



Plain Brown Rapper

THE SAA NEWSLETTER

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Recovery Toolbox

Learning From Newcomers

A letter from Paul W.

Dear fellow members, I would like to share the following experience.

By the grace of the God of my understanding, I have four years as a member of SAA in San Antonio, Texas. I always learn something new for my recovery each time I make a meeting.

I attended an open sharing meeting the other day and learned something thanks to a newcomer. Most in the room had taken their turn and the meeting was nearly over. I had held back, not knowing what I needed to share for my recovery. The man before me spoke of his current struggles after four years in the program. Then the newcomer said, "I don't like to complain, but this is not what I want to hear! I don't want to hear people still struggling with behavior after four years. I'm miserable and I want to get beyond this."

My first reaction was anger (how dare he be so...!). But then I remembered one of the gifts of this program I've received: I have alternatives to attacking him and taking his inventory. I can do a fourth step about this and see what I can learn from him and my feelings. By the grace of God, I was able to do this. I realized in a new way how much this program has meant to me. I saw more

clearly how life has changed for me. I wish to share this.

When I first came into rooms of recovery, I was scared, lonely, hopeless, and cynical. Above all, I was very frightened and unable to acknowledge it. Mine was, and is in some ways, a disease of acting-in. I have never acted out criminally or even formally broken my long-standing marriage vows. I did not believe that I would fit in. I, inside, had reacted to old-timers stories just like the newcomer!

I was addicted to the solitary high of cruising, passive voyeurism, staring, pornography and daily masturbation, all in a context of a very religious upbringing that left me feeling damned and ashamed and unalterably alone. When I walked into rooms of recovery, I was afraid that the progressive nature of my disease would kill me and all that I valued most. And I was afraid because death didn't sound all that bad to me at the time.

As a newcomer, I wanted more than anything an escape from the 'imperious urges.' I wanted a system of mastery and control over what I feared most. What I have received is the gift of not needing to fear. I have learned to love the sexual being that I am.

Part of me would still like to say that I was free of pain,

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troubles, and sexual urges in my life. But I have come to love that these are elements with a purpose in the life that my Higher Power has given me. I have learned not to be ashamed for being human and imperfect. I am working on conscious contact with a Higher Power who is kind and gentle with my struggles and not vengeful and hating of me as I was with myself.

In addition to learning alternatives to shame and fear, I have learned patience and tolerance for myself and others that I never knew was possible. I had always been religious. I first came into recovery in suburban New York City into rooms that included men whose lifestyles on the lower west of Manhattan were as 'morally different' as a universe away from me. I wondered what I could ever find in common with such people.

But I found it. I did not find it in mastery or control or anything else that my desperate ego wanted. I found it in surrender. I still smile with humor that it was not the Elders of the church or the abbots of the monastery, but the 'sickies' out at the edges of their own lives that taught me (me, a very religious pastoral professional!). A whole new universe of spirituality built on simple honesty and the desire to conform to the will of a Higher Power.

I did not change my patterns entirely. My behavior is still not in

line with my 'ideals,' and I still have moments of wishing for the old shamelessness of doing everything right. But the program has changed a level much deeper than my behavior. It has changed *me*. I have a whole new outlook on life. I have a new freedom of

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choices about shame, fear, and isolation that are the heart of my disease. I can see love and gentleness for my own humanity through others' honest revelation of their own lives. I don't have to judge or be in charge or solve everything that comes into my life. I don't live in constant fear of others' opinions or craziness (I've enough of my own!). I know something of a peace and comprehend something of a serenity well beyond anything my fear could imagine before.

I don't know when I'll be half way through, but I am amazed already. When I first came into the program, I did not get the control and the escape from behaviors that I wanted, but I got what I needed. I have moved from shame towards grace.

Thank you.
Paul W.

