



Plain Brown Rapper

THE SAA NEWSLETTER

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

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There exists among us a fellowship....We are like the passengers of a great liner the moment after rescue from shipwreck.

AA Big Book, p.17



Welcome!

Oops!

On page 3 of the August 1996 issue of the *PBR*, a monkeywrench slipped into the graphical production process and created a goofy graphical goose. Oops! In an attempt to get a little fancy with the layout of the *PBR*, yours truly used a graphic which was supposed to be gray and lie behind the text. Below is the text as it should have appeared.

We of the Tuesday Evening Hope and Recovery fellowship, Cleveland, Ohio, devoted a meeting recently to the contents of our collective toolboxes. We have come up with the following as the usable contents, in no particular order, reflecting the many stages of recovery, including persons who are in other 12-step programs.

New Articles Needed!

The *PBR* is in need of your experience, strength, hope, and articles! Please consider writing a reflective piece on any of the 12 steps or traditions, and how they have helped you in recovery.

Coming Soon:

In the next few issues of the *PBR*, you'll find reprints of articles, insight, and experience from the early days of the *PBR* (perhaps before many of us were members of SAA). These articles remain as fresh and vibrant today as when they were printed five or six years ago. And if you were a member of SAA back then, you may read something you had long forgotten but are glad to see again.

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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.

Recovery Basics: Part 2 by Ricky-Lee M.

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The Outer Circular, April, 1996.*

*Part one of this article appeared in
the October issue of the PBR. It
covered tools 1-3. — Ed.*

There are five basic tools for recovery. They are:

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

Steps

Next we come to the steps. This is vital. It is the prescription for the relief of your ailment. Everything 'til now has been, and will be, the most you can do to support this spiritual work. Make no mistake, you have a spiritual malady characterized by mental, emotional, physiological and behavioral symptoms. Symptoms upon symptoms. The medicine for the relief of your plight is the steps, but it doesn't work all by itself. You have to work at it while you remain a consistently active participant in your meetings, sponsor-sponsee relationship, and balanced sobriety plan.

You'll be trusting God, as you understand God, cleaning house and becoming of service to your fellows. This will mark your path through the steps. And you

will remain abstinent. You will retain the gift of sobriety each day if your spiritual house is kept tidy. You will find that a good life is the icing on the cake of abstinence from the horrors of your past acting-out. Dr. Bob of AA used to say "First Things First." He was a very learned man, wise in the ways of theology and spirituality. He saw to the core of recovery, which no politics, culture or religion could lay claims to. It was the indisputable fact that when one first sought the will of God, everything else just had a habit of coming out better. This is what your step work is all about and, like it or not, it will introduce you to a Higher Power of your choice which can solve any problem in your life.

Service

Last of these simple tools is service. You'll hear the old-timers say that you can't keep it unless you give it away. This is the paradox of the daily reprieve. Here you are practicing anonymity in its most powerful form. You're helping the group and in so doing you are letting go of a little more unneeded self-centeredness. There are lots of opportunities for service. You can do coffee, literature, Intergroup rep, treasurer, secretary, join the

Recovery Toolbox

Intergroup's many committees and subcommittees. Being of service to your fellow addicts, without pay, runs contrary to ego and allows us to feel significant without the malignancy of self-servitude. Being of service in the program is the most benign way to lead and guide others. And best of all, when you get tired, someone else will take their turn!

Eventually, you become a crusty old-timer. Then what do you do? You do it all over again until you are not needed or you are dead. You've given up the pride and prestige of being sober longer than most. You don't condescend when speaking to a newcomer. You don't attempt to hold influence over the group because you are further along than most. What you do is remain just another addict and you turn your miraculous gift of recovery toward the fellowship and give it right back. You do the coffee, again. You do the literature, again. You do the things that got kept, and will keep you abstinent. You'll set a good example for others and you'll be relieved soon enough. There's no room for resentments, because someone who isn't strong enough right now will sooner or later build the courage to ask to do your job. You'll gladly hand it over, and you'll gladly lay your head down to slumber one more night a sober, contented sex addict.

Does it get any more complicated than this? I think it does in

the interim. By that I mean the journey itself. For instance, my path through the steps this time was complex. I did a lot of imagery, therapy, feedback groups, writing and flailing about. All of it was very necessary and vital as well as complicated. In the end, what remains is these five simple tools. I'm sure something else will present itself to me and require a detailed examination, but as long as I'm abstinent, going to meetings, using a sponsor, working the steps, and being of service, I should stay abstinent, dependent on my willingness and God's will, of course.

