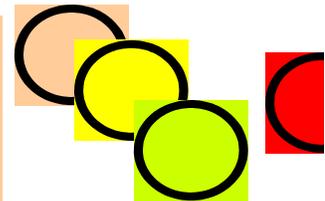




There is no Web column this issue. But don't forget how to get there: [Http://www.saa.org](http://www.saa.org)

Three and a Half Circles...

Dave R.



NOTE TO THE FELLOWSHIP CONCERNING DONATIONS IN MEMORIAM

The PBR is informed that the ISO Office has set up special sub-accounts to track special donations sent for memorials to members. The reason for this has been because of the many sent in memory of Arnold D., former Board Chair and Prison Outreach Chair.

For instance, a group may send a memorial and receive group credit, or an individual member may send one and receive credit. The donations for Arnold have been established for the Prison Outreach Program. Arnold's family will be notified of such donations, except the names, because of issues of anonymity.

In the case of future donations for similar memorials, the funds will be tracked and assigned according to the wishes of the donor, and credit, group or individual, will be given.

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EDITOR'S NOTICE !!!!

I notified many of you by e-mail that my computer crashed [virus e-mail to PBR, before it was identified by my virus protection program] and that I had lost all files for the current PBR. And all my newly added e-mail addresses as well. Some of these, fortunately, were recovered from persons who had the copy, and from hard copy items still retained here. And the addresses from may old computer, but 5 months old.

BUT

I do know there are items [such as a coming event in April] that are lost, and are not included here. I'm sorry for any problems this might have

Our fellowship has a good pamphlet out that can really help us define our boundaries. This pamphlet is called The Three Circles (and can be ordered from the ISO). In it, the inner circle is where we place our most destructive behaviors, the outer circle is where we place the beneficial behavior, and the middle circle is where we place behaviors that are in the gray area. Working through this pamphlet is something that must be done with a sponsor.

As addicts we do not like to think of anything being other than black or white, destructive or beneficial. So, we do not like to think about that middle circle. The pamphlet spends most time in that middle area and yet, I feel that more can be said about middle circle behaviors.

When considering behaviors by someone who has engaged in illegal behavior but has not been caught, it might be emphasized that what goes into the *inner circle* is the illegal behavior. I find that I need to keep the definition of what is inner circle behavior very simple, since that boundary will get challenged in the first year of recovery. The addiction will try to act out on the inner circle behavior. Keeping the definition simple can help to keep sobriety at that moment.

The next step in helping someone work the three circles is to work out what goes into the outer circle. Often, people want to put nothing there. Giving examples of healthy behaviors that are in *my* outer circle can help identify behaviors that *they* can put there.

What I like to do next is to split the middle circle. The reason is, there are many behaviors which can go into the middle circle and there are degrees of gray. In effect, the middle circle has two or more sections in it. The three cir-

cles becomes more like three and a half circles. Each person has behaviors the pamphlet calls "boundary behaviors" and the pamphlet makes the distinction between those behaviors and other behaviors in the middle circle. These behaviors are ones which take a person back to the addiction. These behaviors are where the most work of the program occurs.

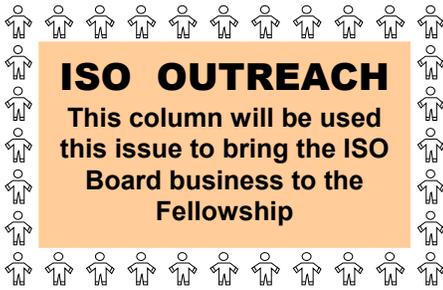
If a person has had or could have legal problems, it is important to work out a "Relapse Prevention Program". This program is a detailed plan of how to prevent the person from crossing the boundary into the inner circle behavior. To do that, the person needs to make plans for what to do about "boundary behaviors". We have to treat these middle circle behaviors as if they are as important as inner circle behaviors. The goal is to prevent behaviors which have legal consequences.

One way to do this is to go through the last few acting out times in detail and identify all the middle circle behaviors that led up to the crossing into the inner circle. Then, with the sponsor, work out realistic plans for what recovery actions to take after doing each of those behaviors. I do not recommend what actions to take to *prevent* these middle circle behaviors, *but what actions to take afterwards*. By planning out what behavior to take afterwards often affects whether or not we do the behavior at all. Yes, this is a lot of work and the plan has to change over time as we learn more and more, which behaviors to avoid.

I find that splitting up the middle circle like this can be of aid especially when sponsoring people who have had legal trouble.

Dave R.

caused. "God, grant me the serenity....." Robert S., PBR Ed.



ISO OUTREACH
This column will be used
this issue to bring the ISO
Board business to the
Fellowship

Following are the actions taken by the ISO Board during its teleconference on Saturday, March 23:

1. That funds designated for scholarships are to be used for scholarships and that future fund raisers conducted by the convention committee are to raise funds for general support of the convention.
2. Instructed the ISO Office draft a list of convention milestones that were to be given to the Interfellowship Relations Committee (IRC) by April 30 for presentation and recommendations to the Board in May.
3. Received the resignation of Southeast Region Board Alternate Bruce B., effective May 24, 2002.
4. Received the resignation of Northeast Region Board Member Joe M., effective immediately.
5. Appointed Bob R. as a temporary Board member until the Northeast Region can elect a permanent representative at its convention caucus in May.
6. Voted that the revised SAA Book manuscript is to be transmitted to the ISO Office by May 1 in whatever state of completion it is at that time.
7. Approved the full-time position of Publications and Administrative Assistant as described by the office manager, with a written job description to be presented to the Board for approval in May.
8. Hired Jonathan C. to fill the position of Publications and Administrative Assistant.
9. Voted that the present ISO of SAA, Inc., job title of "Office Manager" be changed to "Director of Fellowship Services."
10. Decided to champion the following additional business item at the 2002 Delegate Meeting:

"That the term 'Office Manager' in Article IV, Section 10 of the ISO By-Laws be changed to 'Director of Fellowship Services'."