Twelve Steps

Step Eleven: Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

Meditation: An Often Overlooked Aspect of the Eleventh Step

Meditation isn't the same as prayer. I have some experience with prayer. A couple of years ago, I prayed every morning for most of a year. I recently have been writing prayers as an exercise in one of my workbooks. I have found prayer useful for focusing my mind and returning me to a sense of gratitude. But it hasn't been a moving or powerful experience for me. That is probably because I have had no religious training and never came to believe in God. So, how was I to work the eleventh step? Recently, I found an answer in meditation.

I started meditating in a group about a month ago. I had talked about it for more than a decade but never did anything about it. In my addiction, I couldn't mediate because my mind was too ravaged and I was too obsessed about sex. But recently, I realized that I wasn't going to grow in my recovery unless I employed another tool.

I started meditating with a group of people on Sunday mornings. I was afraid the first time. I didn't think I could sit still for two twenty five minute

sessions. I was afraid that I would obsess about sex or sabotage my efforts in some way. I remembered that I had been able to bear it when I had meditated ten years ago. I also remembered the profound joy I had felt afterward. I believed that I would make it this time. When I left, I didn't feel joyful, I felt sad. That was OK; it is what I needed to feel that day. I have felt more peaceful, on the whole, ever since.

The amazing thing about meditating is how this doing nothing can have such a profound effect on how I feel. I can't explain it. I'm not doing anything, *per se*. I haven't adopted a new belief. However, it is working as a tool of recovery. I am finding it easier to say no to my addict. I do feel more at peace and more optimistic.

Recently, I went to my step-grandmother's funeral. I was afraid that I would be tempted to act-out afterward. I had a lot of reasons to be afraid. Not believing in an afterlife, death terrifies me. The funeral was out of town, past a city that I acted-out in many times. I was driving there alone, and I was going to be with my toxic step-family. When I got

Twelve Traditions

there, a feeling of loving compassion came over me as I met my grieving family. I gave love and comfort and support to family members who, previously, I had resented. I even shared with those who were suffering as a result of their addictions. I don't know what came over me. I didn't plan to be that way. And, as a result of the love and intimacy that I shared, I had little desire to act-out as I drove through the city on my way home. My attitude turned what could have been a negative experience into a positive one.

Meditation doesn't require belief in any religion or philosophy. You can practice it without knowing much about it. You need to find a quiet place without distractions. Wear loose, comfortable clothes. Set an alarm before you start so that you don't have to worry about the time. Sit on a chair or cushion in a comfortable, but upright posture. Don't recline or you'll likely fall asleep. Look

out into the room. Don't focus on any one thing but don't let your eyes move around the room. Follow your breath in and out. Breath naturally; don't force your breath. Don't hold onto your thoughts or try to force them out of your mind. Just watch them pass through. Do the same for your feelings and body's sensations. They will pass. Just focus on your breathing. It seems like forever to meditate for twenty-five minutes, but when it's done, it seems like no time has passed at all. It is easier to meditate in a group where your self consciousness will help you focus more and fidget less.

If you want to learn about meditation, I recommend the book *A Gradual Awakening* by Steven Levine. It is simple, straight forward, and won't require you to believe in anything you are not comfortable with. Good luck.

Jeff W.

Tradition Eleven: Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.

Are We Disregarding the Eleventh Tradition Without Realizing It?

The Eleventh Tradition looks deceptively easy to practice but contains some difficulties that we may not be aware of. I don't see the likelihood of any of

our members admitting that we are sex addicts to the press, on the radio, or TV. For personal protection, we wouldn't. We don't have

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Feature

Reaching Out from the Inside

by Sonny W.

My name is Sonny. I am a sex addict and an alcoholic. I am incarcerated at Mt. Pleasant Correctional Facility. My charge is a 3rd degree sexual abuse. Ten years is the sentence. I have been in the program of A.A. for a number of years on the outside. The program of A.A. changed my whole life and made it worth living. I have a beautiful wife who is also in the A.A. program. Together, we raised three children, built a new home, and started two businesses of our own. I was respected in the community where I lived. I attended A.A. meetings regularly. That helped me to take care of my alcohol addiction.

