectively process their thoughts and feelings. We encourage all members to focus on the solution (the Steps) rather than the problem and to ask themselves how their sharing can benefit others. A motto heard around the fellowship goes like this: “We take our problems to our sponsor and the solution to the meeting.” Meetings are not opportunities for preaching or establishing hierarchies. All members are equal and equally humble in their desire for recovery.

There are many different formats for meetings. Some meetings center around topic discussions, step presentations, individual check-ins, delivery of first steps, personal stories (speaker meetings), or studying from appropriate literature. No one format is better than another. Each group is autonomous and can decide by group conscience what is useful to its members.

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Experience has demonstrated the importance of keeping the meetings focused on the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. For this reason, the Twelve Steps, the Twelve Traditions, and the Three Circles of SAA are always excellent meeting topics. A member can prepare and present a topic, or the meeting can be opened to the group right away for discussion. We should participate according to the group conscience decisions. Most meetings have an opening script that describes how the meeting will be conducted and guides the members of the group in their participation. Individuals may choose to share how a step has strengthened their recovery or they might check-in a current struggle but then follow that by sharing how they are applying and diligently working the program with a sponsor to grow spiritually.

Many groups use the book *Sex Addicts Anonymous* and read sections of the basic text or the stories in their meetings. Reading this material together can be a good way to find a topic to discuss. In addition, many of the stories in the second section of the SAA book have themes to which many members can relate. Other groups use *Voices of Recovery* as a source for meeting topics. Whatever literature the group chooses to use, our hope is that it is focused on the Twelve Step solution.

Some groups set aside a portion of the meeting for check-ins, during which members relate the events and feelings of the last week or since the last time they attended a meeting. These are moments of real communication when we reach out and come in touch with our brothers or sisters in recovery. The presence of the group helps break down our denial and overcome our fears. We find that we can share our most shameful secrets and receive acceptance, love, and support in return.

Careful attention is given to providing sufficient time for all who need to share. It may be necessary to break into smaller groups or to set time limits on check-ins so that all have a chance to share. Some groups have members form small groups; other groups establish check-in groups that stay together for four to six weeks.

Some groups do not use meeting time for personal check-ins. Instead, the meeting is devoted entirely to focusing on an aspect of the steps which the members can use to grow in their understanding of the program. They focus on how to better incorporate the program into their lives or how to become more effective in passing our message on to new members. Often, these groups schedule fellowship before or after the meeting where there is time for checking-in with other members.

Some groups forego their usual format when a member wishes to give a First Step presentation. In formal First Steps, we share with our group the behaviors and consequences which show our powerlessness over addictive sexual behavior and the unmanageability of our lives. For information about doing a First Step, please see the "First Step to Recovery" pamphlet.

Below are some suggested formats for meeting readings, adapted from the text *Sex Addicts Anonymous*. Some groups use readings from *Sex Addicts Anonymous* exclusively; other groups combine selected readings from the basic text with the group's traditional readings. Feel free to use whatever readings best fit the group's structure, time limits, and needs.

“Our prayer is that every sex addict who seeks recovery will have the opportunity to find it. And keep coming back” [*Sex Addicts Anonymous, p98*].

### ***Optional SAA meeting agenda***

#### **Serenity prayer**

The Serenity Prayer is sometimes recited while standing in a circle holding hands, and it may be preceded or followed by a moment of silence for those who are still suffering.

#### **Meeting introduction**

There are many versions, and two are included in this *Group Guide*.

- Opening
- What is Sex Addicts Anonymous?
- Who We Are – From *Sex Addicts Anonymous*.

#### **Readings**

- Our Addiction
- Our Program

#### **Readings from program material**

One or more readings chosen from appropriate literature including:

- *Sex Addicts Anonymous*
- *Voices of Recovery*
- Other SAA literature

#### **Tools of the program**

One or two members share how they use a program tool and why it is important in their recovery. For a listing of these tools see SAA booklet *Tools of Recovery* and *Sex Addicts Anonymous* pages 62-66.

## **Business**

Announcements, issues, and concerns are brought before the group.

- Intergroup and/or area announcements
- ISO news
- Group inventory feedback
- Twelfth-step calls/help line updates
- Committee reports: outreach, cooperation with professional community/public information, prisoner outreach, etc.
- Service opportunity sign-up.

## **Seventh Tradition**

Member donations are collected. Often, the trusted servant chairing the meeting reads the Seventh Tradition.

## **Medallions and anniversaries**

Recognition is given to members for length of abstinence from inner-circle behavior or time in the program. The ISO office has medallions available for purchase.

Some groups choose to read a statement before the presentation: “The taking of medallions in our group is strictly optional. Medallions are offered to encourage individuals to meet their own personal commitments. Medallions do not set individuals apart as authorities; they do recognize milestones of achievement in an individual's program.”

## **Meeting focus**

Groups choose one or a combination of the following, as examples, for the bulk of their meeting.

- Topic discussion
- Literature study
- Speaker-step presentation
- Speaker-personal story
- Qualification or I.D. meeting-newcomer focus

- First Step presentations

## **Closing**

The closing is often done in a circle.

- Closing statement
- Closing prayer

## **Continued fellowship**

Known as “the meeting before/after the meeting,” many groups enjoy conversations and informal gatherings before or after the meeting at local restaurants or other public locations. Including newcomers in such gatherings is a top priority. Often these meeting times and locations are included in the group opening or closing readings. Some groups plan meals, retreats, or all-day workshops to deepen fellowship among group members outside of the traditional SAA meeting.

Each group will need to make choices about what will fit its membership. Remember that by tradition, each group is autonomous and responsible to its own group conscience, while careful not to take actions that might adversely affect SAA as a whole.

## ***Next is an example of a possible template. Optional SAA Meeting Agenda***

### **Opening**

- Reading of “Who We Are” *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, pg 1-2 and “Our Addiction”
- Moment of Silence/Serenity Prayer
- Introductions and Newcomer Introduction
- Chairperson asks all present to introduce themselves using first names only.
- “Hi, I’m \_\_\_\_\_ and I’m a sex addict.”
- “My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I’m a recovering/recovered sex addict.”
- Reading of “Our Program”
- Reading of the Twelve Steps of SAA

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- Read and pause for comments on one of the Traditions
- Reading of “Meeting Boundaries”

### **Topic presentation, reading of SAA literature, or First Step presentation**

### **Introduction to discussion/sharing**

### **Medallions and anniversaries**

### **Fellowship business**

### **Sponsorship reading**

### **Seventh Tradition—Pass the hat**

### **Reading of “How We Live” *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, pg. 61 last paragraph**

### **Reading of the closing, *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, pg.98**

### **Closing prayer**

---

### **Opening**

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_, and I’m a (recovering/recovered) sex addict. Welcome to this meeting of Sex Addicts Anonymous.

#### **Who We Are**

“We are sex addicts. Our addiction nearly destroyed our lives, but we found freedom through the recovery program of Sex Addicts Anonymous. In the fellowship of SAA, we discovered that we are not alone and that meeting regularly together to share experience, strength, and hope gives us the choice to live a new life.

“Our addictive sexual behavior was causing pain—to ourselves, our friends, and our loved ones. Our lives were out of control. We may have wanted to quit, making promises and many attempts to stop, yet we repeatedly failed to do so. For each of us, there came a moment of crisis. When we finally reached out for help, we found recovery through the program of SAA.

“We have found, through long and painful experience, that we are unable to achieve recovery from sexual addiction through our own efforts. Our program is based on the

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belief, confirmed by our experience, that a Power greater than ourselves can accomplish for us what we could not do alone. By surrendering our addiction to a Higher Power, we receive the gift of recovery, one day at a time.

“Sex Addicts Anonymous is a spiritual program based on the principles and traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous. Although we are not affiliated with AA or any other organization, we are deeply grateful to AA for making our recovery possible.

“Our primary purpose is to stop our addictive sexual behavior and to help others recover from sexual addiction. We find a new way of living through the SAA program, and carry our message to others seeking recovery. Membership is open to all who have a desire to stop addictive sexual behavior. There is no other requirement. Our fellowship is open to women and men, regardless of age, race, religion, ethnic background, marital status, or occupation. We welcome members of any sexual identity or orientation, whether they are gay, lesbian, straight, bisexual, or transgender.

“In our groups, there is a collective wisdom that has grown and been handed down over the years. We learn many new solutions to old problems. Central to these are the Twelve Steps, a spiritual program of recovery. Following these steps leads to freedom from addictive sexual behaviors and to the healing of our minds, bodies, spirits, relationships, and sexuality.

“Desperation brought us together. We found in each other what we could find nowhere else: people who knew the depth of our pain. Together we found hope and the care of a loving Higher Power. Our commitment is to help others recover from sexual addiction, just as we have been helped.”

[From *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, pages 1-2]

### What Is Sex Addicts Anonymous?

Sex Addicts Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength, and hope with each other so that they may find freedom from addictive sexual behavior and help others recover from sexual addiction.

Membership is open to all who share a desire to stop addictive sexual behavior. There is no other requirement.

SAA is supported through voluntary contributions from members.

We are not affiliated with any other twelve-step programs, nor are we a part of any other organization. We do not support, endorse, or oppose outside causes or issues.

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Sex Addicts Anonymous is a spiritual program based on the principles and traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous. We are grateful to AA for this gift which makes our recovery possible.

### Moment of Silence/Serenity Prayer

Please join me in a moment of silence, followed by the Serenity Prayer.

#### The Serenity Prayer

God, grant me the serenity  
To accept the things I cannot change,  
Courage to change the things I can,  
And the wisdom to know the difference.

### Our Addiction

“Before coming to Sex Addicts Anonymous, many of us never knew that our problem had a name. All we knew was that we couldn’t control our sexual behavior. For us, sex was a consuming way of life. Although the details of our stories were different, our problem was the same. We were addicted to sexual behaviors that we returned to over and over, despite the consequences.