11. Made the following changes in the Director of Fellowship Services job description:

In Paragraph VI, A, 3, changed the phrase "Maintains ISO approved literature and medallion inventory" to "Maintains literature and medallion inventory."

In Paragraph VI, A, 6, changed the

phrase "Prints, prepares for distribution, and distributes the Plain Brown Rapper" to "Publishes, prepares for distribution, and distributes the Plain Brown Rapper."

In Paragraph VII, increased the high end of the Director of Fellowship Services' salary range from \$36,000 annually to \$42,000 annually.

12. Accepted Jerry B.'s report that the public service announcement spots had been filmed and would be ready for distribution at the convention, with copies to be distributed beforehand to Board and Literature Committee Members. The report also said that the radio spots would differ somewhat from the video spots due to the need for more audio material. Because the production company was contracted to produce radio at the same time as it was producing video, there was no time to have the radio spots approved by the Literature Committee. However, added material was being taken from approved SAA literature and would probably consist of more of the Sex Addicts Anonymous pamphlet questions used in the video spots.

13. Approved the Literature Committee's request that future translations be done by a professional.

14. Authorized the subcommittee composed of Bruce B., Peter B., and Roger B. to hold a one-hour teleconference to discuss the Outreach Endowment Fund.

15. Authorize Francie E.'s subcommittee to hold a one-hour teleconference to discuss the issue of ISO office staff and traditions.

16. Related to Interfellowship Forum discussions, instructed Francie E. that the Board is not interested in any umbrella organization.

17. Confirmed the Board's next meeting as being a two-day face-to-face meeting in San Francisco, CA, beginning at 8:30 a.m. (PT), Wednesday and Thursday, May 22-23, 2002. On Tuesday evening, May 21, at 7:30 p.m. (PT), the Board will meet in the lobby of the Hyatt Regency San Francisco Airport for an informal dinner meeting at a San Francisco restaurant to be selected and announced by Frank B. For the Tuesday informal dinner, the Board extended an invitation to Board alternates, Literature Committee members, Literature Committee alternates, and their guests.

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**ARE YOU A "RESCUER?"
DO YOU CARRY THE MEDICINE?
OR....
CAN YOU - CARRY THE
MESSAGE OF RECOVERY?
WILL YOU - CARRY THE
MESSAGE OF RECOVERY?**

Dear fellowship--

Are you doing enough service? Are you looking for a good 9th/12th step opportunity? Remember that service keeps you sober!

Every year at the SAA convention the prison outreach committee hosts a focus group to talk about outreach to prisoners: what it involves, how to do it, and how it helps sex addicts who often have no other access to recovery from sex addiction. We are so fortunate to have the wealth of meetings in our areas, to have a responsive central office, and to have an annual convention where we get to meet many others from this country and beyond. These opportunities are not available to the addicts who are imprisoned.

The prison outreach committee urges you to come to the focus group this year to see how you can carry the message that we are privileged to have been given. If you feel that you have some recovery to share, please stop by and talk with us. There is always service to be had; often a great deal of this work usually ends up falling on the shoulders of just a few people--we need help! And there is no obligation--just come on by and hear us to see if you would be interested in this type of service work would work. The bulk of outreach at this time consists of responding with prisoners and helping them to get SAA literature through the Houston office.

We hope to see you in May at the convention. Thank you and keep working it!

Sincerely,

The Prison Outreach Committee

SPONSORSHIP CORNER....

HELPING WITH STEP FOUR

At some point, if we are patient, our sponsees may ask us about working the Fourth Step. Having avoided it for three years myself, I appreciate the value of procrastination as a tool of pain avoidance. However, it was the continuing insanity and the pain of reemerging addictive behaviors that made me finally say, "I'm ready." Pain is probably the best starting place for anyone doing this work. The reason is that, like any other Step, Four is more than just an intellectual journey; to be effective, it needs to be a union of facts and emotions.

Before any of my sponsees has ever done fruitful Step work, I tell them they must have some abstinence under their belts first. As much as some would like to claim otherwise, the reality is that denial and emotional numbness always are controlling a person when he or she is acting out. (This is true no matter how long a person has been in the program.) Abstinence from all addictive behaviors is the best sign of progress on Steps One, Two and Three. There is no sense in starting Step Four without it.

What has seemed to help my sponsees the most on the first time through is to work a wide ranging Step Four. (In a future column, we can explore working the Step on a specific character defect.) There are many resources. One of the best is the outline presented in Alcoholics Anonymous, chapter 5, pages 64 to 71. It takes an individual through a list of some of the most serious character defects and makes some general suggestions on what to write; the section on resentments is outstanding. However, this outline is very difficult to work without a lot of guidance from a sponsor who has worked the Big Book Step Four him or herself. Even if this is not the format chosen, however, sponsees would bene-

fit from reading this chapter for an understanding of what an effective Step looks like. AA also has a pamphlet on working Four that gives a more detailed explanation.

Another resource is the many Step workbooks available from different sources. I have worked with a few of these; some are better than others. My chief complaint about a few of the workbooks is that they reflect more of a psychological approach than a spiritual one. They can get very heady and move away from a focus on behaviors and what those actions reveal about one's spirituality.

A third approach that has worked for some of my sponsees is using the Seven Deadly Sins as an outline. This approach is suggested in the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions book of AA. To do this, start with the Sins: pride, greed, lust, anger, gluttony, envy and sloth. (Some people suggest adding fear to the list as an eighth Deadly Sin.) Take them one at a time and write out a list of specific incidents which shows how this defect has warped one's character. The chapter on Step Four in the Twelve and Twelve offers a number of questions that can help a newcomer get started. Yet another approach that is used in some areas of the country is a Twelve Step workshop. This is a group of people gathered together to work through the Steps together. These have worked in AA for decades.

My only concern about workshops in SAA is that these sometimes they are composed only of newcomers. Without some kind of guidance from oldtimers, the participants are likely to

fall into old patterns of denial. In other words, they can become the blind leading the blind. Workshops need oldtimers or sponsors to be effective.