Over the years I have grown to love the program of A.A. because I know it works! But somewhere, at some time, I crossed an invisible line. I don't know when, but I had picked up another addiction and I didn't even know it. I had become a sex addict.

I was arrested July 14, 1994 and was sentenced to Mt. Pleasant Treatment Center. That seemed to be one of the lowest points in my life. Here I am, 50 years old, and I'm in prison facing 10 years. I knew what I did was wrong and I promptly admitted it. I did try to make amends as my A.A. pro-

gram had taught me to do. The judge would not listen. He told me his motto: if you do a crime, you will do the time. Bang! went the gavel.

So here I am, and that's OK. You ask how can I say that It's OK? Well, at first I could not say that. When I first came here I was scared. Really scared. I had heard how sex offenders were treated so I expected the worst. I thought to myself, what kind of treatment would they give me? Shock treatment? Drugs? What ever it was, I figured I was doomed. No hope. No help. The hopelessness really set in.

I was assigned a counselor when I first got here. He gave me a book and told me to write a book report on it. The name of the book was *Boys and Sex*. I did what he said. I finished that book and he gave me another book. It was called *Girls and Sex*. I did a report on that one, too. Then he gave me another book called *Men Who Rape*. I did a report on that book, too.

In all, I had read 5 books and did 5 book reports. Yes, I could relate to some of the things that the books talked about, but I could not understand what this had to do with any type of treatment? I even wrote my wife and my friends in the A.A.

program that I was doomed and there was no hope. I would just do my time. I really got on my pity-pot of hopelessness. My counselor gave me another book. I said "Not another dumb book." It was called *Out Of The Shadows*. I started reading that book and it told about a 12-step program of recovery. It told about a successful program which has been tried by using the twelve steps and traditions of A.A.. I could not believe what I was reading. Could this be true? This program, a program of recovery, a 12-step program with the same format of A.A. The program was called SAA, Sex Addicts Anonymous. You know, at that moment I felt a big weight was lifted off my shoulders. A program of recovery, SAA, twelve steps and traditions taken from the format of Alcoholics Anonymous.

I said to myself, this is for me. I spoke with my counselor here and he told me they about the SAA meeting here at the center at 9:30 am on Wednesday mornings. He told me I could go if I wanted to. I went to my first SAA meeting here. There were people at that meeting with smiling faces and talking to each other. They made me feel welcome. I liked it. It reminded me much of the same as my A.A. meetings at home and here. I was happy and relieved that I finally found people who cared and who shared with me the same type of

sexual addiction that I had. I found what I knew I needed.

Waiting between meetings from one week to the next can seem like forever and one can sure have some real bad days in between. For me, the hope that I had found in the SAA meeting seemed so far away that my spirit

I expected the worst. I thought to myself, what kind of treatment would they give me? Shock treatment? Drugs? What ever it was, I figured I was doomed. No hope. No help. The hopelessness really set in.

really seemed broken and I gave up on hope and recovery. But one day, I spoke with my Higher Power and He changed my attitude to a positive outlook on life again. Call it a spiritual awakening or what ever but something changed for the better in me and my program of SAA, which I believe in now.

Sonny's story continues in the next issue of the PBR, where he shares how an experience while cleaning a brass rail changed his life.

On the Topic

Why Do We Reach Out?

by Mark N., Outreach Trustee.

Why do SAA members reach out to the addict who still suffers? At first glance we, as sex addicts in recovery, have all got a price that we will pay should our participation in Sex Addicts Anonymous become common knowledge. These consequences could include losing a job, losing a relationship, losing our liberty, feeling shame, and a variety of other consequences due to the misperceptions of the general public regarding sex addicts.

As we are all at risk for some form of penalty should our sexual addiction become known to people we choose not to share this information with, it is interesting that so many sex addicts are willing to carry the message. I believe that some of the reasons are worth noting here.