“Sex addiction is a disease affecting the mind, body, and spirit. It is progressive, with the behavior and its consequences usually becoming more severe over time. We experience it as compulsion, which is an urge that is stronger than our will to resist, and as obsession, which is a mental preoccupation with sexual behavior and fantasies. In SAA, we have come to call our addictive sexual behavior *acting out*.”

[From *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 3]

### Our Program

“Attending SAA meetings starts us on a new way of life. But while the SAA fellowship supports our recovery, the actual work of recovery is described in the Twelve Steps. Meetings are forums for learning how to integrate the steps into our lives. Working the Twelve Steps leads to a spiritual transformation that results in sustainable relief from our addiction.

“When we start attending meetings of Sex Addicts Anonymous, many of us are surprised to meet people who are enjoying life, experiencing freedom from the painful, compulsive behaviors that had brought them to SAA. Listening to other members share about their recovery, we gradually realize that in order to make the same kind of progress, we need to be willing to do whatever it takes to get sexually abstinent, and to stay abstinent. We have learned from hard experience that we cannot achieve and maintain abstinence if we aren’t willing to change our way of life. But if we can honestly face our problems, and are willing to change, the Twelve Steps of SAA will lead to an awakening that allows us to live a new way of life according to spiritual principles. Taking these steps allows fundamental change to occur in our lives. They are the foundation of our recovery.”

[From *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 20]

**The Twelve Steps of Sex Addicts Anonymous**

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.

“These Steps are the heart of our program. They contain a depth that we could hardly have guessed when we started. As we work them, we experience a spiritual transformation. Over time, we establish a relationship with a Power greater than ourselves, each of us coming to an understanding of a Higher Power that is personal for us. Although the Steps use the word “God” to indicate this Power, SAA is not affiliated with any religion, creed, or dogma. The program offers a spiritual solution to our addiction, without requiring adherence to any specific set of beliefs or practices. The path is wide enough for everyone who wishes to walk it.”

[From *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 20-21]

**The Twelve Traditions of Sex Addicts Anonymous**

“Just as the Steps teach us the spiritual principles necessary for healthy individual recovery, the Traditions embody the spiritual principles necessary for the healthy functioning of our groups. Adhering to these principles safeguards our fellowship, thus protecting the

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recovery of each individual member. We have found that they also help us to act with integrity in our personal relationships and as responsible members of society.”

Our SAA experience has taught us that:

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon SAA unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as expressed in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for SAA membership is a desire to stop addictive sexual behavior.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or SAA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the sex addict who still suffers.
6. An SAA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the SAA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every SAA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Sex Addicts Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. SAA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Sex Addicts Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the SAA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, TV, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

[From *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 76]

### Abstinence in SAA

“Our goal when entering the SAA program is abstinence from one or more specific sexual behaviors. But unlike programs for recovering alcoholics or drug addicts, Sex Addicts Anonymous does not have a universal definition of abstinence.

“Most of us have no desire to stop being sexual altogether. It is not sex in and of itself that causes us problems, but the addiction to certain sexual behaviors. In SAA we will be better able to determine what behavior is addictive and what is healthy. However, the fellowship

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does not dictate to its members what is and isn't addictive sexual behavior. Instead we have found that it is necessary for each member to define his or her own abstinence.

“We are individuals, and our addictive behaviors, while similar, are unique to us. What may be healthy for one member could be clearly addictive for another. SAA simply cannot predict every possible way of acting out and define them all for everyone. As a fellowship, we wouldn't want to deny that any particular behavior might be acting out for a member. Nor would we want to restrict behaviors that are healthy for some of us. Since different addicts suffer from different behaviors, and since our sexuality is experienced in so many different ways, it is necessary that SAA members define for themselves, with the help of their sponsors or others in recovery, which of their sexual behaviors they consider to be ‘acting out.’”

[From *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, pages 14-15]

### **Meeting Boundaries**

“[In this meeting,] we use the words ‘I’ or ‘we’ instead of ‘you’ when sharing about our recovery. We do not interrupt or give advice unless asked. We address our sharing to the whole group, not to one or more individuals. A meeting is not a place to meet sexual partners, nor is it group therapy. We try not to use offensive language, or descriptions that are too explicit. We avoid mentioning specific names or places associated with our acting-out behavior. Because of the nature of our addiction, we are careful about touching or giving hugs to others in the fellowship without permission. Our focus remains on the solution, rather than the problem.

“We strive to practice anonymity and confidentiality, so that the meeting will be a safe place for each and every sex addict. We generally use only our first names in the group, to help ensure anonymity. Who we meet or what is said in a meeting is treated as confidential and is not discussed with non-group members.”

[From *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 12]

Will all present please introduce themselves using first names only. New members need not admit to a sex addiction. Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_; I'm a (recovering/recovered) sex addict.

### **Phone List**

“Most of us use the telephone on a regular basis, just to let someone else in the program know how we are doing or to reach out when we are struggling with our addiction. Some of us have made a commitment to call a friend in recovery whenever we're in a slippery situation or when obsessive thinking and desires begin to arise. Sometimes all we need is

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for someone to ask us what is going on and to listen to the answer. Before long, we know what is bothering us, and once we know, the urge to act out usually passes.”

[From *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 64]

### Seventh Tradition

Our Seventh Tradition states: “Every SAA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.” This means:

“Each group must meet certain basic requirements in order to sustain itself. We need members who are willing to meet together and share experience, strength, and hope on a regular basis. We need a meeting place that is reasonably accessible to sex addicts who wish to attend. We need to have SAA literature and meeting schedules available. Once a group has established itself, it can usually pay the rent and other expenses by passing a basket and taking voluntary contributions during the meeting. Experience has shown that if we are unable to fully support ourselves this way, it is better to lower our expenses than to rely on fundraising or other special events to sustain us. When we have met our own basic needs, most groups pass any extra funds on to the local intergroup or the ISO, in support of coordinated services and outreach efforts.”

[From *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 88]

[Pass the contributions basket.]

### Intro to Discussion / Sharing

“All participation is voluntary. We are not required to speak if we don’t want to. Just by listening we can learn how other members become honest, confront their addiction, find support from fellow addicts, and practice the program.”

[From *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 11]

Option 1. The topic for this meeting is \_\_\_\_\_, taken from page \_\_\_\_ of the book *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, *Voices of Recovery*, or other SAA literature [Read selection.]

Option 2. The topic for this meeting is \_\_\_\_\_.

Option 3. Does anyone have a topic for discussion? [If none is suggested, it is a suggested responsibility of the meeting chairperson to come up with a recovery topic.]

### How We Live

“Practicing these principles in our lives means applying program principles at home, at work, and wherever else we gather with others for a common purpose. As we grow spiritually, we find opportunities for service in virtually any situation. Our closest relationships may offer the most challenges to our honesty, compassion, and integrity, but

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we are often rewarded beyond our expectations. We find that spiritual principles can guide us in the everyday challenges of life, and they can help us face even loss, grief, and death with fortitude and grace. What we gain in this program is a blueprint for full and successful living, whatever may come.

“We maintain our recovery by working a daily program, in the knowledge that although we can never be perfect, we can be happy today. We can live life on life’s terms, without having to change or suppress our feelings. Our serenity and sobriety grow as we continue to live according to spiritual principles. We enjoy the gifts that come from being honest and living a life of integrity. We ask for help when we need it, and we express our love and gratitude every day. We realize that everything we have been through helps us to be of service to others. We learn that the world is a much safer place than we had ever known before, because we are always in the care of a loving God.”

[From *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 61]

### Sponsorship Reading

Examples of this type of reading might include one or combinations of the following examples.

- One of the most vital aspects of the program is sponsorship. A sponsor is a person in the fellowship who acts as a guide to working the program of SAA, a fellow addict we can rely upon for support. Ideally, a sponsor is abstinent from addictive sexual behavior, has worked the steps, and can teach us what they have learned from working the program.
- Newcomers are encouraged not to leave until they have a temporary sponsor. Will anyone willing to serve as a temporary sponsor please raise their hand?

Other phrases and wording to consider about emphasizing sponsorship:

- Many of us enter the SAA fellowship exhausted from living a life of lies, uncertainty, powerlessness, and chaos. On our own, finding a path out of the chaos was impossible. That is why each of us had an experienced guide to help us find and work a tried-and-true path which led us away from sexual addiction-toward sanity, serenity, and joy. We call this guide a sponsor.
- We encourage new members to make finding a sponsor a priority. Simply approach a more experienced member after a meeting and ask if they would be willing to be your sponsor. No matter their availability, most members are happy and grateful to receive such a request. Please don't be discouraged if you get a few "no's or "not right now." Many members who have experience in the program already have as

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many sponsees as their schedule can bear. In time you will receive the "yes" that is meant for you.

### Closing

“This is how recovery has been for us. Each of us has taken steps of courage and leaps of faith. Each of us has contributed, not only to our own recovery, but to the recovery of other suffering sex addicts as well. We have contributed by showing up at meetings and by sharing our experience, strength, and hope. We have listened to our fellow addicts and supported them in their recovery journey. Like the first members of our fellowship, we continue to remain sexually sober by helping our fellow addict stay sober. Our prayer is that every sex addict who seeks recovery will have the opportunity to find it. And keep coming back.”

[From *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 98]

Let's close with the Serenity Prayer (or the prayer of your choice said in silence).

### Newcomers' Introduction

We would like to welcome you to our meeting. We know the courage it takes walking into these rooms for the first time. All of us in this room were in your shoes at one time.

After we have finished our opening readings, we will open up the meeting for sharing. This is a time when you may share your experience on the topic or the reading. We avoid cross-talk or interruptions when another person is sharing. We also do not offer advice or criticism. Stick around after the meeting if you have any questions.

