



Plain Brown Rapper

THE SAA NEWSLETTER

Carrying the message of hope to the sex addict who still suffers.

JUNE 1996

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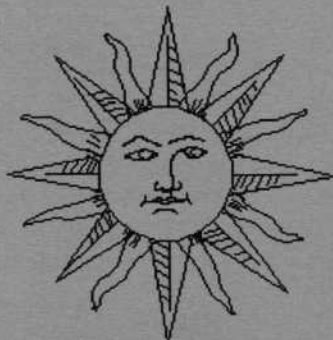
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Welcome!

Whether this is your first time reading the *PBR* or you're a long-time subscriber, I hope you find the experience, strength, and hope within these next few pages to be useful to you in your recovery from sex addiction.

This is *your* newsletter, and as such your contributions, comments, and ideas shape it. Please consider writing an article, poem, or piece of reflective commentary on any sex addiction-related topic of your choice.

If you're worried about your writing skills, try writing as though you are sharing at a meeting or writing to a friend in the program. Give the outcome over to your Higher Power. Here are a few other suggested guide-

lines: use the word "I" instead of "you" when describing your opinions and experiences. Use the word "our" to describe the fellowship of SAA as a whole. Use the expression "Higher Power" or "God." Pick one topic or idea or experience from your recovery and stick with it. This will help you keep your article under 750 words. If you want to tell your story, write about your behaviors and past in a general way, giving details only when necessary. Of course, avoid graphic sexual content, and avoid shaming judgment about your own behavior. Let us hear *you*, not your addict, in what you write.

Wishing you peace and serenity,
Steve B., Editor

The Plain Brown Rapper (PBR) is published monthly by the International Service Organization of Sex Addicts Anonymous.

The opinions expressed in any article are those of the author and not necessarily those of SAA as a whole. Take what you like and leave the rest.

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Take What You Need and Leave the Rest

by Frank M.

The old song said, "You can't always get what you want, but sometimes you get what you need." At some meetings, I hear ideas or advice that I don't want to take. A person may mention a problem they had, and I can admit to having a similar problem. But when I hear how their Higher Power resolved that problem, I don't want the solution. I want my God to solve it my way.

To recover, I need to recall the advice my step-mother gave me: "You're going to grow up

when you learn to do things you don't want to do." I think I need to take as many parts of this program as I can—the parts that work for me. I need to make as many meetings as I can; get a sponsor; work the steps; pray and meditate; keep in touch with the right kind of people; read the Big Book, etc. But if I try something that doesn't work, I don't give up the parts that do work. I simply take what I need and leave the rest.

Frank M.,
Houston

I was regretting the past
and fearing the future.

Suddenly God was speaking:
"MY NAME IS 'I AM.'"

I waited. God Continued:

"When you live in the past,
With its mistakes and regrets,
it is hard. I am not there.

MY NAME IS NOT 'I WAS.'

"When you live in the future,
with its problems and fears,
it is hard. I am not there.

MY NAME IS NOT 'I WILL BE.'

When you live in this moment,
it is not hard. I am here
MY NAME IS 'I AM.'"



Steps & Traditions

Tradition Six: An SAA group ought never endorse, finance or lend the SAA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

The Sixth Tradition has always been a difficult one for all fellowships, and it has been especially hard for us, I believe, because of our relative youth as a fellowship and because there are several other fellowships that deal with sexual addiction. I offer here the thoughts of one member on this topic, with the understanding, of course, that there are others who will disagree, and that this is part of a healthy process of discussion which need not impair our unity.

The problems of money or property seem more clear cut. If we lend our name or our endorsement to certain treatment centers or theories of treatment, for example, there is a danger that persons will use our name to attract customers to their enterprise, thus compromising our meetings, which are free vehicles of recovery, by introducing a profit motive.

It is the problem of prestige which is more subtle and lends itself to many different forms. Our human desire for prestige can take the guise of good intentions very easily, so if we complicate our program by mixing it with various therapies, it may seem like we are helping the still-suffering addict. In fact, it makes our simple,

anonymous program seem more complicated and exciting, thus enhancing our prestige in our own eyes.

When we list other fellowships on our meeting lists, that implies endorsement and association with those fellowships. Newcomers might wonder if we are the same as SLAA or SA, and when they discover differences in the solutions offered, it can lead to worry and confusion.