First, we carry the message as we work our program, and we work the twelfth step in a variety of ways. We share with newcomers at first-step meetings. We make telephone calls, and often enough the person we call is in greater need than we are to talk to a fellow addict. We participate in retreats and in general service work so that our fellowship will always be there for people who need it and want it. We support our NSO and our local

Intergroups. We find time for people when they have a need to talk, even when we have other things to do, and we don't limit this to sponsorship relationships. All of these are legitimate ways to carry the message, and there are of course many others.

We as a fellowship have reached out to the prison system, making our fellowship available to men and women who have committed criminal sexual conduct. We do this in the hope that they may find recovery, and not have to victimize after they are released from prison. We do this with the knowledge that we ourselves could be victimized, but we put our safety in God's hands, and so far as I know we have never suffered any abuse due to our prison outreach program.

Nor have we been seduced by people who are HIV positive when they find SAA. We have reached out to testing centers, hoping that people with AIDS and people who are HIV positive will find the relief they seek in the twelve steps. We also have found that some people who get tested are experiencing their 'bottom' and are ready, even desperate, for recovery. Our fellowship has been a lifesaver for many.

For me, when I see a person break down in a meeting as they

On the Topic

discover some lost memory from their past, so that they can then go forward, when I hear a sex offender state that he thought that the incurable nature of his addiction meant that he had no hope for recovery, and that SAA had shown him the way out of victimizing behavior, when I see the honest admiration for our fellowship on the faces of professionals whom we come in contact with, to carry our message, when I greet the newcomer, whose world has exploded and who is searching for some form, *any form*, of sanity, and when I remember my own first step, I know why I do Outreach.

Our most successful and far-reaching outreaches to date have been to the therapeutic and religious communities. Our *least* successful have been to minori-

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ties, and to a large degree, women. We have a lot of work to do in *all* these areas. In my mind, by doing outreach, we refuting our addict in a very basic way. For all of us, our sexual addiction impacted our lives, and it was a part of us that we felt could never be of any use to us, and in fact we felt that it made us worthless. By carrying the message, we are *not* worthless, but have a found a way to put our experiences to good use, and we find that we are helping ourselves by helping others.

Mark N.

Sobering Thoughts...

***We don't need to be ashamed,
we need to be aware and accepting.***



There's always a lower bottom.

Fellowship Forum

Glad to Have Been Nabbed by Rich W.

I'm so grateful I got caught! I already knew I had a problem with sexual addiction. I had been stabbing at half-measures for five years. All persons close to me, including myself, were still suffering under my 'partial recovery,' if such a thing is possible. Two years ago, two of my many victims found the courage to complain in writing to the proper authority. That authority had sufficient power to coerce me into complying with their recommendation to get the help I so sorely needed. I was 'incarcerated' at a treatment center for

(continued from page 5)

the kind of acceptance that AA has, for several reasons. One, we are a much younger fellowship. AA has had three generations to deliver their message whereas we have had less than one. Second, the whole country has problems talking about sexual issues. For the most part, the country and the media are not ready to talk about sex addiction.

I was pleased to see that the TV character Sam Mallone, of *Cheers*, admitted to being a sex addict in a recovery program on the show *Fraiser*. They didn't make jokes about it. It was

three months, wherein my denial and ego-centrism were finally breached enough for me to get a true understanding of the 12-step program in my heart.

My recovery is much more solid now. It is not perfect. I still struggle at times. My focus is in living a life according to the principles of SAA. I accept that my illness requires daily attention. I visit the 12 steps every day, and reap the benefits of prolonged periods of serenity. I strive to be open, honest, and a kind a gentle spirit. I am a human being: flawed, imperfect, and fallible. I am willing to seek change, directed by a power greater than myself. If you are where I used to be—living a life of sexual addiction—I hope you get caught, too.

handled very matter-of-factly. Gary Trudeau mentioned a sex addict's twelve-step group in a recent *Doonsbury* without making a joke of it either. I appreciate their efforts. It would be premature, however, to believe that these are examples of a public acceptance of sexual addiction. They may not have made jokes of the subject both out of sensitivity to sex addicts, and because the idea is inherently funny to the public.