We recommend that you come to at least six meetings and talk to as many members of the fellowship as possible before you decide whether SAA has anything to offer you. You will find that each meeting is a little bit different, but each meeting shares and works the same program called the Twelve Steps. The twelve-step program is what worked for us.

SAA is much more than meetings. SAA is a fellowship of sex addicts in action. We work the steps and help others to do the same. We encourage you to make finding a sponsor a priority. A sponsor can show you how to work the steps. It is our sincerest hope that you find what you are looking for.

## Service

### ***Roles and responsibilities of group trusted servants***

A trusted servant is a member volunteer who performs unpaid service for the SAA fellowship.

“Those of us who are chosen by our groups to carry out the decisions called for by group conscience are known as *trusted servants*. Asking members to serve does not put them in a different rank or class than other members. Instead, it establishes a relationship of trust. We trust that those we elect to positions of service will act according to the spiritual principles of our Steps and Traditions, be guided by group conscience, communicate accurate information to and from the group, and help carry the message of recovery to the best of their ability. Leadership in SAA means a commitment to serving the fellowship of SAA and promoting our common welfare.

“This concept of service is distinct from the idea of government. To hold a governing authority over others means to exercise our individual power and control over them. As trusted servants, however, we do the will of our Higher Power as discerned by the group conscience, with full responsibility for carrying out the tasks entrusted to us, but with no power to compel or sanction any of our fellow members. Doing service work together, we learn to relate to each other on a basis of trust, caring, and selflessness, rather than the desire for control. When we acknowledge a loving God as our one ultimate authority, we are guarded from the pride and self-will that could divide us from each other and obscure our message. The mutual trust that we experience in service springs from this reliance on a loving God working through our groups.”

[From *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, pages 80-81.]

Groups vary in size and need. As a group grows the members may take on new and additional roles. A small group may need only a secretary and treasurer. A large group might add other roles. Our experience has taught us that rotating service positions is best. The group will decide how often to rotate service positions so that all members have the same opportunity to experience the spiritual benefits of service.

Trusted servants often serve in the following roles:

- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Literature representative

- Phone list representative
- Outreach chair
- Intergroup representative
- Group Service Representative (GSR) / Alternate GSR

To meet the immediate need of each meeting, trusted servants often serve in the following roles:

- Meeting chair
- Token distributor
- Greeter
- New member orientation

### **Secretary**

A secretary serves as the group coordinator for the SAA meeting. The role of secretary can include many tasks, including responding to requests to the phone line, group email, or P.O. Box; taking minutes at business meetings, or making sure that the meeting site is opened, set up, and closed at the end of the meeting. The secretary can have many other responsibilities, but he or she should look for others within the group to take on service duties, as well.

### **Treasurer**

A treasurer handles the financial affairs of the SAA meeting. The treasurer collects funds during the Seventh Tradition and maintains the checking account. The treasurer pays the rent on the meeting place, handles any additional expenses or reimbursements, and donates the remaining portion of the funds to the intergroup or ISO, as determined by the group conscience. Additional information can be found in the section of this guide entitled, “The Role of the Treasurer in an SAA Group.”

### **Literature representative**

The literature representative maintains the group library and purchases *Sex Addicts Anonymous* and other SAA literature for the group as needed. Literature may be sold at cost at the meeting. Many groups also provide meeting newcomers with SAA pamphlets at no cost in a newcomers’ packet.

### **Phone list chair**

The phone list chair manages existing and new numbers received by the group in accordance with the group conscience.

### **Outreach chair**

The outreach chair coordinates the outreach activities within the group. Usually acts as a liaison between the group and Outreach/Cooperation with the Professional Community /Public Information chair of the Intergroup.

### **Intergroup representative**

The intergroup representative represents the group at the local area intergroup meetings. See the section of this guide entitled “What Is an Intergroup?” for further details.

### **Group service representative**

The GSR serves as the primary contact person between the group and the International Service Organization (ISO) on matters relating to the ISO and the fellowship at large. We suggest that each member group elect an alternate GSR to serve in case the elected GSR cannot continue. Some groups chose to combine this role with the intergroup representative or vice versa. This position should be for the entire service year generally lining up with the annual Conference in October. The GSR or alternate would be expected to participate and represent the member group at area assembly events. One role of the GSRs is to elect an area delegate that will attend the annual conference of delegates.

### **Meeting chair**

The chair might be the trusted servant to ensure the meeting room is unlocked and set up according to the group conscience. The chair could be the member that brings the topic for the meeting. The chair can assign members to read the group opening and closing readings. The chair might have all material used to conduct the meeting or know how to access the meeting material that is stored at the meeting location.

### **Token distributor**

The token distributor passes out tokens at the designated time in the meeting to honor a member’s length of sobriety.

## **Meeting greeter**

The greeter welcomes all the members coming into the meeting. If a new person is present the greeter can make sure they are looking for an SAA meeting, help them find a seat, get them a copy of the book used during the meeting, introduce them to some other members, get them a welcome packet and let the chair know there is a newcomer present.

## **New member orientation**

This speaker does a short presentation to the group when a new person is present. The intent of this presentation is to help the newcomer identify with the disease of sex addiction. This helps them connect and see that they are in the right place. This is usually done by a sober member of the group, who has worked all twelve steps, by explaining the physical and mental aspects of the disease. They are encouraged to use twelve-step literature and the speaker's personal experience. After explaining the problem of sex addiction, they transition to sharing about the solution and how our program works.

## ***What is a group conscience?***

The practice of a group conscience comes from Tradition Two of SAA:

*For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as expressed in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.*

“The Second Tradition builds on the principle of SAA unity: in all aspects of the program, our wisdom derives from the group, not from any single individual. This tradition also builds on the principle of humility: our best group decisions are guided by our reliance on a loving Higher Power, rather than on natural intelligence, special expertise, personal power, or skill at debate. This ideal of basing our group decisions on spiritual principles rather than personal opinion or power is a different way than we may be used to. We discover that in SAA, no single member has authority over any other SAA member, but that God has ultimate authority over us all.

“We all have opinions on group issues, but keeping a spiritual focus raises us above the personal level and shows our commitment to finding solutions that fulfill the group's needs rather than our personal desires. We find ourselves asking, “What is right?” instead of, “Who is right?” As we listen to one another while drawing on our relationship to a loving God for guidance, an understanding of how to solve the issues according to spiritual principles begins to arise within the group. We call this *group conscience*. Sometimes the conscience is so clear that a group will come to a quick, unanimous decision. In other instances, we may call for a vote to decide the issue. Whatever mechanism is used to make decisions, we strive to keep our minds open. Our experience has shown many cases where a so-called minority view came, over time, to be recognized as the group conscience after all. In the spirit of SAA unity, we strike a balance between supporting the group's decisions as our own, while continuing, as a group, to seek the will of our Higher Power.

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“Group conscience is not the same as unanimity, consensus, majority vote, or compromise. Rather than expressing the will of the group, it is the will of our Higher Power as expressed through the group. There is no one method used by groups to determine group conscience, but it is always wise to test our decisions against the “Steps and the Traditions as we proceed. In some cases, the group conscience may be expressed by one individual. More typically, the group conscience is discovered only after sifting through many different perspectives, and often represents a view no individual member could have come up with on his or her own. Regardless of our personal views or opinions, we each have a responsibility to play our part in discerning and supporting the group conscience.

Learning to seek the will of our Higher Power through group conscience takes time, patience, and goodwill. Love is the force that guides our service activities, rather than the familiar methods of human power and control. It can be difficult for us to relinquish old ideas about authority, especially if we believe that our motives are good. We may, out of a genuine concern for the fellowship, want to take control of what happens in our groups and service committees. But with time and experience, we learn to trust the group conscience and to value the guidance we receive as a group more than our own power or wisdom. We also learn that the group conscience grows and changes just as we do in our personal recovery. New challenges call for new solutions. Sometimes growth can be painful, and the changes we experience may not look anything like what we'd expected. By practicing the principle of surrender, we can trust that God's guidance, as expressed in our group conscience, will take us right where we need to be.”

[From *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 79]

### **Recording of group conscience**

It is recommended that groups record their group conscience in a binder or diary to maintain a record of what has been agreed upon over the years.

### ***Conflict within a group***

“Disagreements are a natural part of any healthy community. The spirit of unity prevents disagreements from turning into quarrels, factions, or destructive personal conflicts. We do this by cultivating tolerance and good will towards other members, holding the welfare of the group above our own personal preferences, desires, or opinions. A group that splinters or divides over conflicts puts all of us at risk. Our groups are strongest when we can solve or accept disagreements as they arise, continuing to carry the message of recovery, with equal compassion for all.

“Resolving conflicts in a healthy way deepens our recovery. The Traditions of SAA suggest a new, spiritual approach to looking at and resolving conflicts. Groups that have

regular business meetings and group conscience meetings are much less likely to have conflicts that boil over into division. Taking sides, rescuing, or getting involved in personal conflicts all divert us from our primary purpose.

“Experience has also shown us that conflicts in a group are not always destructive. Constructive conflicts that cannot be resolved may lead some members to form a new group.”

[From *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 78-79]

### ***What Is a home group?***

Many recovering addicts come to feel a special affinity for one particular group and may refer to it as their “home group.” Having or designating a home group is not a requirement for group attendance or participation; indeed, the only requirement for SAA membership is a desire to stop addictive sexual behavior. However, many of us chose one particular meeting every week and call this our “home group.” Often, this is the group where we perform service, participate in group conscience meetings with our voice and vote when necessary. This may be the group where we regularly see our sponsor, sponsor others, or participate in fellowship functions and events.

### ***Taking a group inventory***

Groups have found it helpful to take an inventory from time to time to provide a thoughtful review of how the group is doing. Information from an inventory helps the group make decisions about changes based on the group conscience.