If you've been abstinent a while and you feel restless, the meetings don't hold you in rapt attention any more, if you feel bored at hearing the same things all the time, don't give up and try to re-write the program. It is probably just fine. Maybe all you need to do is stick it out. If you are not hearing what you need to hear at meetings, then say it yourself. Make the most of what we already have. I know sprucing up the program seems like a nice thing to do, but that sort of thing seems like the nervous cleaning of ashtrays in a house where nobody smokes.

So for the newcomer and old-timers alike, keep it simple and stick to the basics. There's only five of them. How hard can it be? Well, luckily for me it's pretty simple, if not easy. I'll take it over acting-out any day!

Ricky-Lee M.

PLAIN BROWN RAPPER

Releasing Closeted Skeletons

by Rich W.

Shame exists when prior violations of inner values remain unforgiven. Am I ashamed of myself, or allowing myself to be shamed? I took on unearned shame during my childhood. I feel disgraced as a witness to my father's drunken womanizing when I was an adolescent. I could never talk about the dishonor I perceived, then. Later in life, I became a sexual predator, overfeeding my lion of lust within.

More that just "less than"
at times I felt a red-eyed demon,
enveloped by a cloudy shroud of shame,
was playing cat-and-mouse with my miscreant soul,
shielding it from the brilliant light of joy.

I am embarrassed by my imperfect recovery. Am I embarrassed on my own or being judged? The lion is strengthened by quiet secrets and dirty transactions. I must own my capacity for malevolence lest it sneak up and bite me. I talk about my mistakes immediately, sharing my true thoughts and feelings with openness and honesty. Relapse autopsies are a pain in the ass, but disclosure of relevant truth is a means toward healing pain.

I can choose now,
whether or not to dance the addict's dance,
protect the addict's stash,
spiral inward toward the consuming flame of consequences,
or flit about serenely in the cool night.

Can I choose recovery every single time? What of those times of coincident high stress and powerful temptation? I need a "fire drill" for those times. I cannot depend on a potential partner to choose what is healthy for me. I cannot know for sure if another is acting in my best interests. I disclose my sexual addiction to potential partners as a warning, not as a lure toward the exotic. I cannot use another's part as an excuse, directing responsibility away from myself. The shame spiral is broken upon the shoals of spiritual awakening. Guilt is not shame, but a useful tool to be aware of what is healthy for me. I don't believe in the Christian fundamentalist's Hades. God's punishment for me is not hell, but the guilt I feel after wrongful actions.

My callous heart,
encrusted in concrete shame,
experienced in broken life,
willingly receives divine healing from rebirth of the spirit.

Rich W.

Features

Turning Off My Radar

by Mike T.

Ever since I was a child, I have enjoyed "looking". Although my primary acting-out behavior is not peeping or voyeurism, I do get a thrill from seeing what I'm not supposed to see. This probably explains my unhealthy fascination with pornography.

When I got into recovery, I threw out all my pornographic books, magazines, and videos, and I haven't purchased any more. I thought that I was no longer "drinking in the images". But a few weeks ago, the woman I love pointed out that I still had a habit of looking at other attractive women very closely. She was right, of course. I never thought she would notice, but apparently I wasn't hiding it very well. And the fact that I tried to be "discreet" shows that I knew it was not good for our relationship.

In my old life, I would have become very defensive about this behavior and would probably have accused her of being a prude, even while I was feeling deeply ashamed of myself on the inside. This time, thanks to God and SAA, I decided to look closely at the issue and try to figure out what was happening within me.

I discussed it with my therapist, who recommended that I carefully consider the ultimate

consequences of this behavior. What will eventually happen if I keep indulging in my habitual practice of staring at attractive women?

First, it is a behavior that is clearly part of my addiction. Unless I curb this practice, I will still be giving power to the addict. That's because it is a behavior of which I am ashamed and which I want to keep secret. Shame and secrecy are what nourishes the addiction.

To continue growing in my recovery, I must be vigilant in identifying the ways my addict seeks strength, and I must deny access to them. If I allow a behavior such as this to go unreported and unchecked, it will gradually build up power for the addict.

If I persist in an activity for which I feel shame and if I choose to keep it secret, the addiction will eventually gain enough potency to make me want to act out. Then the cycle begins in earnest.

When I act out and don't tell anyone, I will feel deeply ashamed and horribly unfit. I will retreat further into my shell as I try to hide myself from others. I will stop going to meetings and I will stop talking to God. My terrible loneliness will only be eased by acting out, and that only temporarily.

I will begin to blame others for my pain, and I will stop trusting them, especially those to whom I have felt the closest. My sponsor, my therapist, and my partner will all know that something is wrong. In fact, they will probably know *exactly* what is wrong. In the worst case scenario, I will turn away from each of them and put them out of my life, because I will not want to see my anguish reflected in their faces. I will then be alone.

Once again, I will apparently have no one I can turn to except my addict. It will appear to me as if I have only two choices—to live in my addiction or to take my own life. In reality, both choices are forms of death, one physical and one spiritual. Living in addiction is not really living at all.