Associating our program with other fellowships causes confusion in our message. Being a young fellowship, we still offer outside literature, including the AA Big Book, to our members. This is understandable, but it does cause controversy. Many of our members are not alcoholics, but come directly to SAA. The Big Book can be very confusing to them, because it doesn't directly address sexual addiction. I foresee a day when we will offer only official SAA literature to our members. When I say this, I've found that it threatens some of us. I've heard statements like, "Aren't we grateful to AA? Their program has worked for sixty years!" My

Steps & Traditions

answer is that I am grateful to my parents, but I no longer live with them or depend on them. I moved out and made my own life. I believe that in the same way we will eventually need to establish our own independence, offering our unique experience, strength and hope to sex addicts.

The fact that there are several other fellowships dealing with sexual addiction has led to dilemmas. Once again, good intentions have led us to make mistakes. When we list other fellowships on our meeting lists, that implies endorsement and association with those fellowships. Newcomers might wonder if we are the same as SLAA or SA, and when they discover differences in the solutions offered, it can lead to worry and confusion. My belief is that we can make phone numbers or addresses of other fellowships available to those who ask, all the while making it clear that we are not associated with the other fellowships. But we ought never combine their schedules, phone lines, or literature with ours, otherwise we confuse our message. It is up to those fellowships to practice the principle of attraction rather than promotion in making their programs available. Inter-fellowship dialogue needs to follow this Tradition, too, including discussion of common concerns and sharing of experiences in order to help ourselves, but never coordination of activities

and services.

I have noticed that some scoff at all this and consider it as a barrier to carrying the message. It is difficult for me to convey how very important strict adherence to the Traditions really is. The Traditions keep us free! If we violate them or try to bypass them repeatedly, sooner or later we will damage the integrity of our groups. Without a clear message and sense of identity the newcomer is not served.

Understand that I am only speaking of official services and activities of SAA. What we share as individuals, either in meetings or outside of them, is totally up to us! I am only speaking of cases where a meeting format implies an outside endorsement of some sort, or our service structure allies itself with an outside institution of some kind, and so forth. It is then that we need to step back, pause to be quiet, and ask God for guidance.

The love for our fellow addicts, which is the true principle of our unity, will keep us free. The Traditions are a direct expression of our Higher Power's love working through our groups. I am truly grateful for them. They have saved my life and will continue to save countless others as long as we preserve them.

Thank you for letting me share.

Chris D.

Birth and Tears by Mike T.

Before I began my recovery from addiction, I never understood the meaning of being "born again." Now I know what it means. Being spiritually reborn is a miracle that is available to all who are willing to follow the Twelve Steps. It is real, and it is a relatively simple process, but it can also be terribly difficult.

During the many long years that I was acting out sexually, I lost all my faith and belief in God. It was a sad and lonely existence, but at the time, I saw no way out. I was convinced that I was fundamentally alone in the world. This belief left me with only one place to turn for comfort and reassurance, and that was to my addiction.

In a strange way, I was involved in a long, deeply unhealthy love affair with myself. It bears some similarity to the "co-dependent" or "co-addictive" relationships with others with which many of us have struggled. I was hurting and I felt I had to turn to someone. But instead of seeking out another person to soothe my pain and enable my addiction, I turned to "my addict"—that part of my own personality which was emotionally and sexually immature but which was determined to take care of me by keeping me away

from the pain. Ironically and tragically, the efforts of my addict to protect me really only pushed me deeper into isolation and thus ultimately had the effect of intensifying my pain.

My acting out behavior primarily centered around pornography and masturbation. I spent countless hours alone, watching, reading, and also writing pornography. As described during the preamble to our meetings, I "came to feel disconnected...tuned out with fantasy, music, and masturbation...plugged in by drinking in the pictures, the images."

By repeatedly medicating my pain and loneliness instead of feeling it and dealing with it, I allowed it to grow. Instead of going away, my pain became harder and heavier, and it gave strength to my addict. The more I hurt inside, the stronger my addict needed to be to keep me from facing the pain. Without knowing it, I was creating—and potentially becoming—a monster.

But in order to sustain this isolation and keep this sick love affair with myself going, I made the decision at some point to completely reject God and any real hope of spiritual salvation. I had to give up on God, so I would have no other choice but to give in to my addiction. I did give up on God, and by doing so, I gave up on me. For many years, I was





spiritually dead.

Incredibly, God never gave up on me. What I choose to call God—what others may call their Higher Power—was always there, always available, always offering unconditional love and acceptance to me, but I was blind to it. Until I

was ready to open my heart, I would remain lost. Until I was able to believe in a power greater than myself that could restore me to sanity, I remained spiritually dead.

Being born again may be simple, but it is definitely not easy. For me, it is often a miserable process, one that requires me to confront and to finally experience all the pain and fear I've bottled up inside. That doesn't feel good, and I hate having to do it, even though I know it's necessary.