As the twelfth step reminds us, we also practice anonymity for more than our own personal protection. We practice the eleventh step so that the public doesn't associate our movement

Fellowship Forum

with any individual member of our group. When Roseanne Barr and LaToya Jackson admitted that they had been sexually abused as children, they became models of

Ultimately, we must trust that the program works and will attract people who need it when they are ready for it.

incest survivors. What the public thinks of these people now spills over to what they think about abuse survivors. And the credibility of all survivors rides with them to some degree. I certainly don't want that responsibility. But do I try to take it anyway?

Sometimes we attempt to promote our program without being fully aware that we do. I have told my first step in front of newcomers and omitted details about my struggles and slips since entering the program. Sometimes time doesn't seem to permit or it doesn't seem important. Sometimes I know that I'm afraid to scare off newcomers.

Am I promoting the program? On the one hand, they already found the program. On the other, am I afraid that they'll learn that it takes great dedication to work this program and that the addiction is cunning, baffling, and powerful? They will certainly learn that themselves with time. But do I risk giving them a false impression that could lead them

to feel that their struggles are unique? Fortunately, none of us have that much influence on how another person perceives the program. But we do want to be honest with all of our members in an appropriate way.

I also wonder about the arguments that I have had with therapists about the existence of sex addiction. I wasn't trying to promote the program for their personal use, but I was trying to persuade them of our validity. In the end my efforts fell on deaf ears. But is that promotion? I can spare myself the grief of arguing with these professionals if I say that it is promotion.

Recently, my sisters have had some contact with twelve-step programs. Again, it was tempting to preach to them about my salvation or try to make the program more attractive. In the end, although it is lonely to work my program without being able to share it with them, I have no control over their response to the program. I have to turn that over.

In the end, we must work our own programs honestly and let people, both in and out of the program evaluate it on our spiritual growth. And that includes our recognition that we don't always live up to our own standards. Ultimately, we must trust that the program works and will attract people who need it when they are ready for it.

Jeff W.

Announcements

FRIENDS OF THE LITERATURE COMMITTEE (FOLC)

The Literature Committee is made up of elected representatives, an alternate from each region, up to three at-large representatives, and the Editor of the *PBR*. We want to involve more SAA members in literature-related work. Connect to the network of people helping to create and distribute recovery literature. Fill out the form below and send it to:

Friends of the Literature Committee,
c/o NSO of SAA, P.O. Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270.

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Phone: (____) _____ - _____ FAX: (____) _____ - _____
E-Mail Address: _____
Intergroup: _____
Do you have a computer? <input type="checkbox"/> MAC <input type="checkbox"/> PC <input type="checkbox"/> Modem?
Friends of the Literature Committee (FOLC)

Some projects we're working on:

- *Plain Brown Rapper*—increase the distribution of the *PBR* in local areas and intergroups, and finding local group or intergroup news contacts
- A booklet on sponsorship
- A short guide to working the 12 Steps
- A book on the 12 Steps (to be published in 1997)
- Translations of our literature into Spanish and French (we are looking for translators as well as reviewers of material already translated)
- Do you have any ideas for new literature?

Send us your ideas or literature you have published for use by your meeting or intergroup.

SUBSCRIBE TO THE *PLAIN BROWN RAPPER*

The *PBR* includes news of the worldwide fellowship of Sex Addicts Anonymous, stories of recovery, the experience of the fellowship in working the 12 Steps, outreach, service work, and more. The *PBR* is our journal and a vehicle for communication. In its pages, through the shared experience, strength, and hope of our fellowship, we aim to provide gifts for your recovery and serenity. \$12/year (\$18/year outside the U.S.)

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