Once the sponsee has clean time and have found a Step Four tool, there are still a number of things that I do as a sponsor to help make it safe and productive. I suggest the sponsee always call me every time after doing some writing; if they don't reach me, they are to call someone else. Step work is painful if it is effective, and it is at those vulnerable moments that the addiction offers "relief." A call to the sponsor is an important bit of support through the

"I suggest the sponsee always call me every time after doing some writing; if they don't reach me, they are to call someone else. Step work is painful if it is effective, and it is at those vulnerable moments that the addiction offers "relief."

pain. Even if it isn't painful one time, the habit of calling may be what gets the sponsee to seek support the next time when it is. I also encourage sponsees to pace themselves in a self-respectful and consistent way; don't hurry through it because the pain will accumulate and become overwhelming, and don't draw it out over years. One specific suggestion is working three or four times a week for about thirty minutes, lessening this pace when the more painful times hit.

A final suggestion responds to the question, "How do I know when I'm done?" The answer is one week after you feel like your Higher Power is indicating that you are done; the week provides a chance to see if anything else comes up. Then it is important to schedule a time to present Step Five as soon as possible. Whoever the sponsee chooses to hear the Step, it is important not to wait very long, because the denial and emotional disconnection can quickly reappear. As with Four, Step Five is only effective when the facts and the emotions are united. This is where so much healing can take place.

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POET'S PAGE



Drew F. from a Texas Prison
 THE KEY...
 Don't pick up the key!
 Don't pick up the key!!
 Don't pick up the key!!!
 But I am weak and always do,
 addiction must pay shame its due.
 With this, the ritual's first act,
 the final die is cast.
 The car drives itself
 on this well known,
 well rutted road
 and parks in front
 of this seedy place,
 in this seedy part of town.

Feet hit the ground,
 praying for invisibility.
 I shallow pant from the heat
 rising from my loins.
 Adrenaline, and anticipation
 flush my face.

It is no adult book
 that I seek in this place.
 I slide inside.
 Downcast eyes avert the clerk's.
 I buy the minimum,
 a five dollar token's sum.

I slither on past the glass,
 the case of novelties
 and its kinky pink devices,
 of potions and pastel lotions,
 on past the racks of cellophane slicks,
 row on row of youth's firm flesh
 posed in every conceivable act,
 yet all, staring back
 with those dilated, violated
 dead-fish eyes.

The traitorous buzzer exposes me,
 then unlocks the cavern's door.
 I sink then sink on back,
 down into the dark labyrinth
 with its cheap plywood maze
 of tiny video shacks.

First I am blinded in this night.
 Then sight with the gray TV light
 strobing and flashing,
 escaping the door bottoms and jams.

Musk mixes with the smell
 of bleach and seminal fluid
 and the lurid cacophony
 of a dozen different groans
 and moans and screams
 all gringing to the rhythm
 of the drum as saxophone.

I am swept along in. the current

of the river Styx
 as it sweeps around
 this quadrangle's endless course
 with the flotsam phantom
 pausing only for
 a longing look,
 a searing stare,
 a glance cast askance,
 to catch perchance
 just the right one.

Here, is cruel, instant judgment
 made.
 This one, too old.
 That one, too fat.
 Too rough, too fem.
 I've been with him.

Doors are left cracked,
 as invitation to satiation
 in anonymous, silent contracts.
 Crotch-high holes
 connect these cloisters..
 There is no glory in what passes through
 Here you can fill a cavity
 but not the soul.

In such gloom there is a room
 for intimacy to blossom, to bloom
 in the few desperate seconds
 it takes to consummate
 this most intimate of acts.
 And never is such a let down as comes
 this anticlimax.

Shame drives me here.
 Shame drives me home.

Tonight, God forbid,
 is lovemaking what she'll want?
 What really haunts,
 "Did I pick up something else?"

Have I, or will I yet
 innocence inject and infect
 with chancre, blisters, warts, pus or
 death?

Betrayal and guilt,
 fear and self-hate
 are too great a weight
 for any prick to rise above.

So flaccidly I fall
 and sigh and cry in my chair
 by my table with the dirty ashtray
 and I say,
 "Never again!
 Never again!!
 Never again!

Yet addiction and its sin

demand relief from the relief!
 even one is a full time job!
 But my four,
 seemingly insurmountable whore!
 I'm in bane's pain.
 Now they all glare back
 They beckon me:
 The cell phone button to my bookie's
 home.
 The porno mag with the doe-eyed fag.
 The half-full glass of clear ethanol.
 The jellybean jar of seconal.

The last two together
 in deep euthanized sleep
 might open Heaven's Gate.
 But wait,
 to be sure
 there is always the pistol!

The key!
 The key!
 The key!!
 Don't pick up the key!!

But which one is the key?
 Oh I know. I reach for thee.
 ++++++

Editor's note:

This poetry was sent to the PBR two years ago this month. Amid the discourse of the Literature Committee, and others pro and con, it was not printed. Nonetheless, it seemed to strike chords in all who read it. Most agreed it was powerful. Just as the addiction is powerful.

I believe it is more than just an eye-opening writing. It moves me to realize the depths to which I, and perhaps others could, and did, fall. It mirrors the paralyzing catatonia wherein we are wrapped. Until, of course we open minds to the wonders of the total program support of SAA, and the supporting shoulders of the members of the Fellowship.

Perhaps we have moved to higher levels of courage in these two years, and have the ability to face our own "devils" as we look at Drew's powerful writing.

Give some feedback if you like.

Thank you.

Robert S., Editor [until May 31, 2002

DEALING WITH TEMPTATION

Jan H.

I find it rare to hear people in meetings talk about temptation and yet as a sex addict, I think I deal with it every day. Maybe because it carries some measure of religious overtones, but I suspect all of us are tempted to do things we do not want to do, whether we are religious or not.

The first point I want to make about temptation is that **it is sure to come**. I am assured that whatever resolution I make, there will come a time when that resolve will be tested. Therefore, I am not surprised nor blindsided when it happens. Forewarned is forearmed and I wish someone had warned me.