Fortunately, I do have another choice. I can choose to talk about this subject with my therapist, with my sponsor, and with others in recovery. Getting my feelings out in the open is very healthy.

If I persist in an activity for which I feel shame and if I choose to keep it secret, the addiction will eventually gain enough potency to make me want to act out. Then the cycle begins in earnest.

I can also work on turning off my "radar" and keeping my attention directed to the person or task which is my primary object at the time. When an attractive woman does catch my eye in a normal way, I can remember to dismiss her from the focus of my attention and not return to her. For me, after a lifetime of looking, it is quite a challenge, but I know it is necessary in order to remain in recovery.

I'm happy to discover that I do have a choice in this behavior, and that I have the ability to make that choice. Praise God!

Mike T.

Relapse Again

by Jim S.

My addiction came visiting today
I welcomed him in, what can I say.
Didn't stay long, he knows his trade;
to unravel the progress I had made.
Had every thin going right for me,
turned around and smacked into co-dependency.
He made me feel like I did before,
here I thought I had closed that door.

On the Topic

Oriented to Recovery by Frank M.

Before I had been in this fellowship for a year, I realized that sexual orientation doesn't matter as much as I thought it did. We're all suffering from the same disease. Hearing other people's stories, and their wisdom, has taught me that sexual addiction is no respecter of gender or orientation. Extreme or illegal behaviors can occur among straight, bisexual, or gay. Regardless of my orientation then or

now, the important thing is recovery. I must find healthy sexuality. I don't want to return to the old days, when my addiction was in control of my life. Sometimes in meetings, I realize that almost half the people have tried homosexuality, and at least half have tried heterosexuality, but orientation wasn't the real problem. What matters is that we have so much in common: behaviors that were out of control, followed by a sincere decision to let our higher power free us from this disease.

Frank M., Houston

Sex: How Important is it? By Frank M.

Lately I've been asking myself, "How important is sex, anyway?" First, I realized that "normal" adults probably only spend one or two percent of their waking hours concentrating on sexual behaviors or thoughts. Almost all their time is spent on work, meals, commuting, shopping, civic meetings, relationships, etc. Their decisions are seldom based on their sexuality. They don't have a perfect sex life, but they're not preoccupied with it, either. When my life was controlled by my sexual addiction, it seemed like nothing else mattered. Although I managed to keep a job, eat, shop, have some relationships, etc., my burning desires put the rest of my life in jeopardy. My priorities were

wrong. Now, the most important thing about my sex life is that I have to recover. In this program, I discovered how the addiction started, how it progressed, and why I hit bottom. I have the tools to overcome my worst temptations, and a relationship with my higher power that gives me the strength to resist. My priorities are getting into the right order. Almost every adult has a sex drive, which shouldn't be ignored. On the other hand, we can't let our sex organs rule our life. The disease is in our minds, anyway. A wise man once said that we shouldn't let the wrong impulses press us into a mold; instead, we should let our higher power transform us by the renewing of our mind.

Frank M., Houston

Spiritual Growth and the Abstinence Statement by Edan E.

Much has already been said about the proposed change in the Abstinence Statement regarding the phrase "pitiful and incomprehensible demoralization." I would like to discuss instead, however, the proposed change from "personal growth" to "spiritual growth". Presently there is a sentence which reads, "Abstinence is the foundation upon which all subsequent personal growth depends." This was a very powerful sentence for me as a newcomer. It doesn't say that abstinence is the goal of life; rather it reminds us that without abstinence, we can't meaningfully have anything else.

Living well, then, must be the "personal growth" we begin to have once we become abstinent. The problem I have with the words "personal growth" is that for me, I can too easily twist this concept around so that it means "acting out." Getting "laid" was part of my "personal growth," on a par with making new friends, learning new hobbies, or developing my career. In fact, getting laid really topped the list, but it was still "personal growth."

I believe that true personal growth is important, but that nothing is more imperative for a full and sober life than spiritual

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growth. For one thing, it seems to me that it is virtually impossible to confuse spiritual growth with acting out!

It doesn't say that abstinence is the goal of life; rather it reminds us that without abstinence, we can't meaningfully have anything else.

Personal growth, I believe, can too easily become a rationalization for more self-centered living, which is what got us in trouble in the first place. Therefore, I propose that we change the sentence in question to read either "spiritual growth" or the more inclusive "spiritual and personal growth." By including both concepts, those newcomers who only understand "personal growth" will be able to identify their needs, while the word "and" reminds everyone that something else—much greater than ourselves—is also vital for a sober life.