There is something I have found, however, that helps me feel better about everything I'm going through. It is, simply, this analogy of birth. By taking a closer look at it, I can get a perspective on where I am in this process and what should come next.

Imagine what it must be like to be physically born. After spending months in the warm, comfortable, secure environment of the womb, we are suddenly and unexpectedly forced out into

a harsh, bright, cold, foreign world. But before we come out of the darkness and into the light, consider for a moment the pain of passage. Squeezed into a narrow channel, alternately pushed and pulled, possibly grabbed by forceps, it's no wonder the first thing most newborn babies do is cry!

Incredibly, God never gave up on me. What I choose to call God—what others may call their Higher Power—was always there, always available, always offering unconditional love and acceptance to me

Once out of the womb, though, the infant is lovingly cradled in the arms of a warm, welcoming, and somehow familiar presence.

As a recovering addict, I sometimes rebel at having to give up the security and comfort of my addiction. I know my addiction, and I know that it can make me feel good, at least in the short term. Having made the decision, however, to turn my will and my life over to God, I must now be willing to endure the pain of passage. The emergence for an addict from darkness into light, the process of coming out of the shadows, is inevitably a painful one. This is God's will for me.

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On the Topic

Supporting Each Other in Our Recovery

by Bill J.

The feature story published in the September 1995 issue of the PBR, by Louis W., focused on a man who was sexually molested by his relatives during much of his childhood. Now, in recovery from sexual addiction that came as a result of those abuses, he has found a way to forgive his abusers, and to accept people in his SAA group who have been offenders. As a person who found SAA only after perpetrating a sexual crime against a child, I found his story to be particularly comforting.

Though I was not a victim of any overt sexual abuse (there was some subtle abuse), my childhood was loaded with emotional and some physical abuse. My antagonists have included my own brother and most of the boys who should have been my friends. I won't elaborate on this abuse due to space considerations for this article. As I entered puberty, around age 13, I started having fantasies, first in the form of "wet dreams" that I created as defense and escape mechanisms from my abusers. That was more than 30 years ago. The first dreams started with me placing younger boys into situations of forced nudity that would be used to embarrass them. With time, the dreams began to become more and more

sexual in nature, and later I began feeling sexually attracted to some boys. I couldn't understand why I was having these dreams, how I could have any sexual attraction toward any little boy, or how I could even enjoy any of that. Much later I learned that what I had done was take the emotional issues in my life and attached sexual feelings to them.

I was living a life of shame for having sexual feelings that I knew to be completely contrary to my moral beliefs, and was horrified that I was so willing to invite these fantasies into my mind. I was growing to hate myself, for I thought that I must be completely evil to harbor such thoughts. I was also living in total fear. I was afraid to tell anyone that they might also see me as being evil, and then tell everyone just how evil I was. I was afraid of accidentally being found out. I was much more afraid that I might harm someone, for I felt that there was a real possibility of that happening. I knew that I was being driven by something that I didn't understand or want, and really wanted to be separated from.

Ultimately, I befriended a young boy, wanting only a friendship, and then allowed that friendship to progress into some inappropriate touching that I

wanted to believe wasn't harmful to him. When I was later confronted for my sins I finally realized that I had molested this boy, who was someone I had cared very much for, and would never have wanted to harm.

Louis' writings of how he was forced to strip by his cousins, and then to run naked through the fields, woods, and briar patches, played right into my addiction. Through my life I had created dozens of fantasies in my mind that were based on the very same form of abuse. Even though I have learned much in my two years in recovery, I still felt very ashamed because of the excitement that part of his story created in me.

Then I read where he is now, with recovery in his life, and I was moved. Louis had found the same support in his recovery that I am finding in mine, though the manifestations of our addictions would seem to be quite different. It never fails to amaze me that I am accepted in our SAA meetings, even as a child molester, by people like Louis who have been so viciously molested in their childhood. This is particularly true for people who never have progressed from victim to perpetrator. That acceptance and support has been crucial in my recovery.

Also crucial has been the power of forgiveness. My offenses became very public so everyone

in my life knew of the sins I had committed against a child. I was amazed to find how almost everyone in my life, with a few exceptions, showed me more

It never fails to amaze me that I am accepted in our SAA meetings, even as a child molester, by people like Louis who have been so viciously molested in their childhood. That acceptance and support has been crucial in my recovery.

forgiveness, support, and acceptance than I ever thought possible. I have also made a concerted effort to forgive everyone who I saw as doing me harm, especially the harm that I see as helping to form my addiction.

I believe that forgiveness is part of the process that is now releasing me from the pain I have carried for so many years. As with our brother Louis, I also choose to be free of the pain of my past, and to live in recovery. I have also chosen to be in outreach, offering the promises of our program to anyone in need who wants to embrace them.