Next, the first step tells me a lot about temptation: I am powerless against it. This can be a difficult concept for the newcomer to recovery and yet it is the basis of successfully dealing with it. I cannot stand against temptation; I am powerless. If I can weather the storm of temptation, it is only because my Higher Power is there, (the second step). The importance of understanding this point is that I do not ever put myself into a situation where I know I will be tempted. I do not show my strength by resisting temptation. I show my strength by **AVOIDING** temptation. Only the Higher Power has the strength to resist. Therefore, step three becomes very important.

“Be prepared” is not just for Boy Scouts. I need to be prepared for temptation. I do this first by avoiding it, but secondly by having a plan of action arranged for dealing with it. This can consist of a relapse prevention plan which might include lists of consequences, recovery brothers and sisters I can call, reasons to not act out, etc. Do not forget the power of the **slogans**. I used to think they were clichés, but I have learned the wisdom born of experience. **“HALT=Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired”** is a good one to use to be aware that temptation lurks.

I do not try to defeat the temptation for all time to come. Another slogan is appropriate here: **one day at a time**. I can resist the temptation only for today and today alone. I might give in

tomorrow, but I’ll deal with that tomorrow. I can stay sober only **one day at a time** and so when temptation comes, I try stall for time as much as possible. Do not use the time to “enjoy” the temptation, but use it to run away.

I have found it incredibly powerful to **talk!** Talk to my Higher Power, talk to a friend, or talk to a recovery buddy. I can NOT try to deal with it by myself. Secrecy is a killer. Part of this is to tell my HP how I feel. A major part of falling to temptation is “acting out” my feelings. Getting in touch with my feelings gives me insight into my dynamics of the situation.

Almost always, there is an avenue of **escape**. I must decide to use it. I have to look for it when temptation comes. It will be there if I want it to be there.

“Idle hands are the devil’s playground.” sounds so trite and yet it is so true. If I have nothing better to do, there is always a recovery buddy who would benefit from hearing from me. If nothing else, I can tell him about my struggle.

Lastly, it is not a failing to be tempted. Do not fall into the snare of feeling guilty about the temptation, unless you deliberately sought to be tempted. Every experience is a learning experience. The Higher Power sees to that.

Jan H.

From the Saturday Morning Circles Meeting in Columbus, OH

Continued from Last Issue

More writings from The Circles Group, sent by Paul M and members

“How did I rationalize or explain away my acting out?”

Good question since ‘rationalize’ is a shaming word to me. Somewhere in my experience of life, I learned that when others wanted me to feel shame about my thinking, they’d accuse me of ‘rationalizing.’ But that is the way I felt—and I no longer have the total trust in my feelings I once had.

When I was growing up I was traumatized with belt-beatings. Then, when I went to school they taught me about the evils of masturbation and how I was going to Hell—straight from the third grade. Somehow now I suspect I may have over-reacted. In other words, I suspect my reaction to the teachings of the nuns and priests was skewed by my altered state produced by the beatings. (One clue was that other boys didn’t seem to take these curses so seriously and literally as I did.)

So, I’ll stay away from the word ‘rationalize’ and concentrate on how I explained away my behavior. Again, my early childhood experience come comes into play. At some point after reading a lot and thinking a lot about my masturbation (I still remember exactly where I was when I first heard that word at about 12-13 years old), I decided “they” were wrong. Once I decided that completely—of course I’d already started acting out—I made it okay for myself to go exactly 180° away from their teaching and masturbate whenever the urge presented itself (well...almost). The logic being that their teaching being wrong must mean “right” was to be found in the opposite direction. It got to the point where I was finally able to masturbate, go to mass and communion, and teach a Religious Ed class—all in the same morning.”

TED N.

The following is in response to The Bubble pamphlet:

“I love reading The Bubble pamphlet. It helps me see what a trance I am in, and how trapped I am, when I am acting out. Hearing it read, or reading it myself, is so real that it’s almost triggering. There’s still a large part of me that wants to be in the prison of that bubble, so I don’t have to think about or fear what is going on in my job, or my relationship, or the fact that I

need new tires and don’t have the money. How much easier it *seems* instead to try hiding from the police, or to play cat-and-mouse with other active addicts.”

--Anonymous, Columbus OH

More from the Columbus, OH Saturday Morning Circles Group

“On Acting out experiences”...

My mind always becomes cloudy when I have to recall my acting out experiences in any kind of time sequence. I can recall all kinds of facts and figures on a variety of subjects, but when it comes to recalling the timeline of my acting out it is all a haze to me. My sponsor has requested that I record each acting out experience on my calendar. I usually forget. I know it is a defense mechanism that I employ in order not to face the reality of my addiction.

OK! When did you last act out? It happened last week. I went to the gym. I finished my exercise I decided that I would go to the single stall showers instead of the group showers. Success!

After getting dressed I decided to walk over to the group shower area to see what I had missed. I ran into an older man who I befriended and who participates in the same exercise class. While talking to him, I saw “him.” I don’t even know his name, but we have acted out together about three times.

Our eyes met. I was instantly triggered. While talking to this person, I was in non-verbal contact with my old acting-out partner. I had to get out of there, so I left. But, I could not get him out of my mind: The look had me hooked. I fantasized about him for a couple of days. I didn’t physically act out but mentally and spiritually I did. Why?

I am very lonely even though I am surrounded by people. It was the holiday season. I have attended many family, friend, and work-related functions, but I am still lonely. I am scared of spending time with myself. I spend so much time and energy escaping having to be alone with myself. The fear is real!

All the same I am more in touch with myself than ever before. At my family’s Christmas gathering my mother announced that I have become more assertive since I started in recovery. Progress not perfection!”

ROLLIN S. Columbus, OH
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Ed. Note: there were other submissions from the group that we are not able to include in this issue. Maybe the new Editor

(Note: this article reveals several plot details from the movie A Beautiful Mind.)

I’ll be honest I’ve always felt that the program “truth”--once a sex addict, always a sex addict--as a pile of horse pucky. Why even try it the program wasn’t going to make you normal again. This phrase mocked my efforts to stay sober time and time again, that is, until I saw the movie A Beautiful Mind.