We have provided two group inventory examples. The group can pick a format that fits the group needs. It can be copied and distributed to the members a few weeks ahead of a scheduled inventory meeting. Most groups take an inventory from one to four times a year. Some groups break the inventory into smaller chunks and do several sessions over the course of the year. Experience has shown that careful planning and guidance are essential. Set aside a time and a place so group members can schedule the extra time to attend these informative meetings to review the feedback. If the inventory runs too long or is superficial and incomplete, members may be reluctant to do it in the future. Sometimes the inventory review is not finished in one meeting and the group may need to set aside another time for its completion.

It is very helpful to write a brief summary highlighting the positive qualities of the meeting as well as the areas that the group would like to see improvements. These observations and the changes the group has made based on the inventory can be documented for future reference. This summary may then be forwarded to the entire group so members are aware of the lessons learned.

## **SAA group inventory example #1**

Before we meet take time to reflect on your group's strengths and weaknesses in each of the following areas. Come prepared to share your experience on how our group is doing in these vital areas.

### **Staying Rooted in the Twelve Steps**

- Are the Steps being emphasized as a pathway to recovery?
- Are we emphasizing working the steps with a sponsor?
- Does the group give adequate time for First Step presentations?
- Knowledge of, adherence to, and fidelity to the Twelve Traditions.
- Is the group providing members an opportunity to review, discuss, and study the Twelve Traditions at regular intervals?
- Is the group adhering to the decisions made in the group conscience?
- Are we receiving adequate financial support for our group and providing financial support to our fellowship according to our group conscience decisions? (e.g. donating to the local intergroup, area, and the ISO)
- Are we being careful to avoid affiliation with or endorsement of, actual or implied, outside entities or programs?
- Are we careful to keep "outside issues" out of our SAA meeting?
- Are service positions being rotated?
- Are we placing principles before personalities in our group?
- Are we being mindful of personal and spiritual anonymity?
- Are we using attraction rather than promotion? Does the group understand the difference between attraction and promotion?

### **Newcomers**

- Are newcomer calls (twelfth-step calls) being answered in a timely fashion?
- Is attention being given to the needs of the newcomer?

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- Are there enough sponsors in the group to meet the demand of newcomers coming into our group? If not what else can we do?
- Are we trying to carry the message to the newcomer like our Twelfth Step suggests or are we waiting for them to come to us?
- Are newcomers sticking around? Do we seem to have an excessive turnover? Is our meeting as attractive as it could be? What could make it more attractive to a potential new member?
- Primary purpose: *Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the sex addict who still suffers* (Tradition Five).
- Is the group looking for opportunities to try to carry our message to other sex addicts outside of the SAA meeting?
- How is outreach being addressed by the group?

### Tools of the Program

- How are these tools being used by the group?
- Sponsorship—Is sponsorship emphasized and celebrated? Is it clear to the new person who is willing to sponsor?
- Literature—Do we emphasize using SAA literature? Do the members come to the meeting with the literature our group conscience has decided to use? Is SAA literature accessible to new members?
- Service—Does the group offer many ways to be of service? Is there a simple way to sign up to commit to be of service? Do we provide a way for new members to be of service?
- Phone list—Is it up to date and accurate? Does it show the new person who is available/willing to be a sponsor? Are members getting the newcomers phone number and calling them to see if they want help recovering from sex addiction or answer any questions they might have?
- Medallions/Chips—Do we consistently have the appropriate medallions to hand out when needed?
- Meetings— Write in suggestions for improvement.
- Topic or step presentations—Is the group providing opportunity for members to share their stories or present a step to the group?

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- Membership attendance—Is the fellowship growing as a result of the group effort to carry the message?
- Format—Is the current format sufficient to meet the needs of the group?
- Other areas—Where we are doing well or need improvement?
- Group's sexual sobriety—Is it obvious to the newcomer that SAA and this group provides a solution for sex addiction via the Twelve Steps?
- Fellowship outside of meetings—Are opportunities for continued/additional fellowship provided to all members before or after meetings? Are members participating in this additional recovery opportunity?
- Welcoming newcomers—Is the meeting attractive and safe for all new members that come to us for help? Are newcomers coming back?

### **Other**

This inventory form may be copied as needed by SAA groups. The group can add to or take away from it as necessary. All members are encouraged to participate and attend discussions after the group completes this process.

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**SAA group inventory example #2**

Tradition Four: *Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or SAA as a whole.*

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

The purpose of this inventory is to determine how effective our local group(s) are in fulfilling their primary purpose. Thinking about how we conduct our meetings, please give your response to the following statements using a five-point scale with 5 = I agree completely, 4 = I sort of agree, 3 = I neither agree nor disagree, 2 = I sort of disagree, and 1 = I disagree:

	Response
All members have an opportunity to share during meetings.	
We listen patiently to others, when they share.	
Shares are appropriate in content staying focused on our common solution.	
Shares are appropriate in length.	
Members do not cross-talk or offer advice, unless asked.	
Emphasis is placed on working the Twelve Steps as the pathway to recovery.	
The importance of working the Steps with a sponsor is regularly emphasized.	
The anonymity of the members is respected.	
Newcomers feel welcomed and accepted.	
Every newcomer is encouraged to get a sponsor as soon as possible.	
Importance of sponsorship is emphasized in our meetings.	
Members are encouraged to use tools of recovery (phone, literature, etc.).	
Our group is involved in carrying the SAA message (outreach activities).	
Group members are encouraged to participate in service activities.	
The group honors decisions made at the group conscience.	

What do you like most about the meetings you attend?

What do you like least about the meetings you attend?

What else would you identify as an opportunity for improvement of the meetings(s) you attend?

I most often attend the following meetings:

Name (optional): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## ***Step Twelve in action***

### **Sponsorship**

Step Twelve tells us: “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.” One of the best ways to *carry the message* is to sponsor members in our fellowship.

### **Service work**

In addition to sponsoring other members, there are many ways to serve the SAA fellowship. It’s a privilege to serve at any level. Service work makes twelfth-step work possible. Since service work can be performed at different levels, long-term abstinence and completed step work is not required. The sooner an addict gets involved with helping others, the sooner the promises of the program can be realized. For some service positions, particularly at the international level, certain lengths of time in the program and time abstinent from inner-circle behaviors are recommended. However, every addict can do service of some type.

Service work can be accomplished at several levels: personal, group, intergroup, area and international (ISO service work). The following paragraphs will briefly describe some of the possible opportunities for service work.

### **Personal service work**

There are many ways an SAA member can engage in personal service work, whether they have only a few weeks in the fellowship or many years. Those with less time in the fellowship can consider service tasks such as:

- Agreeing to be a “program buddy” with another recovering addict who may be seeking his or her first sponsor.
- Sharing with other trusted group members as much of your story as you are willing to do. Remember that long-time members, as well as newer ones will benefit from hearing your story.
- Donating to the “hat” when it is passed, and donating to any special group funds such as intergroup or ISO funds.
- Participating with your presence or, if appropriate, with your voice during group conscience meetings.
- Coming to meetings regularly. Regular attendance will inspire other members to continue coming and to work the program.
- Being willing to “carry the message” by sharing a lead or a step at group meetings.
- Arriving to the meeting room early to help set up and welcoming members as they come into the room.
- Scheduling time for fellowship outside the normal meeting times to get to know other members of the group.
- Calling other members, new and old, from the phone list -- even those you don’t know or haven’t seen in a while. Invite them for coffee or simply invite them back to the group.
- Those with more experience in the program could consider all of the above tasks, as well as any of the tasks below:
- Agreeing to be a temporary sponsor or sponsor for a newer member in the fellowship.
- Considering being a speaker at an SAA function at any level – group, intergroup, area, or at the annual ISO convention.

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- Writing articles sharing your experience, strength, and hope and submitting them to *The Outer Circle* or your area/intergroup newsletter.

### Group service work

Group service work should focus on helping new members become acclimated to the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of SAA as well as living as a recovering addict.

All recovering addicts, regardless of time in the fellowship, can consider serving in the following ways:

- Help with coffee/refreshments (if offered at a meeting) and help with meeting set-up before and clean-up after.
- Help set up SAA literature before a meeting. (Note that this is a good way for a new member to have increased exposure to SAA literature.)
- Add your first name, phone number, and/or email address to the group phone list. Offer to reproduce the list and make it available to all members.
- Offer to help with planning and executing a group function such as a picnic, pre-meeting fellowship session, campout, etc.

Those who have begun to work the program could consider serving in all of the ways listed above, as well as in the following ways:

- Serve as group trusted servant for a period of time determined by the group's policies or bylaws. See the section "Roles and Responsibilities of Group Trusted Servants" for more details.
- Chair the meeting as often as possible.
- Volunteer as a temporary sponsor and be available to new members as they join.
- Be available for newcomer calls (twelfth-step calls), when needed.
- Represent the group at the intergroup or area level.
- Represent the group as a GSR at area assemblies.
- Represent the area, if elected as an area delegate, as a voting delegate at the annual ISO conference.

## ***What is an intergroup?***

The Ninth Tradition of SAA states that:

*SAA, as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.*

“In some areas, local meetings band together and form intergroups to provide services that a single meeting could not provide on its own. Intergroups may publish meeting directories and newsletters; organize area events, serve as a clearinghouse for literature orders, sponsor a phone line or a website, provide outreach to the community, or perform any number of other services as determined by the needs of the member groups.”

[From *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 76.]

Intergroups are made up of representatives from local groups within a regional area. An intergroup may meet quarterly or monthly. The general purpose is to pool efforts. Some of the ways intergroups do this is by:

- Pooling funds for outreach efforts.
- Operating committees to solve local or regional problems and organize outreach efforts.
- Planning local outer circle and fellowship events such as workshops, retreats, speaker meetings, and potlucks.
- Establishing local policies.
- Providing a forum where groups can access the collective wisdom and experience of many groups.
- Networking with other groups.
- Exchanging meeting information.
- Discussing and distributing information about fellowship-wide issues.