Bill J.

sobering thought

***We don't have to be ashamed.
We can choose to be
aware and accepting.***

Fellowship Forum

Topic for sharing in the July issue of the *PBR*: Your Experience of the 1996 National SAA Convention, "Circle of Hope: Return to Our Roots"

Attending and participating in a national SAA convention is unlike any other recovery experience. If you attended this year's convention in Minneapolis, please consider sharing what the experience meant for you in your recovery. The *PBR* will devote a special section in the July issue to this topic. I encourage you to take a few minutes and give away to the rest of the fellowship some of what you received at the convention.

Write as much or as little as you like; write about the good and the bad; tell us what you learned or what you discovered; share in any way which is meaningful to you and your recovery, and you can be sure it will also be meaningful to others.

Send your experiences to:

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

or

EditorPBR@aol.com

(continued from page 7)

I may feel pushed and pulled in this process, and at times I may recoil from my true feelings. I may even try to go back the way I came. But facing and enduring and struggling through the pain is the only way to be born again. If I cry, as almost all of us do, it's a good sign. Like the newborn infant gasping for air, my tears show that I too am reaching for life-giving nourishment, for spiritual air.

Once I emerge into the light of rebirth, I am gathered into the arms of a warm, welcoming, and somehow familiar presence. I feel and know, perhaps for the first time in my life, the unconditional love and acceptance of God. I

have been born again, and it feels good.

Of course, the struggle is not yet over. As with a child, there will be many lessons to learn, many mistakes to be made, many trials to face. But if I continue to rely on God, as a child must depend on parents, I will grow in strength and faith. As promised in the Big Book, we will "know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace."

Every day, our new lives are beginning again. I pray that we will live them in joy and peace and fellowship.

Mike T.

Minors at Meetings Revisited

Dear PBR,
My name is Jack and I'm a sex addict. I'm writing in response to Mark N.'s concerns over young people in SAA, as expressed in the April 96 issue of the *PBR*.

Both philosophically and *personally*, I share Mark's concerns that those who legally are minors represent potential (a) triggers and (b) court cases against specific members and/or SAA groups.

Today we live in a "litigative society." Hardly a day goes by without some behavior or belief getting tested in court. There's no reason to believe that SAA would be immune from such action. Obviously, our question is, How should SAA and its individual members react to this (real or perceived) "threat" to our anonymity and/or freedom?

When faced with such questions, I frequently ask myself, What did the early AA's do when faced with similar circumstances 40 or 50 years ago? Most often, a review of AA's *12 Steps and 12 Traditions* or *As Bill Sees It* will shed light on the subject. If I find an answer, I try to determine if that answer is as valid today as it was back then. Usually it is.

I believe the "young people in SAA" answer is clearly stated in Tradition Three. As written, "*The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop _____.*"

I'm sure that, over the years, our "cousins" in AA have experienced triggers in their groups and meetings. And now AA is finding that its anonymity is not immune to actions of the court system. Is our "parent program" altering its foundation to protect itself from these challenges? Not to my knowledge!

I guess that means it's up to me to respond to my own triggers. I have several choices. I can use the "three second rule." I can confront triggering behaviors, comments and/or clothing in a kind and loving manner, at the meeting or privately. Or, I can find another meeting *if* I am truly "willing to go to any length to get it." I guess that also means it's up to me to determine my actions if called upon to testify (for or against) a member of my own program. If this happens, I hope I am sober enough to ask my God, my sponsors, and my groups for their guidance and their support. Ultimately, however, it's up to me to do the next right thing.

My thanks to Mark for this provocative topic *and* to the *PBR* for another "meeting in print." Let us all remember (page 449 of the Big Book) that "absolutely nothing happens in God's world by mistake." May He bless us all as we walk the road to recovery.

Jack R.
Lansing, MI

Announcements

FRIENDS OF THE LITERATURE COMMITTEE (FOLC)

Your Feedback is Requested

SAA Homepage Available on the Internet

<http://www.sexaa.org>

The SAA homepage is in a developmental stage. We need feedback from the fellowship of SAA to assist the Literature Committee, and the entire SAA fellowship, in carrying our message of hope.

If you are able, please surf on over to the WorldWideWeb site listed above. Remember that the site is still under construction and only with your feedback and input can we give it shape and direction as guided by the conscience of the fellowship.

You may e-mail comments to:

Jerry B., ISO Office Manager (JerryB1012@aol.com)

or

webmaster@sexaa.org

You may mail comments to:

Jerry B, ISO Office Manager

P.O. Box P.O. Box 70949,

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