The movie is based on the true story of John Forbes Nash, Jr., a mathematical genius who gradually realizes that he’s schizophrenic. Nash heavily relies on his wife’s strength and his friends’ compassion but ultimately it is he who must face and defeat the demon of his mind. What’s especially brilliant about the film is the way it’s told. We meet Nash, the social outcast, as he enters Princeton in the early ‘50s. He has few friends and little contact with the outside world except for his roommate, Thomas, and a few peers.

Nash is recruited, several years later, by a shadowy government agent to work as code-breaker for Uncle Sam a job he attacks with feverish gusto. While doing his spy work he meets and marries a beautiful math student, and that’s when the trouble starts. Nash soon learns that he’s been having hallucinatory visions since college and that Thomas never existed.

Neither did the government agent or the Thomas’ 8 year old niece. These 3 visions go on to haunt Nash for the rest of his entire life, right up until present day. Nash, whose in his late 60s now, still has the visions of his 3 imaginary friends.

How is this related to Sex Addiction? A loner allows several fantasies to overcome his grip on reality and nearly lead him to self-destruction. Sounds very familiar.

And that leads me to the maxim of ‘once a sex addict, always a sex addict’ advanced by the SAA literature. Nash, like any addict craved his visions, because they provided a momentary sense of clarity, complete-

ness, escape, and joy. But as we all know these feelings are as fleeting as a government surplus.

When I started the program I wanted to be free from the desires forever and I thought the solution was out of sight, out of mind. But the literature mocked me, telling me

A BEAUTIFUL ADDICTION

Kam...

that would never happen. It took me over 2 years to accept it but now I understand. My fantasy visions wouldn’t be government agents and roommates, it’d be sexually stimulating ones. Following me around always wanting me to play with them, demanding that I do, and then I would succumb.

Yet, through Nash’s story, I realize that unfortunately my ‘fantasy visions’ will never stop. They will always shadow me. Asking for me to play, and that’s what I think the literature means when it says ‘once a sex addict, always one’. It does not mean that we will always succumb to temptation, but that temptation would never be far away. Even if the urges receded they would never disappear entirely.

Nash had two choices, one that would’ve led Nash to drowning his infant son and being committed for life, and the second choice led to him winning a Nobel Prize and remaining with his woman he loved for several decades. Despite the path that he chose, the visions still haunt him as they do me, but now I realize that Nash’s developed a very unique solution to his problem.

Wanna know what he did? He learned how to put something that was always in sight, out of his mind. It may have taken him 30 years to do it, but I think we can all agree that it’s still a beautiful thing.

Kam

B A C K T O B A S I C S

Richard P.

Everything I really needed to know about life I learned from the AA Big Book and the Twelve & Twelve. How unfortunate that I was not taught to look to these books for help until after several years of “12 Step” recovery from sexual addiction. I am grateful to those who were sitting in these rooms the first day I walked in and admitted, “My name is Richard and I’m a sex addict.” They were able to pass on what they had been taught and somehow some of us muddled through as others went back out, but the steps and AA literature were not part of my early re-

covery. Major relapse was. After finally finding the safe haven of recovery I almost didn’t make it.

I am sure my recovery has been just what it needed to be. I have a history of learning things the hard way. I have learned the hard way that “It works if you work it”. For me, working it means working the steps and traditions as they were originally fashioned by the experience of those early AA’s over six decades ago. I did not always think this way.

When I began my recovery journey

I thought this whole system of steps and traditions seemed rather outdated. At that time AA was over fifty years old and the archaic language of the Big Book indicated it had not been updated to reflect the changes that had occurred during that time. I was sure what the program needed was someone like me to move it into the late twentieth century. I would go to intergroup meetings with all sorts of great ideas on how to “improve” the program. The “old timers”

(Continued on page 8)

I am a different man heading into 2002 than I was a year ago. I'm sure I was more of a different man heading into 2001 than in any previous year, but it was not so apparent to me as it has been in the last 12 months. I can attest that I owe much of my emotional improvement and strength to recovery.

God has been in my life for 23 years, but not nearly as powerfully as he has been in my recovery. I have been in recovery for sexual addiction for 3 years. I am excited that I am on the verge of receiving my one-year chip. The thing that sticks in my mind that made this recovery milestone a reality is help. Help from attending meetings, reading program material, calling program buddies, trusting in my affirmations, having a morning recovery routine, praying, calling my sponsor almost every day, talking things out with my sponsor, working the 12 steps and believing the serenity prayer. It boils down to learning how to reach out for help. This important life skill developed after I finally believed

and accepted that I could not do it alone. This has been the most difficult transition for me so far, but it is providing the onset of peace as well as the awareness of who I am and the incredible value in life.

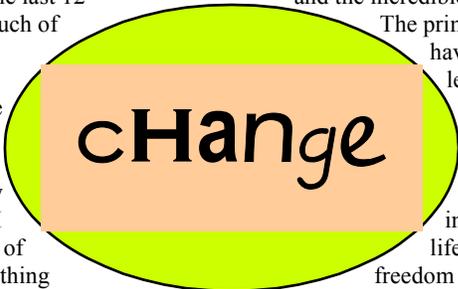
The primary benefit I have derived is learning how to let go and not be so hard on myself. I feel so much more in touch with life. I feel the freedom to be myself while I am slowing down and learning to experience serenity and contentment.

I value reading Answers in the Heart every day. Some of the nuggets in this devotional reading are so poignant and penetrating that it tweaks my thinking and causes my brain to pause. I am grateful for these revelations that help me appreciate my life and the life around me. Recently our group's beloved mentor, Carl, mentioned the word

authenticity. It stopped me in my tracks. I paused significantly at this word much the same way I did with intimacy. I knew authenticity was also what I wanted. Tad later shared that authenticity is irresistible. The truth of this statement hit me so hard that it is now a permanent part of my thinking.

I am grateful that my life now has meaning and purpose rather than the aimless and meaningless existence I experienced when I was mired in my sexual addiction. One of the most wonderful aspects of recovery that I have learned to embrace is that life and recovery are all about progress rather than perfection. Serenity is becoming a reality for me. I experience peace knowing that gratitude is becoming one of my best friends. Yearning for more . . .