## **Intergroup representation**

The suggested qualifications for an intergroup representative are as follows:

- At least one-year of experience in the fellowship.
- At least six months of continuous sexual sobriety.
- Experience in service work at the local level.

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- Endorsement of their home group—affirming their belief that the individual has the serenity and wisdom in the program to serve at the intergroup level.

The suggested duties of an intergroup representative are as follows:

- The term as intergroup representative usually requires a minimum one-year commitment. (After two years, it is probably time to pass it on to another member so that more people can benefit from the experience.)
- It is recommended that the representative be present at each meeting or that a substitute be sent if the regular representative can't make a particular meeting.
- It is recommended that the representative take notes at the meeting and share that information with the group.
- The representative is responsible for informing the intergroup about his or her meeting's group conscience on current issues.
- The intergroup representative is encouraged to bring group problems to the intergroup, accessing the wisdom and experience of a larger recovery community.
- Each intergroup representative is encouraged to participate on intergroup committees.
- It is suggested that the representative keep copies of the minutes from intergroup meetings.

When a representative ends their tenure and a new one is ready to start, it is recommended that both new and old representatives attend an intergroup meeting. The new representative can then be introduced to the other members and to the workings of the intergroup. For reference and safekeeping, all the past minutes of intergroup meetings and a copy of these guidelines are passed on to the new representative.

For more information on establishing and running an intergroup, see the *SAA Intergroup Guide* found on the [ISO website](#) under SAA Info / Intergroup.

The Intergroup Communication Committee (ICC) is a resource for local intergroups or individual groups. A group does not need to belong to an intergroup to participate on the ICC calls. See the *SAA Intergroup Guide* or contact the ISO office for more information about how to participate in this monthly teleconference. Send an email to [info@saa-recovery.org](mailto:info@saa-recovery.org)

## **International service work**

Some examples of international service work are listed below:

- Serve on the Literature Committee of the ISO or on one of its subcommittees.
- Serve on the Public Information/Cooperation with the Professional Community (PI/CPC) committee of the ISO or one of its subcommittees.
- Women's outreach
- LGBT outreach
- Prisoner outreach
- Intimacy and Sexual Avoidance Awareness Committee
- Represent your intergroup or local area meetings by participating on the Intergroup Communication Committee (ICC) monthly telemeetings.
- Serve on the Conference Steering Committee or one of its subcommittees.
- Represent your local area as a contact for the PI/CPC program.
- Serve on the Board of Trustees of the ISO or on one of its committees.
- Lead or join a committee to arrange for hosting the annual ISO convention.

## **Conducting group business**

SAA groups find they must regularly hold business meetings to make decisions that keep the group functioning, healthy, and able to carry its message to other sex addicts. For example, groups decide on group meeting times and places, meeting formats, procedures to welcome newcomers, and what and how much literature to keep on hand. In addition, groups decide how and to what degree they will integrate their activities with the larger fellowship. These logistical decisions are made by group conscience.

“Adhering to our primary purpose involves many responsibilities. We make sure that SAA literature and meeting schedules are available. We strive for an atmosphere of recovery in our groups, by using consistent formats and meeting etiquette, starting and ending on time, and being respectful in our sharing and listening. When we have business meetings, or otherwise gather to discuss service, we explore new ways to make our message accessible and our meetings safe and welcoming” [From *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 85].

### **Common Topics at Business Meetings**

- Intergroup reports and requests

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- ISO reports and requests
- Twelfth-step calls
- Sign-up for step or topic presentations
- Group outreach efforts
- Group treasury – status and ideas for use

### **Timing of Business Meetings**

One of the first business decisions groups must make is when and how often they will make business decisions. Some groups conduct business during a period of time (often 10-15 minutes) set aside during each meeting. These groups often find that they must set aside a longer period of time to accommodate some topics in order to reach a group conscience. This may be done as the need arises, or at set intervals.

Other groups allow only brief announcements during the regular meeting and designate a different period of time for business. These groups may circulate a sign-up sheet, for instance, during the Seventh Tradition collection, during which individual members may write down items they wish to discuss during the next business meeting. Separate business meetings are then held regularly so that members can be assured that business concerns will be heard in a timely manner. For example, business meetings can be held monthly after the first meeting of the month, or for one hour prior to the start of the regular meeting at the last meeting of the month.

### **The role of the treasurer in an SAA group**

The Seventh Tradition tells us that every SAA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions. These contributions are generally small cash donations made by group members. These donations help pay for group-related expenses such as conducting outreach mailings, purchasing SAA literature, paying rent for the meeting facility, purchasing refreshments for the meeting, and supporting fellowship activities. Many small groups may feel as though they do not need a treasurer as they may not have to pay rent and might not be collecting donations at each meeting. Our experience is that small groups that regularly collect small donations have been better able to fund outreach, literature, and tokens and have grown as a result. Another important use for the funds is to support local or regional intergroups and to support the ISO. Keeping track of the incoming funds and outgoing disbursements requires that a member of the group be appointed treasurer.

### Selecting a Group Treasurer

The job of the group treasurer is one of the most important to the smooth functioning of the group. Here are some recommended criteria to help in choosing a group member to fill this service position:

- Although there is no standard length of abstinence required, at least three to six months would be prudent.
- The candidate should have attended meetings with regularity for at least six months.
- The candidate for treasurer should have some knowledge of the Twelve Traditions of SAA, particularly Traditions Six, Seven and Twelve.
- The candidate should be trustworthy, dependable, and show sound aptitude for handling group finances.
- The candidate should not have personal financial problems that might cause a conflict or temptation. (See “Problems with the Meeting Treasury” below.)

### Tasks of the Group Treasurer

It is important to remember that the treasurer is a trusted servant. That means that anyone who is selected as a treasurer takes no actions, spends no group money, and signs no agreements with outside entities without direction and permission from the group. The group may authorize broad actions, or a group may need to have every disbursement authorized through a group conscience action. For small or new groups, it is very helpful to the group that every disbursement be authorized through a group conscience.

Tasks for the group treasurer will typically include but may not be limited to the following:

- *Making sure the group basket is emptied at the end of each meeting and the money counted and logged into a ledger.* If the treasurer cannot be present, then another trusted servant should be selected as an assistant to collect the money and store it in a safe location until the treasurer can receive it.
- *Establishing and maintaining a checking account to keep the group funds secure.* At least one other trusted servant from the group should provide additional signatures on checks and aid the treasurer in opening the account. See “Resources for Group Treasurers” below.
- *At regular intervals, requesting that the group take up a separate collection to support special initiatives* such as a monthly group donation to Lifeline Partners, donations to the local intergroup or ISO, or setting aside money for special fellowship activities.
- *Purchasing SAA literature as needed* or assigning another trusted servant from the group to purchase literature using a portion of the group’s funds.

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- *The treasurer should report to the group at regular intervals the checking account balance, a description of current disbursements and their amounts and, if possible, current giving trends. A paper copy of the group's ledger or a checking account statement can be made available for the group to view.*
- *The treasurer aids the group in creating and keeping a budget. The treasurer reports on how the money has been spent over a selected period of time such as a month or a quarter so that the group can set a prudent reserve and determine how money should be spent in the future, via a budget. (See "Resources for Group Treasurers" below.)*

### **Term of the Group Treasurer**

There is no set term for a treasurer of an SAA group. We suggest that group members agree in advance on an appropriate term for the treasurer position. About two years would normally be considered a maximum term, although longer terms might be necessary for smaller groups.

### **Resources for Group Treasurers**

#### **Opening a Checking Account/Getting a Tax ID Number**

A checking account is needed only when the group is no longer comfortable with informal ways of holding and managing its money.

Since most banks require that a non-profit group have a Tax ID number before they will open a checking account for them, this number will be a necessity. Many banks have the necessary form available for filing for this number. Also, a copy of form SS-4 can be found at the IRS website at <https://irs.gov>. As an option, a group may also want to file for tax-exempt status through the IRS. See IRS publication 557 *Tax Exempt Status for Your Organization* for more information on this topic.

Next, the bank account is opened by the treasurer and two or more trusted servants from the group. The Social Security number of the treasurer is generally used to open the bank account, although the following will generally be required of ALL group members who need access to the account: Full name, Social Security number, address, and birth date.

The monthly checking account statement can be used by the treasurer to report the group's balance and disbursements to the group itself or to an intergroup as necessary.

#### **Creating/Keeping a Budget**

A group should aid the treasurer in creating a budget and maintaining that budget over time. How many line items the budget can have for disbursements will depend on the size of the group and the giving trends. For instance, in a small group of 5-7 members with an

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average donation of \$2.00 per member, the group will acquire about \$50.00 per month. A group may create a support plan based on its typical donation income. Most group financial support plans will have these components: incidental expenses, rent, printing, P.O. Box or virtual mail box, literature library, chips/sobriety medallions, convention scholarships, retreats, paying for the GSR's expenses to area assemblies, and a "prudent reserve" for emergencies or to cover times of the year when giving or attendance drops off. The remaining funds can be targeted for the purpose of donations to intergroup (if one exists), Lifeline Partners, areas, and the ISO, as follows:

- 50% Local intergroup
- 10% Area
- 10% Lifeline Partners group donation
- 30% International Service Organization

or

- 40% Local intergroup
- 10% Area
- 10% Lifeline Partners group donation
- 40% International Service Organization

or

- 30% Local intergroup
- 10% Area
- 10% Lifeline Partners group donation
- 50% International Service Organization

or

- Set aside regular amounts for a monthly donation to the local intergroup, Lifeline Partners, or the area, and take up a separate gratitude collection for the International Service Organization.

Remember: Give out of gratitude.

