



Plain Brown Rapper

THE SAA NEWSLETTER

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

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*We have the 12 Steps
so we don't kill ourselves.*

*We have the 12 Traditions
so we don't kill each other.*

A Promise Coming True

How your experience can benefit others

The *AA Big Book*, in discussing the ninth step (page 84), notes that the one of the promises of the program is that "no matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others." Whether or not you have worked the ninth step, the promise definitely holds true when it comes to sharing your experience with others by writing an article for the *PBR* (*Plain Brown Wrapper*).

The *PBR* is read by members of the fellowship across the United States and other countries. It carries the message of hope to other sex addicts in places where meetings may not be plentiful. If even one member of the fellowship benefits from having read your article, poem, or letter, then surely this is one way your experience can benefit others. This is the miracle and promise of the program.

You don't have to be a professional writer to write for the

PBR. Just use the tools of the program you already possess: share from your own experience with rigorous honesty — that's all it takes! The *PBR* depends solely on the contributions of the SAA fellowship for its content — that means you, as members of the SAA fellowship, determine what the *PBR* contains. It is the voice of the fellowship, a meeting in print, and a place to share the gifts you've received in the program with others you may never meet.

Please type or print all submissions, double-spaced. If possible, please submit your work saved as a text-only file on a floppy diskette (3.5 inch) and send it to:

PBR Editor, c/o ISO of SAA
P.O. Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270

or send it by e-mail to:
EditorPBR@aol.com

Please include your first name and last initial, otherwise the submission will be published as 'anonymous.'

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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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Send all submissions for publication to the Editor, c/o ISO of SAA. You may also send submissions via e-mail to EditorPBR@aol.com.

Moving on with a Spiritual Program

by Frank M.

SA is a fellowship of men and women that practice a spiritual program to get recovery from compulsive sexual behaviors. As I practice a spiritual program, I remain recovered and abstinent (there is a difference to me) more and more. I see myself making mistakes as I begin practicing a spiritual program, but that is normal for me when doing something new. I now know that with continued and diligent practice over and over again, recovery and abstinence arrive as a gift.

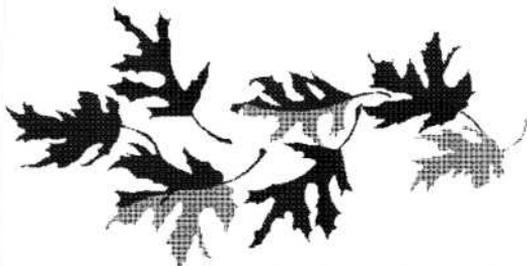
To every newcomer or member that hasn't yet started a spiritual program, I encourage you to do so. Be *prompt in starting and completing your first "lessons"* about a spiritual program. I see that it is similar to getting hired for a new job. I suggest that you go through the "training" as urgently as you can, then move on to the *real work*. Practice and do your new job on a daily basis. I emphasize the urgency and

importance to "complete the training." Consider this: Do you know people that are hired when they only go through partial training? Finish the training so that you are exposed to the *entire* job. My best gifts come the more I practice and do the *entire job, every day* and not just part of it on some days.

I now know that with continued and diligent practice over and over again, recovery and abstinence arrive as a gift.

My frequent desire to *understand first* was a big trap. That trap slowed me in getting to the practice stage. Focus on finishing the course! I naturally come to understand more as I *do* and *practice* more. I always have the fellowship around. I always refer back to my "training book" for guidance. Get on with *doing* the job and *understanding* will follow!

Frank M.



Recovery Toolbox

Recovery Basics: Part 1

by Ricky-Lee M.

There are five basic tools for recovery. They are:

1. Abstinence
2. Meetings
3. Sponsorship
4. Steps
5. Service

Abstinence

The first one, abstinence, is so important as to be overlooked. The compulsive and/or incomprehensibly demoralizing behavior which forced us to our bottoms can be likened to illicit drug use, alcohol dependence, debting, etc. and serves to keep us in the vicious cycle of the disease and the spiritual corrosion it characterizes. It is overlooked sometimes because we often make solemn oaths and dig dramatically deeper for the real reason we are the way we are rather than just being what we have become: addicts. The woe-is-me-I'm-lower-than-whale-crap scene keeps us feeling stuck and allows the justification and rationalization every addict wants to make acting-out inevitable and welcome.