Andrew M.



***** ANTIDOTE FOR STINKIN' THINKIN' *****
John C.

Many of us got a good laugh out of the Saturday Night Live character from a few years back, Stuart Smalley. To counteract "stinkin' thinkin'", he would usually have some (half-baked) affirmation that he said into a mirror.

Actually, that character has always made me leery of affirmations. They seem goofy. But on a walk recently, I decided to do one.

Backing up a bit, most of my life I have tended to be a "worst case scenario" thinker. I would often wonder what the worst thing that could happen would be in a given circumstance. Which just led me to worry about that

very thing happening.

I caught myself thinking this way while I was on a walk. I realized that my faulty thinking led me to expect things to go badly, to "take a turn for the worst."

I decided to turn that around. As I walked, a kind of affirmation came to me, and I said it out loud (well, not too loud) as I walked: "I have faith that things will take a turn for glorious wonder, filled with light and love."

I just said it over and over about 10 or 15 times as I walked. And as I rounded a curve in the path, a bright red cardinal flew by me and landed on a

nearby tree branch. While that could be a total coincidence, I decided to take it as a God thing that I was on the right track.

And this really has been helping me switch over from negative self-talk, to a more peaceful and balanced outlook. You might try coming up with your own thought or sentence to say to help change your faulty beliefs.

Or you can feel free to use mine.
peace,
John C.

BACK TO BASICS Continued from page 7.... Richard P.

(Continued from page 7)
just looked at me and told me I was talking about violating the traditions. I was sure the traditions had to go. They were obviously standing in the way of progress. Fortunately no one else saw it my way.

Today I find I am the one referring overly enthusiastic members to the traditions, and most of them seem to appreciate it about as much as I did when I was in their shoes. I still need to remember that I am not always right. The group conscience is much closer to the truth than I am; and the steps

and traditions continue to be our best guide into the twenty-first century.

I recently attended a workshop called 'Back to Basics'. It is a series of four meetings put together by a group of Mid-western AA's in the late 1940's to introduce newcomers to the program. During the course of these four weekly meetings the newcomer actually does all twelve steps. What a concept! Not just learning about and talking about the steps, but actually doing them. I have to wonder what my recovery would have looked like if these four meet-

ings had been part of my first month in recovery.

Joel D. of Eugene has adapted these meetings for sex addiction. Copies can be downloaded at <http://www.eugeneseaa.com/>. I challenge you to consider starting a "Back to Basics" newcomers meeting in your community. It's also a good refresher for "old timers".

+++++

Step 12: Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other sex addicts and to practice these principles in our activities.

What does a spiritual awakening mean as far as my sexuality is concerned? And if I have a spiritual awakening as a result of the program, what might be the connection between the twelve steps, spirituality, and a healthy, affirmative sexuality?

Growing up I mostly heard the word "spirituality" used in a religious—mainly Christian—context. The Christianity I was subjected to tended to place the spirit very, very high and the body very, very low. Spirit was disembodied, ethereal, connected with the Holy Ghost, mysterious and otherworldly—certainly not having anything whatsoever to do with carnality or sex. Spirituality was for an elite few who dwelled in a state of grace, a seemingly impossible ideal; sex was for the rest of us, lowly, fearful, sinful, shameful. When I was growing up, that vocabulary seemed to be the only one applied to the complex world of sex. I learned that original sin was passed down from generation to generation through sexual intercourse—unless one happened to be Christ or the Virgin Mary. And if there was one thing I knew for sure, it was that I wasn't either Christ or the Virgin Mary.

My first conscious experience of sex was at age 11; but I felt then, obscurely, that I had been sexualized long before I knew what sex was, and seduced long before I had any inkling what seduction was. And these vague but powerful feelings of sex and seduction were accompanied by a potent flux of emotions: risk, thrill, release, sin, and punishment—even though I couldn't figure out the meaning of any of it. Like so many people of my generation, sexual experience preceded any kind of knowledge or explanation or understanding or sense of boundaries or feelings of safety.

So for me, sex at puberty was a discovery and a rediscovery—something new and awesome but also something powerfully familiar, filled with mystery, terror, anxiety, longing, disintegration, and excitement. This complex tangle of feelings and experiences remained for many years underground, barely conscious, a second script or text or web of feelings running alongside the text of my ordinary daily life. Mysterious, thrilling, volcanic, destructive.

I came to feel that my sexuality was as far from spirituality and the Holy

SPIRITUALITY AND AFFIRMATIVE SEXUALITY

Peter L.

Ghost as it was possible to imagine: wrong, shameful, sinful, but also secretly exciting, and exciting because secret. And it became gradually more and more addictive until in 1986, after the wreckage of two marriages, I came into the program, defeated and deadened by sex.

A Spiritual Disease

In AA, addiction (alcoholism) is a spiritual disease and no human power can relieve us of our addiction. In SAA, we have taken over those wise words, interpreting them to mean that our spiritual disease consists of compulsive, addictive, and destructive sexual fantasizing and acting out. The promise of the program is that by working the steps, we will have (or will have had) a spiritual awakening.

The steps lead us towards a spiritual awakening. That's the promise of the program, the central promise of the Twelve-Step program. But what about our sexuality? Unlike the alcoholic whose spiritual awakening and recovery implies giving up the bottle, we aren't asked to renounce sex, even though some of us may go through periods of abstinence before reconnecting (or not, as the case may be) with our sexual selves.

But when I connect or reconnect with my sexual self, what kinds of changes do I hope to discover or create? And are there ways in which a transformation of my sexuality can be associated with a discovery or rediscovery of spirituality? And that childhood split between body and spirit, between sex and spirit—what about that?