**An example of a group budget is shown below.**

**Group Budget for the Trails to Serenity Group of MyTown, MyState**

Approved by group conscience on June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2006

Prepared by John D – Trails to Serenity Treasurer

Line Item	Planned Amount
Monthly rent for facility	\$25.00
Literature	\$15.00
Convention Scholarship Fund	\$10.00
Coffee supplies, Picnic Fund	\$10.00
Prudent Reserve Fund	\$35.00

Remaining funds to be distributed as follows:

The My Region Intergroup	(50% of remaining amount)
The ISO of SAA	(50% of remaining amount)

**Donations to Meeting Room Provider**

All groups should pay rent to their meeting provider. In some cases, the locations will give the group a flat fee to pay or ask for a percentage of the donations given at the meeting. Even if the meeting location provider does not require rent or a donation, the group should still make a donation in order to remain self-supporting in accordance with the Seventh Tradition. The group should estimate a reasonable rent for the location and provide it to the facility as a donation.

**Ordering Literature and Chips or Making Donations**

The treasurer or another assigned assistant can order SAA literature to stock the group library. SAA literature can be ordered on-line at <https://saa-recovery.org> or by requesting a literature catalog from:

**ISO of SAA**

P.O. Box 70949  
Houston, TX 77270

Or a form can be requested by calling: 1-(713)-869-4902.

Donations to the ISO can be made at the web address and mail address noted above. Standard forms for making donations are often sent with literature orders from the ISO but can also be requested from the addresses given above.

### **Problems with the Meeting Treasury**

What about someone disappearing with the money? Experience has shown that this will happen. What about the person who has the chips and materials who suddenly stops attending meetings and disappears? This also happens.

In our experience, trying to prevent those things from happening often causes more harm to our recovery than letting them happen. Remember, we are a twelve-step organization, not a business. No shaming or judgments should be made about the person who admits his or her problems. It is up to that person to make amends to the group, in his or her own time and way. How we react to these events often illustrates new areas for us to work on in our own recovery. By the way, our Higher Power can replace the lost funds.

The funds are meant to serve the group. The person holding these funds should not spend or disburse them without direction from the group. If the person holding the money is getting nervous about how much is in the treasury, that is a sign to spend more money on outreach or to send a donation to the local intergroup or ISO.

While there is no foolproof way of keeping problems from ever happening with the treasury, here are a few suggestions from others in the fellowship on ways to minimize the problems:

- Split the financial duties between two people. Have one person collect the funds and another keep the records for the group. The person keeping records then creates a periodic treasurer's report.
- Periodically, the treasurer reports fund collections and disbursements at the business portion of the meeting. This should be done at least once every three months.
- The treasurer should have someone in the group periodically review the records to ensure that the incoming funds and outgoing disbursements match. Each time a new treasurer takes over, the funds in the treasury should be audited.
- Rotate the position of the treasurer every six months to two years. This will allow others to do service work and minimize temptation.
- Set a minimum reserve and split the excess funds between the intergroup and the ISO of SAA every three months. A minimum reserve is a prudent amount that a group keeps on hand in case of emergencies. Anything above that reserve can be safely donated or spent.

## **The Seventh Tradition**

We are fully self-supporting when we all take ownership of our common welfare, secure in the knowledge that even if certain members leave, the group will be strong enough to continue to carry its message.”

[*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 89]

### **Where does ISO income come from?**

Established on the basis of the Traditions of SAA and supported predominantly by Seventh Tradition contributions, the ISO of SAA provides information, resources, and other services for the SAA Fellowship. It also serves as a point of first contact and referral for sex addicts, concerned family members, and friends. As the demand for services increases, the need for support of the ISO is greater than ever.

For its support, the International Service Organization of Sex Addicts Anonymous depends on five primary revenue streams.

- Donations
- Literature Sales
- Convention
- Endowment Distribution
- Interest

Donations are the life blood for the ISO's ability to serve the fellowship of SAA and to do its part in carrying the message to the addict who still suffers. In accepting donations, the ISO adheres to the Seventh Tradition, which states:

*“Every SAA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.”*

When it comes to donations—whether money or in-kind goods or services—the Seventh Tradition means the ISO cannot accept anything unless it comes from an SAA member. That makes for a simple rule of thumb: if you are not a member of SAA, we cannot accept your support.

However, if you are a member, the ISO not only can accept your donation but needs and solicits it. The only restriction on donations from individual members is that they cannot exceed \$15,000 in any calendar year. All donations to the ISO are tax deductible under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service Code. Each donation is acknowledged with a receipt, and those who give \$100 or more during any given year also receive a

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donation summary letter each January. Keeping these important details in mind, there are a number of ways you can financially support your service organization.

### **LifeLine Partners**

In 1995 the Board of Trustees established the LifeLine Partners program as a way for individual members and groups to contribute to the ISO on a regular basis. This program has become a vital source of support for the ISO.

As a LifeLine Partner the member or group pledges to contribute a specific amount each month, quarter, or year. Some members fulfill their pledge by sending in a monthly check, but most arrange for the ISO to process their LifeLine Partner gift using a credit or debit card. Nothing could be easier.

LifeLine Partners is a program that challenges all members of the fellowship to pledge to help the ISO by sending in a monthly donation. LifeLine Partners has provided a solid foundation upon which the fellowship can depend, not only to meet its daily financial needs, but upon which to base its financial planning. Contributions are tax deductible.

While all donations are greatly appreciated, LifeLines provide the steady, predictable income that allows for planning of complex and long-term projects. The growth in the number of LifeLine Partners has allowed the ISO to provide unprecedented levels of support for outreach projects. Major multi-media outreach projects have been conducted in major cities across the United States. These projects have given us the potential to reach several million people! Additional outreach projects will continue to be supported by LifeLines.

LifeLine Partner gifts can be made through the mail, via the ISO website, or by having the ISO process a debit or credit card on a specified date each month. To join, simply contact the ISO office and ask for an enrollment form or visit the website at <https://saa-recovery.org/LifeLinePartner/>.

Thank you for making your LifeLine donation!

### **General Donations**

Some individual members and most SAA groups that support the ISO do so by simply sending in donations without making a formal pledge. Such donations are called general donations, because they go toward funding general operating expenses

To make a general donation, start online at our secure general donation web page.

### **Giving Thanks Events**

In 2003, an SAA member from San Francisco wanted to find a special way to show his gratitude for the work that was being done by the ISO in service to the fellowship and to the sex addict who still suffers. He invited other SAA members from the Bay Area into his home on a Saturday afternoon in November for the specific purpose of giving thanks to the

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ISO. Appropriately, the event became known as Giving Thanks I. More than \$7,000 was raised, and November Giving Thanks afternoons have been held annually in the Bay Area ever since.

Other local SAA fellowships are beginning to follow the Bay Area's example. Initial Giving Thanks events have been held in Bakersfield, CA; Houston, TX; and Minneapolis, MN. Hopefully, more local SAA Fellowships will follow suit.

We have a web page that gives an easy to follow step-by-step guide for hosting a Giving Thanks event in.

### **Outreach Endowment Fund**

The Outreach Endowment Fund was established in 1999 using \$22,000 in seed money donated to the Greater Houston Community Foundation by eleven SAA members. The fund continues to grow. For more information on the Outreach Endowment Fund contact the ISO office.

## Resources for Meetings

### ***Literature in meetings***

Most SAA groups choose to maintain a supply of approved literature on hand, to be used by newcomers and members looking for additional support in their recovery. This material should be kept secure. Many groups find it useful to use a locked closet, cabinet drawer, or portable file box. Groups decide through group conscience if literature bought with group funds is to be given away, sold at cost, or sold with a small mark-up to help fund the group's treasury. In addition, groups often maintain a lending library of recovery materials, which may include recordings from previous SAA conventions.

The group's literature representative maintains the supply of literature, inventories it regularly, and orders replacement literature when necessary. Often, the literature representative sets out on a table the group's supply of recovery literature and puts it away at the end of the meeting or fellowship period. The literature representative takes responsibility for ordering a sample of newly approved literature as it becomes available and circulating the sample within the group.

Groups decide through experience and group conscience what literature they wish to keep on hand. Below are some guidelines other groups have found to work.

### ***Basic literature***

Every group should have on hand a copy of *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, the basic text of the SAA fellowship, and a copy of the *Group Guide: Handbook for SAA Groups*.

Most groups also keep on hand a photocopied supply of a listing of members' current phone numbers, and a listing of SAA meetings in the area. Every group registered with the ISO may also request a subscription to the SAA newsletter, *The Outer Circle*. The newsletter includes the experience, strength, and hope of members from across the fellowship and information about ISO events and initiatives.

### ***Newcomer's packets***

Most groups give newcomers a packet of information about the program and their particular meeting. The packets are often in the form of an 8 x 5 manila envelope and are made up ahead of time. How many ready-made packets to keep on hand is up to the group conscience and determined by the number of newcomers the group typically welcomes and how often the group wishes to purchase literature. Some groups give the packet to all newcomers at their first meeting; others wait until the newcomer has attended several meetings, to avoid overwhelming the newcomer.

A newcomer packet will typically include several standard pamphlets (in English or Spanish, as appropriate). When the newcomer identifies as a woman, the pamphlet "A Special Welcome to the Woman Newcomer" is generally added. Many groups give newcomers a current phone list of their members; others wait until the newcomer has

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attended several meetings. In these cases, groups are advised to be sure the newcomer has at least one or two phone numbers of group members.