Getting abstinent is actually fairly easy for we addicts have tremendous wills. We often make a flourish of getting abstinent. We are proud of ourselves! The tricky part is to get abstinent according to a well-thought-out plan with the help

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of someone or something other than the renowned intellect and god-like religiosity that got us to the program in the first place.

Use of the Three Circles concept is most highly recommended. Make a plan that works for you and one that you won't be tempted to change in the near future. You will probably be afraid of making your circles too loose. A lot of us do and pay dearly for our guilt-driven perfectionism. Go easy. Create opportunities for success. It can go a long way.

Try to remember how recovery from our problem is similar to that of the recovering overeater or co-dependent. We can't shut off our sexuality. Celibacy clears the head and gets you in touch with your feelings. Feelings are not the be-all-and-end-all of spiritual growth, and after an extended period of celibacy you get in touch with more than feelings. You get in touch with craving, normal craving. Much like a thirsty, starving person really feels the effects of their deprivation. Would it be fair to say that a famished person would eat and drink themselves to agony if they suddenly stumbled from the wilderness into a finely laid, sumptuous feast? Balance, my friend, is the key. It may be difficult and daring, but it is possible to construct an abstinence plan that

Recovery Toolbox

sees to your fulfillment and validation, not that of someone or something else. If you're honest and willing to find the right plan to make your start, you will find it.

Meetings

Assembling and adhering to an abstinence plan should coincide with the second tool for recovery: meetings. In fact, most of us were attending meetings all the while struggling to stop acting-out. Where abstinence forms the foundation for growth, meetings on the other hand, are the most powerful and simple tool one can use to attain/maintain abstinence.

Sponsorship

Sponsorship, primarily in the form of asking for help with the details of your program, is a tool which is probably the riskiest because it requires sidestepping our egos enough to get another perspective. Oftentimes, this other perspective runs contrary to our self-centeredness, but that's really the whole point and there really is no use fighting it.

The trick is to find a sponsor who can simplify our program, making it easier to digest mentally, spiritually, and behaviorally. There are some real loons out there who

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To make the most of a meeting, do the following:

- arrive early,
- leave late,
- help set up,
- help clean up,
- volunteer to read,
- sit up front,
- share,
- include what it was like, what happened, and what it is like now,
- end your share with hope and encouragement for yourself and others,
- be sure to welcome newcomers,
- congratulate chip-takers,
- share with someone after if you weren't called in the meeting to share,
- say hello to at least three old-timers,
- say hello to at least three not-so-old-timers,
- say hello to at least three newcomers,
- make plans to attend fellowship after meeting,
- make plans to meet someone from this meeting at the next meeting.

You get the point, I'm sure. Is this too much to do? I don't think so. Most of the people I've seen who get this program do these things at every meeting they attend. Also, I have not seen anyone get this program who attends less than three meetings weekly, especially when new.

Features

The Great Controller

by Craig S.

(sung to the tune of "The Great Pretender")

Yes, I'm the great controller,
Tryin' to control what I feel.
I've tried everything that I can think of
'Til I don't know for sure what is real.

I've used sex, I've used work,
I've used food, I've used sleep,
And all I really know is
my life's in a heap.

Yes, I'm the great controller,
Tryin' to control what I feel.
It's time that I turn over one more time
My will and my life so to heal.

There's the Steps, there's my groups,
then there's prayer and amends.
There's my sponsor, and there's HP,
who'll be with me 'til the end.

Yes, I'm the great controller,
Tryin' to control what I feel.
I'm willing to turn over one more time
My will and my life so to heal.

Craig S.,
Houston

Unanticipated Anniversary by Rich W.

The wind, newly warmed, whisks across clear water.

Turtles bask their shelled backs on submerged trunks,
bridging a shallow inlet at the base of a woodland watershed.

Twenty years ago, here,

I spent an innocent sensuous afternoon with the one I loved,
ignorant of our hopeless future.

When she left, I felt angry and rejected,
my misery encouraged and seemingly justified.

The anniversary is ironic, wishing as I do the knowledge of how to love again.
I suffered a failed marriage, a threatened career, painful self-awareness, and grew.

After the fall, the future is optimistic.

I can feel again, letting go of pain.

My intuition is less impaired, I'm more in tune with the coincident.

I can choose inner peace.

With my spirit Blossoming, I'm fit to fly.

Rich W.



On The Topic

Some Thoughts on Outreach to Women

by Elizabeth S.

I've been thinking about this topic ever since the Convention in Minneapolis, at which the delegates passed a motion to produce some new literature specifically welcoming women into SAA. I was proud to be a part of that historic decision — but now what?