It's in this context that I'm always trying to figure out what, for me, constitutes positive, healthy, affirmative sexuality and how it might be related to the promise of a spiritual awakening. Let's say, tentatively, that sexuality has to do with those places in the body where pleasure is obtained through sensations, feelings, memories, experiences and acts that may have but usually don't have to do with procreation. But when I try to describe affirmative sexuality, I can't describe it purely and simply in

terms what all people think or feel or do, for the following reasons:

Some people (homo-, hetero-, and bi-sexual) have sex a lot; others very little; others not at all; some people fantasize a lot; others very little; others not at all: masturbate a lot; a little; not at all; identify themselves as sexual beings a lot; a little; not at all; need ritual a lot; very little; not at all; connect sex with other experiences a lot; very little; not at all; are fixated on certain acts, objects, and positions a lot; very little; not at all. Etc. etc.

Many of us ring the changes on these and dozens of other aspects of our sexual thoughts, feelings, and behaviors as we move through life. And each of these complex and individualistic aspects of sex can be affirmative or negative depending on factors that are not necessarily intrinsic to those desires, needs, orientations, and behaviors.

So I have tried to figure out (and I keep trying to figure out) what I understand by affirmative sexuality, using other criteria than those I just mentioned. Mostly, for me, the distinction is one of feeling rather than knowing, and probably the distinctions aren't ever as

"The steps lead us towards a spiritual awakening. That's the promise of the program, the central promise of the Twelve-Step Program... But what about our Sexuality?"

clear-cut as the following speculative descriptions:

Affirmative sexuality: Feelings of attentiveness, alertness, aliveness, presentness, connectedness.

Negative sexuality: Feelings of distraction, obsessiveness, numbness, disconnectedness

Affirmative: An intensification and enrichment of my relationship with myself and, if there is a partner, with my partner.

Negative: A decrease in my sense of myself and others, loneliness, isolation, impoverishment

Affirmative: Feelings of safety, security, and affection towards myself and my partner.

Negative: Feelings of abandonment, loss, disintegration, alienation

Affirmative: Increase in a sense of life, movement, change, renewal

Negative: Diminishing appetite for life. Standing still. Spinning wheels. Staleness.

Affirmative: Experiences that I enter into freely, collaborating with the power of

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

sex

Negative: Experiences that are initiated or accompanied by feelings of compulsion, exploitation, or victimization of myself or others.

Affirmative sexuality is on the side of the life force: involvement, participation, celebration.

Negative sexuality is on the side of death: compulsive repetition; refusal of change.

Affirmative:

Any sexual feeling or experience that is enacted for its own intrinsic positive feelings and values; something I enjoy for its own sake, without hidden agendas. Leaves me feeling enriched, alive, and powerfully connected with positive forces.

Negative:

Any sexual feeling or experience that is a substitute for some other experience or feeling:

for example, anger, isolation, boredom, frustration, self-seeking, powerlessness, recklessness, fear, shame, guilt. Seeking sex to escape, or simply to medicate feelings, or to demean myself or others, or to increase my sense of shame or unworthiness. Etc. True, there may be times when acting out seems the only way I know how to cope, but the promise of the program is that we can learn and practice other ways of coping:

How it works

For me, the SAA program is a prolonged exercise in reorientation and transformation. I think of the promises:

We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness

Our whole attitude and outlook on life will change

These are extravagant claims only if we interpret them as meaning that our new lives (and our re-newed sexuality) are created by a complete renunciation, even obliteration of the past. That would be extravagant and self-defeating; another vital promise makes this clear: We will not regret the past, nor wish to shut the door on it

If I spend time in regret, remorse, guilt, and self-hatred about my sexual acting out, and if I try to erase those fantasies and acts that brought me

catastrophe and shame, then that other text or script or tangled web of my addiction will only gain in intensity and power. What is repressed always returns in one way or another—and often as disruption or even disintegration. I know what I did and am capable of doing again, and I need to keep thinking and talking about that until I can integrate it into my ongoing sexuality or at least keep it in a safe and loving place.

“Sex is a power greater than myself, a manifestation of the source and force of life. In trying to control or warp or exploit the power of sex, I become a slave to it, just as the alcoholic who wishes to master the bottle becomes a slave to the bottle.”

This positive move forward is a long process, but then, the program never suggests that a spiritual awakening is a magical conversion, away from sickness to health. The transition is incremental and implies change, reorientation, and transformation:

Changing power systems steps 1, 2, 3, and 11

Reorienting my relationships with others (8, 9 and 12)

Transforming the relationship with myself. (step 1, and steps 4 through 7, and 10)

Power

For me, the power of sex has always filled me with awe. Once set in motion, even the healthiest of sexual feelings can threaten my self-mastery, control, limits, consciousness, ego.

Sex, affirmative sex, is always unpredictable in its course, duration, and outcome. Orgasm is a concentration and dispersal of forces, an intensification and a disruption of continuity.

Sex is a power greater than myself, a manifestation of the source and force of life. In trying to control or warp or exploit the power of sex, I become a slave to it, just as the alcoholic who wishes to master the bottle becomes a slave to the bottle.

The program is about power and a transformation of power. The battle between my ego and my addiction is inevitably a losing battle, because my ego is part of my addictive personality system. Step One is already the first vital move in a process of change from the illusion of self-power to recognition of a power—or powers—greater than myself. And I believe that the effect of the twelve steps is to heal self-division by bringing me to accept that I am part of systems (cosmic, social, emotional, spiritual, sexual), which I did not initiate and cannot possibly dominate.

As far as sexuality is concerned, I have come to accept that:

Sex is a power greater than myself
I need to try and integrate myself within that power

I need to discriminate between affirmative and negative sex

I need to accept that my unconscious text or script or tangled web will always be active and potentially subversive and destructive (“I am a sex addict”)

I will never completely get at the Truth (capital T) of my sexuality; and maybe the compulsion to understand absolutely everything about sex is just another form of defensiveness or destructive control. But, I need to go on talking about my sexual life and talking and talking and talking. . . and I have to be brave enough to follow the words and feelings wherever they may lead me, until I stumble across or create stories about my sexual history that I can live with and integrate into my mind and spirit. As someone once said: “In AA you recover by telling your story and hearing others tell their stories. It’s a ‘tale-telling’ and a listening cure.”