In line with these thoughts I would like to raise the debate on a proposed simple change to the Abstinence Statement. The

On the Topic

Abstinence Statement states that "we learn a new approach to sex and relationships which is non-compulsive and non-destructive." This, to me, implies that the purpose of our program is to have better sexual relationships. I do not think that this is our main purpose at all. Such an idea, whether explicit or implied, only serves to reinforce the faulty notion that sex is the most important part of our lives, an idea that surely got us into trouble in the first place.

Our challenge is to live better, not just to have better sexual relationships. I propose that we change this line to read "we learn a new approach to sex and to life which is non-compulsive and non-destructive." I do not think that sex is our problem. Sex was our solution, though a flawed one. Life is our problem. I believe, therefore, that our program is ultimately about learning how to live

a truly happy, joyous, and free life. Abstinence is merely the foundation upon which all subsequent spiritual and personal growth depends. Our program gives us 12 proven tools for coping with life, as well as fellowship so that we do not have to do it alone.

In conclusion, I would like to acknowledge the gift we have been given by those that gave us our program literature. The changes proposed and now being discussed are minor. Thank God we have literature to discuss! I believe, however, that in order for our literature to be truly meaningful, we must be challenged at some point to reflect more deeply upon it. The Literature Committee therefore performs, I believe, a valuable service by inviting open discussion and, hopefully, deeper reflection.

Edan E.

Together We Grow '97 **Fourth Annual Retreat at the Pathwork Center** **April 11-13, 1997**

presented by the Northeast Region Inter "S" Service Group

A retreat promoting recovery for those suffering from sexual and/or relationship addictions and compulsions.

For information write Bob R. at
4101 Taylor Rd. Jamesville, NY 13078-9618

SAA is not affiliated with this or any other organization and has not lent the SAA name to this event.

Dear Fellow SAA'rs and PBR members,

My name is Brent, and I am an angry sex addict right now. I've made phone calls, no fellows able to talk right now, however I can write, so here we are together in spirit as I write.

It's amazing I feel your presence, God's love as I write. I want to act, single, live alone, sink full of dishes and it's Saturday night. Not much self-pity just bewilderment. I love recovery but at times I just want to act for no real 'apparent reason'. As I think I realize I am resentful that housework is an on going, never-ending process. I hate every day living, it's boring and tedious. As I write this I feel a sense of laughter and shame, shame for the selfishness of throwing away sobriety, possibly my life and freedom in society to contribute and be part of. I keep expecting the obsession to just leave, but it hasn't completely.

Progress, it's not a compulsion yet. I'm living by the steps and I look forward to five to nine. The fourth step itself has been a great experience in awareness. I thank SAA and especially those reading for being my family now. Hopefully I can let myself be angry, tired, but do the dishes, eat, watch game two of the World Series and try giving a fellow sex addict a call and myself the

opportunity to listen to them. I need to give back. I've been given a lot in SAA, especially healing in dishonest relationships in another twelve step fellowship—OA (Overeaters Anonymous).

Well time to go, my Higher Power is keeping me sober and connected in spirit with you all.

God Bless and may we once again look ourselves and others in the eye and know we are loved, forgiven, no matter our shame or selfishness.

Sincerely,
Brent

Dear PBR Editor,
Thanks for publishing my contribution. I needed to remember that stuff cause I was in the middle of another funk spell when the July issue came. By the way, what happened to August?

If I ever get out I'd like to do volunteer work for the PBR. I become eligible for parole next year in July.

Peace,
Harvey A.

*Dear Harvey,
Sorry about the delay in getting the August issue out to you and the rest of the fellowship. Keep writing – you are already volunteering by sharing your experience with the fellowship!*

Steve B., Editor

Announcements

MEMBERS OF THE LITERATURE COMMITTEE

The SAA Literature Committee is responsible for coordinating the development of literature for the SAA fellowship. Perhaps you didn't realize you had a representative for your region, or perhaps you don't know who your regional representative is? The job of your regional rep. is to serve as a conduit for your region's voice at the national level. You'll also notice that several positions are unfilled. Do you feel called to service? Let the Chair of the Literature Committee know if you do!

Northwest Region*	Frank A., <i>vice-chair</i>
North Central Region	Robert S., <i>secretary</i> (Robertsonjs@aol.com)
Great Lakes Region	Jeff W. (JeffWAA@aol.com)
Northeast Region*	unfilled
Southeast Region	Louis D.
South Central Region	Dave R. (74170.452@Compuserv.com)
Southwest Region*	unfilled
Latin America	Alfonso Novoa
At-Large	Scott B., <i>chair</i> (ScottBHTX@aol.com)
At-Large	Carolyn L.
PBR Editor	Steve B. (EditorPBR@aol.com)

* the alternate regional representative position is unfilled in this region

You may write to any member of the Literature Committee:

c/o SAA International Service Office
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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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