Here is a list of the contents of a typical newcomer's packet:

- Current phone list or a list of members and phone numbers of those present at the newcomers first meeting
- Local meeting list
- “Three Circles” (pamphlet)
- “Sex Addicts Anonymous” (pamphlet)
- “Abstinence” (pamphlet)
- “The Bubble” (pamphlet)
- “Hope of Recovery” (pamphlet)

The ISO of SAA offers a starter kit for new meetings that contains the following items:

- 4 copies of the following:
  - “The Bubble” pamphlet
  - “Three Circles” pamphlet
  - “Sex Addicts Anonymous” pamphlet
  - “Abstinence” pamphlet
  - “Sexual Sobriety and the Internet” pamphlet
  - “Getting a Sponsor” pamphlet
- 2 copies of the following:
  - First Step to Recovery booklet
  - Getting Started in SAA booklet
  - Tools of Recovery booklet
  - “A Special Welcome to the Woman Newcomer” pamphlet

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- “Writing to Prisoners” pamphlet
- “Recovery from Compulsive Sexual Avoidance” pamphlet
- “Safe and Sexually Sober meetings” pamphlet
- Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender Sex Addict
- 1 copy of the following:
  - Group Guide

### ***Guidelines for prayers***

Following the traditions, SAA groups should not endorse outside causes or institutions, including specific religions. Group members should be sensitive to other members' feelings about outside prayers aligned with a particular religion, cause, or institution. The person leading a prayer at a meeting might preface the prayer by saying, "Whoever would like to join us in this prayer, feel free to do so." Members who do not wish to participate should feel free to abstain or use a prayer of your choosing said in silence.

In addition, some groups include "tag lines" at the end of their closing prayer. Some examples:

- "Thy will be done in our lives. Peace."
- "It works if you work it, because you're worth it."
- "Keep coming back. It works and you're worth it."
- "It works if you work it, and it won't if you don't so work it because you're worth it."

## ***Fellowship***

Many groups have a tradition of regular fellowship outside of the formal meeting. This includes such activities as:

- Meeting before or after the meeting at a convenient location near the regular meeting. A casual restaurant or coffee shop works well.
- Going out for coffee (or a meal) after the meeting
- Group picnics
- Regular lunch meetings
- Periodic campouts, retreats or recovery day events

Such fellowship often allows for informal discussion of issues, encourages fellowship members along their path of recovery; get to know the stories and lives of other members; or a place for sponsors to do step work with sponsees. Some people say they have learned just as much or more during the fellowship before or after the meeting as in the regular meeting. As these are informal meetings, we can hold them in public places. The only concern would be to not discuss topics that are best kept in the meeting room or to “break anonymity” of group members.

Sometimes, spouses or significant others are included in these activities. Including spouses or significant others is usually done sparingly, as they have their own recovery fellowship and program, but sometimes it can help everyone’s recovery move forward.

## ***Sober meetings, safe meetings***

While people from all walks of life can have their lives wrecked by addictive sexual behaviors, so too can people from all walks of life experience a restoration to sanity and a spiritual awakening by working the Twelve Steps of Sex Addicts Anonymous. Knowing this to be true, the most important thing we can do is to maintain our own sobriety through the spiritual growth that results from working the steps. A group that maintains spiritual growth and works toward sobriety will inevitably become more attractive to newcomers.

Becoming a more welcoming meeting starts well before any newcomer shows up. Members of a group that is truly “carrying the message” will be less likely to engage in behavior that may threaten or confuse a newcomer regardless of gender. A newcomer in a sober meeting is also more likely to conclude that the group has what he or she wants, and that it is worthwhile to come back.

Many of our groups hold annual group conscience or group inventory meetings in which we examine the health and sobriety of the group. Questions examined might include how many members of the group are working the Steps with a sponsor, and

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how many have completed the Steps at least once. We might also ask whether the general amount of sobriety time the group has is growing or staying stuck. Members who are qualified and available to be sponsors and temporary sponsors can be identified and made known to other group members.

It's a good idea to establish sobriety requirements for trusted servants, if practical. Using examples from the SAA Group Guide as the meeting format is an excellent way to ensure that a group is clearly carrying the message of recovery. In particular, reading the SAA meeting boundaries statement (found just above this discussion) helps to remind us all what behavior is appropriate in a sober group.

In a sober meeting, sharing centers on our sobriety and our new life in recovery. Graphic language, body part descriptions, and references to the places we acted out are discouraged. It is suggested that our attire reflect our group's commitment to sobriety. The shares focus on recovery rather than on acting out. Healthy and safe meetings bond in the solution to the problem. Unhealthy and unsafe meetings bond in the problem.

Some of our groups split in two when someone who is new or who is coming back from a relapse requests a First-Step meeting. One group shares their First Step with the member, while the other group continues to discuss step work and sexual sobriety. This plan helps ensure the person needing a first step gets appropriate support and attention, while it keeps the group's focus on recovery. It also helps support those who might be disturbed or triggered by the disclosures shared in a First Step.

[Excerpt from the SAA pamphlet "Safe and Sexually Sober Meetings"]  
Sober Meetings, Safe Meetings

While people from all walks of life can have their lives wrecked by addictive sexual behaviors, so too can people from all walks of life experience a restoration to sanity and a spiritual awakening by working the Twelve Steps of Sex Addicts Anonymous. Knowing this to be true, the most important thing we can do is to maintain our own sobriety through the spiritual growth that results from working the steps. A group that maintains spiritual growth and works toward sobriety will inevitably become more attractive to newcomers.

Becoming a more welcoming meeting starts well before any newcomer shows up. Members of a group that is truly "carrying the message" will be less likely to engage in behavior that may threaten or confuse a newcomer. A newcomer in a sober meeting is also more likely to conclude that the group has what they want, and that it is worthwhile to come back.

Many of our groups hold annual group conscience or group inventory meetings in which we examine the health and sobriety of the group. Questions examined might include how many members of the group are working the Twelve Steps with a sponsor, and how

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many have completed the steps at least once. We might also ask whether the general amount of sobriety time the group has is growing or staying stuck. Members who are qualified and available to be sponsors and temporary sponsors can be identified and made known to other group members.

It's a good idea to establish sobriety requirements for trusted servants, if practical. Using a suggested meeting format found in the SAA Group Guide is an excellent way to ensure that a group is clearly carrying the message of recovery. In particular, reading the SAA meeting boundaries statement (from Sex Addicts Anonymous, page 12, first sentence through the end of paragraph two) helps to remind us all what behavior is appropriate in a sober group.

In a sober meeting, the focus is on our sobriety and our new life in recovery. It is suggested that our attire reflect our group's commitment to sobriety. Graphic language, body part descriptions, and references to the places we acted out are discouraged. Often, responding to another person's share decreases the sense of safety and is best avoided. The shares describe recovery rather than acting out. Healthy and safe meetings bond in the solution to the problem. Unhealthy and unsafe meetings bond in the problem.

Some of our groups split in two when someone who is new or who is coming back from a relapse requests a First-Step meeting. However, other groups have found that splitting the group for First Steps can send the unintended message that newcomers - particularly women - are somehow dangerous. Sometimes members may initially express fears that hearing a First Step of someone they feel attracted to may be triggering. However, in recovery we learn that we are not passive victims of external "triggers." Instead, we take responsibility for the ways we actively sexualize other people, places and things. By being willing to view other members as "siblings in recovery" rather than sexualizing them, all members of the group can hear the pain of what it was like, the crisis of what happened, and the hope of what it's like now.

***International Service Organization (ISO): The fellowship of SAA and the ISO of SAA, Inc.***

For most, the newcomer's first months spent in SAA are focused almost exclusively on personal recovery. This is as it should be. Yet, even during this early stage, the newcomer is likely to hear talk of or announcements about the ISO. At some point he or she might learn that ISO is short for the International Service Organization of SAA, Inc., and that it is the service organization of the SAA fellowship. Still, what does that mean?

It might be helpful to first understand the relationship between the ISO and the SAA fellowship. They are not one and the same. The SAA fellowship is made up of people who follow the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of SAA as a way to recover from addictive sexual behavior. These individuals support each other and receive support by attending SAA meetings, also commonly called groups. Each of these groups is autonomous except in things that affect other meetings or SAA as a whole. The groups and the SAA fellowship are not legal entities. In addition, because they are diverse in makeup, size, and location, it is difficult for them to coordinate fellowship-wide activities.

The ISO, on the other hand, is a legal entity. It is a non-profit corporation formed under Section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Service Code. It is able to conduct business on behalf of the SAA fellowship, and, with the financial support of SAA members and groups, it is able to provide services to the fellowship and coordinate activities for the fellowship.

**The members of the ISO of SAA, Inc.**

If the ISO of SAA is a legal corporation, just who are its members or, if you will, its owners? This is laid out by the corporate bylaws as follows:

“The members of this corporation, also known as ‘ISO convention delegates,’ or ‘international convention delegates,’ shall consist of one individual elected by each SAA member group as its international convention delegate.

A) An SAA group is defined as: two or more addicts meeting together regularly for the purposes of recovering from their sexual addiction and reaching out to others suffering from sexual addiction, who are self-supporting and have no other common affiliations.

B) An SAA member group is an SAA group that has registered itself with the International Service Organization of SAA and follows the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of SAA.”

[Article II, Section 1]

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These delegates, again as provided in the bylaws, entrust the daily operation of the corporation to a Board of Trustees.

“The Board has the general powers of a non-profit corporation enumerated under Minnesota Statutes 317A.161, but shall not own real property, invest in or issue securities, act as an administrator of any person’s will or testamentary trust, nor deal with the donation to or income of SAA in any speculative way.”

[Article IV, Section 4]

As the corporation has grown in numbers of registered SAA groups spread throughout the world, the Board of Trustees have seen the necessity to invoke its authority to hire a staff to act on its behalf in carrying out the daily business of the corporation.

“The Board shall have the power to create committees and special service boards to deal with matters of concern to the SAA fellowship, and shall have the power to employ individuals to conduct its day to day operations.”

[Article IV, Section 8]

Within the SAA fellowship, the staff is usually referred to collectively as the “ISO Office.”