If the situation in my home state of Indiana is representative, I know that something is necessary. Last year the first SAA meeting specifically for women in Indiana started in Indianapolis. It's been limping along with three or four "old-timers" forming the core of the group and a steady stream of newcomers (several each month) filtering in and out. Although prospective members are usually very relieved to hear there is a meeting for women only, none have stuck around long enough to get integrated into SAA (most say they would never consider attending meetings with men present; some find out about the SLAA schedule through us and eventually migrate there, or just seem to disappear after one or two meetings.)

The hope, a year ago, was that a "safe" women-only meeting would be a way to reach out to new women who would otherwise be too scared to come to SAA. Among other benefits, it

would provide some kind of bridge into the program (since, in Indiana, virtually all meetings are gender-mixed). For me, the women's meeting has been rewarding and has provided an opportunity to feel "heard" in a different and valuable way by a circle of other female sex addicts. For that alone, I hope the meeting keeps going. But the hoped-for purpose of outreach to *new* women does not seem to be successful.

One observation I've made, based on both what I heard shared at the wonderful Sisters in Sexual Sobriety (SISS) meeting in Minneapolis and my own experience around SAA for the past three years and seven months, is that many (but not all) women SAA's come into this program after long and idiosyncratic journeys through other recovery programs and/or therapy. My own experience seems typical in this context: after hitting my first bottom in 1985, involving a compulsive affair, an abortion, and the break-up of an abusive relationship with an alcoholic-sex addict — all pretty obvious manifestations to me now of my own then-undiagnosed sex addiction — I got into therapy and Al-Anon ("my problem is that I'm having relationships with alcoholics!"). It took five years in therapy

On The Topic

and other 12-step programs (Al-Anon, ACOA, and EA)—and two more bottoms—before I was able to take the First Step and admit to the sex addiction underlying the other issues. My sense is that this is the case for many other women in SAA as well (i.e. we end up here only after years of stripping away denial around co-dependency, chemical addictions, food addictions, etc.). For many of us, sex addiction, and sexual abuse, seems to be the secret that the other addictions are hiding. And it takes time and courage to be able finally even to recognize it.

Several thoughts follow from this for me: first, honoring the mystery of timing (God's, not mine) in reaching out to women. For the female newcomers who get referred to SAA, stay for a meeting or two, and then disappear—yes, they're in pain, yes, they seem to us old-timers to "belong" here, but for whatever reason, perhaps they just are not ready and still have a ways to travel before they can face the pain of their sex addiction—may God be with them on their journeys and bring them to the help they need *when* they are able to accept it. When I look at my own story, I am grateful that I get (and continue to get) what I am able to handle when I am able to handle it. It may have taken over five years *in recovery* for me to get to my first SAA meeting, but when I finally came I was ready, I was willing, and I've stayed. I know I

could not have gotten here any sooner; I could not have "heard" that I was a sex addict in 1985. I need to trust that other women will be taken care of in the same way as they pursue their recovery.

I think we also need to acknowledge that there are concrete and legitimate reasons why women are often scared of SAA meetings, even if they are otherwise "ready." I know I had these fears. There's the fear of sitting in the same room with perpetrators and child molesters. There's the fear of being vulnerable to male sex addicts in meetings (for many of us, the drug of choice!). There's the fear of being marginalized or not taken seriously in a predominantly male fellowship or an otherwise all-male meeting. These common fears (shared by some male sex addicts, I know) are just exacerbated by the male/female power imbalance built into our culture (e.g. I quickly realize I would never get a chance to speak at meetings of my otherwise all-male home group unless I was uncharacteristically assertive!). For me, simply admitting some of these special difficulties seems to remove some of their power: I am in reality (instead of denial) when I acknowledge their existence. For that reason, I'd like to see any literature for women that we come up with address these fears head-on.

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Fellowship Forum

One More Consequence: Inflicting Our Wives with Cancer

by Rich S.

Page 3 of Denver's *Rocky Mountain News* today carried a story linking the likelihood of cervical cancer in women to their husband's number of sexual partners. It raises a new consequence for sex addicts like me whose issue is acting out with prostitutes and having affairs. The study, published August 7, 1996, in the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute*, said that women whose husbands had 21 or more other sexual partners caused their wives to be five to eleven times more likely to develop cervical cancer.