Struggling to accept and live the above feelings and beliefs helps me feel that the relationship between sex and spirituality can be complementary rather than oppositional. I want to redefine spirituality as something profoundly human and attainable—and not otherworldly, far out, elitist, or impossible. I am coming to believe that there is no contradiction between spirituality and affirmative sexuality; both imply:

Attentiveness to the here and now

Affirmation of the value of myself and others

Recognition of powers greater than myself and of my place within those powers
Acknowledgment that I am “part of” rather than “master of”

Belief in feelings of connectedness with myself and others

Acceptance of conflict, ambiguity, uncertainty, and open-endedness

Involvement in life and celebration of the joys of living and loving

Peter L.



**SAA 15th
International
Convention**

Friday evening May 24
Through
Monday noon May 27
2002

**There's
Still
Time !!**



Bridge to Freedom

CONVENTION HIGHLIGHTS

The SAA International Convention attracts members from around the world. Your SAA friends from the convention area hop you will join us for a week-end of sharing, workshops and entertainment!!!

Friday, May 24

Convention Opening Celebration*
Keynote Speaker*

Saturday, May 25

Workshops* [selected]
Banquet*

Sunday, May 26

Workshops* [selected]
Community Bus Tour & Dinner*
[additional cost]

Monday, May 27

Speaker and Closing Ceremony*
Brunch*

Other Convention Activities

24 hour meditation room*
24 hour marathon meetings*

Hospitality Suite*ISO Bookstore*
Talent Show*

* Indicates Open to adult paid guests of SAA Members.

**JOIN THE
FELLOWSHIP
AND THE FUN !**

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Contact the
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A limited number of scholarships for registration fees are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Call the ISO Office for information
1-800-477-8191

Travel Rates

United Airlines-5-10% off
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See Registration Brochure
For numbers to call

**Convention Registration Fees as
Approved by the include Hotel
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| SAA Members | 4/1— 4/30 | After May 1 |
|---------------------------|--------------|----------------|
| 3 days-Sat-Sun-Mon | \$145.00 | \$155.00 |
| 2 Days-Sat-Sun or Sun-Mon | \$125.00 | \$135.00 |
| One Day-Sat, Sun, or Mon | \$105.00 | \$115.00 |
| Adult Paid Guests | | |
| 3 Days-Sat-Sun-Mon | \$100.00 | \$110.00 |
| 2 Days-Sat-Sun or Sun-Mon | \$80.00 | \$90.00 |
| One Day-Sat, Sun or Mon | \$60.00 | \$70.00 |

**Delegate Conference
Please Note !!**

SAA members appointed by their home groups as delegates to the conference should be on site Friday, May 24, 2002 at 8:30 AM until Saturday noon. Delegates must register for this portion SEPARATELY through the ISO Office. There is a \$20 Registration Fee which includes the Friday noon meal. Appropriate Call-to-Convention Documents will have been sent to each REGISTERED SAA Group. Voting representation is authorized only by each local group. Call 1-800-477-8191 between the hours of 10 AM to 6 PM CENTRAL time if you have questions about registration.

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WILL YOU PLEASE? Remember the needs of the SAA Fellowship at the international level? This newsletter was provided for you by those doing their own Step Twelve and Tradition Five work. And by one full time/one half time, paid staff member. There are important programs of outreach, many of which are represented in this publication. Outreach of all kinds, prison and all other. Materials are provided free to those who cannot afford them; i.e., prisoners. It costs dollars to maintain the central facility through which our efforts are maintained. For you who downloaded this, or have received it via "snail mail", we hope you will strongly consider sending your periodic contributions to the ISO office. **YOU** are the answer to total Outreach! Thanks !!

ARE WE A SOBER FELLOWSHIP??

Chris C.-Indianapolis, IN

[Editor's Note: This article has been edited approximately one half of the original, still attempting to purvey the original intent of his message, which has to do with the Delegate business item as indicated.]

Among the items in the "Call to the 2002 International Convention" is a notice about an issue that strikes to the core of our purpose as a fellowship. The New Business Item D, "Delegate Sobriety Guidelines," proposes "...that the suggested criteria for international service at the delegate level be amended to read 'six months sobriety rather than two years.'" It proposes to water down our message of recovery

Sex addicts come to SAA because of the pain that our addiction causes us and others. While in active addiction we try to minimize the effects of acting out, but the reality is that it causes shame. Shame leads to many other hurtful products of addiction: denial, self-deception and emotional numbness - Step 2 calls it insanity. We do not choose

them; they are unavoidable elements of active addiction. What's more, they all lead to spiritual disconnection.

So we came to the program seeking relief from the pain, and in meetings we learned about this thing - sobriety. What is sobriety? The clearest definition is the one offered by the Big Book of AA, i.e.; "abstinence from [the addictive behavior] coupled with on-going spiritual growth." By living a sober life, shame, denial, self-deception and spiritual disconnection are gradually replaced by serenity. Serenity doesn't come automatically; it comes over years as we continue recovery. Without both abstinence and spiritual growth (working the 12 Steps) there is no sobriety, only insanity. One without the other is called by AA, "a dry drunk."

Claiming sobriety when one has only reduced the acting out is not abstinence. Recall what our experience has taught us: any acting out reactivates the addictive cycle and we are powerless to stop it. The cunning part of this addiction leads people to deny that

the insanity and spiritual disconnection claiming now they know what they are doing; it leads them to believe that they can still grow spiritually and gain something from the Steps while still acting out. Let us be truthful, those who live in this position are SAA dry drunks.

Again, Item D suggests giving fellowship approval to reduced acting out and calling it sobriety. True spiritual action is best recognized by its fruits. I feel the lack of abstinence-based sobriety has deeply hindered the process of group conscience and led to poisonous fruit for our fellowship.

I ask that the delegates amend the measure to raise the standard to three or four years of complete abstinence from all addictive behaviors

I hope that the delegates will choose sanity and abstinence-based sobriety for our fellowship. When one thinks about it, we as a fellowship have no other purpose than choosing it, living it and passing it on.....

You can order materials and make donations, even register for convention by using your VISA, MC, Discovery or