In addition to the Board of Trustees, the registered groups, through their delegates, have formed a second group of trusted servants who serve on the ISO Literature Committee. The Literature Committee’s corporate role, its limitations, and its relationship to the delegates are explained in the bylaws as follows:

“The Literature Committee shall have supervisory authority over the content of all ISO publications. It shall not, however, enter into any contracts, exceed the budget voted it by the preceding international convention, own any copyrights, grant permission to anyone to use ISO copyrighted materials, or in any other way act as a business corporation. The Literature Committee or its representatives appointed to subcommittees for specific tasks shall always be consulted by the Board for advice and input in any business matters relating to ISO publications.”

[Article V, Section 3]

“The Literature Committee is responsible to the members of this corporation, who, by majority vote of a quorum at an international convention, or a majority of those responding within 60 days of an ISO Board requested mail vote, can overrule any decision of the Literature Committee.”

[Article V, Section 6]

## **In summary**

The importance of the ISO might be best summarized in the context of SAA's First Tradition:

*Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon SAA unity.*

Without the ISO, SAA groups would not only be autonomous, they would be isolated and fragmented. Communicating and coordinating within such a diverse and far-flung membership as SAA's presents a challenge. Without the ISO, the challenge could not be met.

## **Identifying leaders for international service work**

The ISO of SAA has learned through experience that the following guidelines are necessary for effective leadership at the international level. The guidelines were adopted at our Organizing Convention in Houston in 1989, updated by the Board of Trustees in 1998, and modified specifically for delegates in 2003.

- At least one year experience in the fellowship.
- At least six months of continuous sexual sobriety.
- Completion of Twelve Steps with a sponsor.
- Demonstrated leadership in service work at the local level.
- Endorsement of their home group—affirming their belief that the individual has the serenity and wisdom in the program to serve at the international level.

The ISO Board is convinced that those who serve well at the international level must have had success in their personal recovery based on the Twelve Steps of SAA. International service work cannot be left to those who lack sobriety. We affirm the assembly's conviction that international service work requires more than what can work well at the local group level. We believe the identification process needs to begin at the local level sometime before the convention. Then the group conscience can take action to see that those who have the skills, serenity and wisdom are at the convention. In areas with intergroups this structure can further enhance the identification and endorsement process.

## **Other qualities important for our trusted servants**

A good grasp of the Twelve Traditions and a high sense of ethics.

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- Members who will accept the commitment that each position requires. They need to follow through with actions on projects undertaken to fulfill the goals set by the membership at the annual meeting.
- International service work usually involves working in or with committees, either in person, through the mail or through teleconferences.
- Willingness to listen to all viewpoints.
- Humility that cripples any desire for personal over collective goals.
- Willingness to support group decisions even when they are not what the individual would have preferred.
- Ability to place principles before personalities. This means refraining from gossip and working with others in the spirit of respect.
- Know patience, as work based on broad group consensus moves slowly.

Remember, when conducting the business of our fellowship, that our program is primarily a spiritual program.

The guidelines listed above should not be construed so as to disqualify those in the program who have strong convictions and beliefs. The energy such people often carry with them can be a valuable asset to our program, so long as they recognize that the ultimate authority in our program is God, as God is revealed in our group conscience.

Just as there are demands made on those engaged in international service work, there are more than enough in the way of compensating rewards. Personal growth, the joy of seeing others who have been under the heel of their addiction find sexual sobriety, and the joy of giving something back to a program that has given so much to us. It is true that we grow in our recovery by sharing it with others.

We hope these comments will help your group identify and send forth trusted servants who can serve our fellowship with integrity, vision, and energy.

### ***Meeting registration with the SAA International Service Organization (ISO)***

As a fellowship, we now have over 1860 meetings (as of May 2019) It is important that all groups register with the ISO and get their GSR contact information into the ISO database, which serves as a tool for sex addicts to find local meetings. Our database is only as good as the data it contains. This guidance in preparing the group's registration will help us in serving the suffering addict in search of a meeting.

**Group Name:**

This is any familiar but unique name by which the group chooses to distinguish itself. It can reflect the theme or special focus of the group, such as “SAA Men’s Serenity Group” or the “Sexual Anorexia Recovery Meeting.” The name can also reflect some combination of the city, day, or time, such as the “The Fairfield Saturday Morning Meeting “or “Hope and Recovery Monday Night.” Groups are discouraged, however, from affiliating their SAA group with outside enterprises by incorporating the name of the facility that rents meeting space to the group, the title of outside literature, or any specific religious or therapeutic concept or practice. The data in this field is keyed in as free text during data entry.

**Meeting Mailing Address Name:**

In this field a group may choose a similar sounding name for its group mailing labels that does not indicate that it is a sex addiction recovery group. Examples include changing the “SAA Men’s Serenity Group” to the “Men’s Serenity Group” or the “Sexual Anorexia Recovery Meeting” to the “Anorexia Recovery Meeting” for group mailing labels.

This is the address at which the meeting would like to receive ISO mail. This address is never given out to anyone outside the ISO office without permission.

**Meeting Location:**

The term “location” refers to the physical location of the meeting at its regular day and time. Within the Location box on the group Registration Form, there are several fields available for describing where the meeting is located.

**Meeting Day:**

Day on which the meeting takes place: e.g. Monday, Tuesday, etc.

**Meeting Time:**

Time of day the meeting takes place: e.g. 8:00 – 9:00 pm, 10:00 – 11:30 a.m.

**Facility Name:**

The name of the facility used: “St. John’s Methodist Church.”

**Location in Facility:**

This field can contain one building name at a larger campus or a room number within a single building. It can also include directions within a facility such as “Take Elevator A to the second floor Conference Room.”

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**Street:** This field is used for the street address of the overall facility used by the group.

**City:** City the meeting facility is located in.

**State/Province:** State or Province that the meeting is located in.

**Country:** Country the meeting is located in.

**Cross Streets/Directions:** The data in this field can name a cross street or nearest major intersection: e.g. 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street.

### **Availability of Meeting Information:**

The registering meeting should decide whether they want their meeting location listed in the Fellowship Directory and/or the ISO website. If the meeting does not want to be listed on the ISO website, they should check off the boxes on the Group Registration Form. It will be assumed that the group wants the information available to others unless listed otherwise.

### **Meeting access:**

Meeting access is listed as Open, Closed, Closed/12/New, or Closed/12/All. In the SAA Meeting Registration form, this falls under “Your Group Type”.

#### *Open / Open to visitors*

These meetings are open to anyone interested in finding out about SAA; they need not have admitted that their sexual behavior is a problem.

#### *Closed / Those Seeking Help*

Meetings for those who have a desire to stop their addictive sexual behavior. The meeting location will be printed in the directory and given out by the ISO office to anyone who seeks help, whether by phone, postal mail, or e-mail.

#### *Closed/12/New*

“Closed/12/New” means the meeting locations will not be printed in the directory and will be given only to people who are already SAA members.

#### *Closed/12/All*

“Closed/12/All” means the meeting locations will not be printed in the directory nor be given out to anyone, not even SAA members.

**Meeting Format:**

Meeting format refers to the structure or particular recovery topics highlighted by the group. Common meeting formats listed on the Group Registration Form include: Speaker, Step, Topic, Step/Tradition/Topic, Book Study, and Other.

*Speaker*

Meeting where an individual shares their experience, strength, and hope related to twelve-step recovery through SAA.

*Step*

Meeting discussing one or more of the Twelve Steps of SAA.

*Topic*

Meeting discussing a recovery-related topic.

*Step/Tradition/Topic*

Meeting discussing one of the Twelve Steps, one of the Twelve Traditions, or recovery-related topics.

*Book Study*

Meeting involving readings and discussions from the book *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, or other literature.

*Other*

Groups can also specify their own unique formats in this free text field as well, e.g. Step Meditation and Journaling, Writing and Recovery, Relationships in Recovery, etc.

**Meeting Makeup:**

This field specifies any additional boundaries that a group might want to add. Common examples of meeting makeup include mixed, men's or women's meetings, or meetings for helping professionals. Standardized terms within this field are entered by using a drop-down menu. This information should be noted in the letter accompanying the Group Registration Form to the ISO.

**Meeting Contacts:**

This is for members representing their meeting to the ISO. The fields required include:

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**First Name and Initial:** The first name and last initial of the individual who will represent the meeting.

**Phone:** The phone number of the meeting contact.

**E-mail :** The Internet e-mail address of the individual who will be the meeting contact.

**Check-Off Boxes :** Designation to let the ISO know whether the meeting wants their contact listed on the ISO website or in the Fellowship Directory. By checking either box, the meeting is agreeing that it wants to list the contact on either the ISO website or in the Fellowship Directory.

### **Website:**

If your meeting has an ISO approved website, enter its address in this section of the Group Registration Form. For information on how to get a website approved, contact the ISO.

### **Mail group registration to:**

ISO of SAA  
P.O. Box 70949  
Houston, TX 77270 USA

### ***How to Contact SAA***

If you wish to contact SAA, your anonymity will be assured.

For questions about the SAA program, help when you cannot find a meeting, or other problems:

Contact the SAA ISO office:

By e-mail: [info@saa-recovery.org](mailto:info@saa-recovery.org)

By telephone: Call/WhatsApp +1 713-869-4902. We answer our phone from 10 a.m. through 6 p.m. Central Time, Monday through Friday. Voice mail is available at all other times.

By regular mail:

ISO of SAA  
PO Box 70949  
Houston, TX 77270 USA

To submit articles to the SAA Newsletter: Contact the Editor at [toc@saa-recovery.org](mailto:toc@saa-recovery.org)

## **Group Guide: Handbook for SAA Groups**

To submit suggestions for on ways to improve the Group Guide: Handbook for SAA Groups, e-mail the Literature Committee [litcom@saa-recovery.org](mailto:litcom@saa-recovery.org)