The cancer is linked to HPV (*human papillomavirus*), a virus commonly spread by sexual intercourse. "Male behavior is the important thing in this cancer," said Dr. Keerti V. Shah, a professor at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. "Up to 97% of cervical cancers are infected with the virus." Even though the research report didn't mention sexual addiction, you, like myself, might view persons with 21+ sexual partners as probably addicted and certainly acting well beyond the scope of "normal sexuality".

As my wife and I read the news story we exclaimed, *maybe that's the reason* for the cervical

cancer she endured in her early thirties! To keep it from killing her, the doctors did a complete hysterectomy and she has lived the rest of her life dependent on regulation of her body chemistry through taking various medications like estrogen. She had been married for a decade to a man who traveled a lot, and shortly before she came down with the cancer, he had confessed to having had affairs with 17 women in various cities. She never made any connection between the two until today.

Divorcing him, she married me and seven years into our marriage my compulsive masturbation progressed to seeing prostitutes. It rapidly escalated and within three years I'd had sessions with sixty different women, twenty of them involving intercourse. We have known that at one point I brought home genital warts to her, but until today we'd never suspected that her cancer might have resulted from the infidelity of her former mate. Our gay members have long been afraid of the potential to inflict one's partner with HIV, but this research reveals that straight sex addicts also have a frightening potential for bringing yet another terminal disease home to their spouses.

Dr. Willard Barnes of the Georgetown University School of Medicine said the study reinforces evidence that "cervical cancer in many ways is similar to classic venereal disease. HPV is a very common type of virus. It has been known for some time that it places women at higher risk of cervical cancer. The message from studies like this is that men should stay home." Of course, we sex addicts *know* that we should stay home, yet how powerless we are to stop acting out without getting help through a recovery process.

Sometimes reading the paper uncovers a surprisingly personal message! The study concluded by stating that there is no treatment for HPV infections, but the body's immune system usually eradicates the virus within six to 18 months. However, the infection can be restarted if there is new exposure. After I got sexually sober with the help of the Program, we've lived eleven years without my having had intercourse with another person.

How sad to think that some of us may have brought this frightening illness or even death to the person we loved the most, and was closest to in this life. Regardless of the wreckage of the past, my wife and I are feeling extremely grateful today that this sort of risk is behind us.

Rich S., Denver

(continued from page 5)

would have you shoving marbles up your nose to prove your willingness to go to any lengths for recovery, but they are rare and usually easy to spot. Look for someone who uses these same tools, certainly, but look also for extra emphasis on meetings, balanced lifestyle, long-term abstinence one day at a time, a keep-it-simple attitude, stepwork, compassion for others, and an accepting, loving spirit. You'll know when you've got the right sponsor because you'll want what they've got, you'll be willing to do what they've done, and they'll love you even if you don't or won't.

Eventually, all sponsees outgrow sponsors. This does not mean that we pass them. It only means it is time to move on. The relationship ceases to exist as it did.

Also, you can change to another sponsor at any time, especially if you are not comfortable with your current one. Don't worry about being ridiculed by the ex-sponsor or his friends. If he or they have a good program, you won't be wished anything but the best of luck with your next sponsor. A further note about sponsors is that I've never seen anyone get and stay abstinent without some sort of sponsor.

Part 2 of this article will appear in next month's issue of the PBR.

On The Topic

(continued from page 9)

Lastly, I'd like to raise the question of putting the SAA message out to women who might be in a better position to "hear" the truth of sex addiction and recovery from sex addiction (i.e. women who are members of other 12-step fellowships and who, as a result of the work they've done there, have cracked through enough denial to be ready to work on sexual issues). I know there is a lot of diversity among women in SAA, and a lot of different ways we get here, but it seems to me there's got to be a pool of women out there (women like me!) who are poised to be attracted to our program from out of other programs. This also means acknowledging that many women get to SAA by a different route than many men (i.e. I've seen a lot of men come in through the legal system. I don't know personally of any women who came in this way).

So if we as a fellowship want to improve outreach to women, I think we need to explore how to carry the message to the places where women are.

I don't have any answers—just the hope that we do develop some literature that honestly addresses the common problems women face in SAA (even if it can't solve them) and that we find a way to get this literature into the hands of those women who are most likely to want to find and work our program. It would be great to read more ideas on this in the *PBR* in the coming year—so that maybe we can pick up the discussion next year in Houston, too. Or, I'd welcome any responses, reactions, or ideas sent to me at the address below. If the thoughts presented here contribute to all the dialogue, I'll be grateful.

Elizabeth S.

c/o Hope and Recovery

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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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