

The Plain Brown Rapper

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The irony is that the more arrogant I am, the less able I am to offer any real answers...

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“so now what is the difference? Am I not now staying sober through exercising my control over my recovery through will power?”

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The Challenge of the 12 Steps

By Ric M.

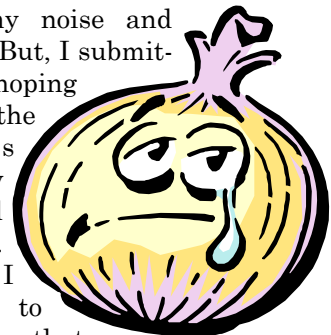
I know that often we read in the Big Book of AA or in other recovery literature the challenges of those who went before us. It encourages me many times to read these. And yet, few things were able to prepare me for what the Steps brought to my life.

I am working on Step 8 currently and this is my first time through it. I have been coming to SAA for three years now. Step One took me a long time to complete. Not because it was a difficult step to work in the sense of what was required of me. It was because I hated the thought of looking in the mirror at the pain I caused others in my life. Most of all, it was the fear of the pain I caused myself. I would have to relive those feelings (not the euphoric feelings of the addiction, but the hurt, shame, and guilt). I dreaded writing it. And yet, over a year's time, I wrote it. I remember going into the SAA meeting room the night I planned to give my First Step before the group. I was very nervous, and I was a bit tentative. And yet, as I read I wept. For myself. For those I hurt. For my Higher Power. It was cleansing. It was the way I set my burden of the addiction down. I felt truly connected to the group. From then on, I no longer sat in the room as a

stranger. These were my brothers and sisters in recovery. They encouraged me and accepted me.

Step Four was another point of pain for me. I had to write a list that was "a searching and fearless moral inventory" of myself. What a mountain to face climbing! Now I had to see my selfishness, my self-serving heart, my pride, and my fears. I had to face it in regard to the people who were close to me who I felt had wronged me. That was the last thing I wanted to do as an addict. I wanted to yell, "God, what have you gotten me into?" Were these people crazy? This was a deeper search within me. It is like peeling away the layers of the onion and the fumes irritating my nose and eyes. But, I submitted hoping that the

steps really did work. What I came to find was that they do. The more I wrote, the more I realized about myself. In the journey from Step One to Step Four (a two-year one for



The Challenge of the 12 Steps Continued

By Ric M.

me), I came to know myself better than I ever had. And, it was good for me. I could see how I played a key part in my addiction. Talking about these with my sponsor in Step Five was another weight lifted from my shoulders.

If there is one thing I can share with those just beginning the steps, it is that I got a sponsor, I have been working the

steps, and I didn't put off what I could do today. For me, sobriety came from these crucial steps and from embracing the philosophy set before me by the founders of AA. They knew what they were doing, even though they wouldn't take credit for it. I desperately need what these steps bring me. I've been thorough and have hidden nothing. It has helped to save me.

Answers

By Andrew M., Richardson, Texas

I used to think I had all the answers until I got into recovery. I somehow thought that I knew what was best for others in my isolated condition. The sad thing is that I had no answers or even a clue about what was best for my life, much less anybody else's. Arrogance is a destructive attitude and I was infected with it. How could I think highly of anyone else if I was always the best? But the subtle kind, arrogance shrouded in perceived humility, is the absolute worst and I'm sad to admit there was no antibiotic for this infection I had. I was an expert at it. It all translates into pride. The irony is that the more arrogant I am, the less able I am to offer any real answers, even if I am somehow capable.

What I've discovered in recovery is real answers: how to think, how to live, how to love. And when sadness or anxiety or compulsion overwhelms me, I now have answers for my life. One of the best tools I've found for answers is a particular meditation book dedicated to sex addiction.

This book has given me hope and inspiration – motivation for pursuing the changes that will help me become more of what I was intended to be and receive the permanent benefits for myself and those around me. The meditations in this book serve as poignant reminders of the grace that is available all the time. And I need to be reminded often since my mind is easily distracted with the mundane, the superficial, the ideal, and the

fantasy of something better.

I've come to understand and respect the introduction to one particular meditation: Eleanor Roosevelt's statement "No one can make you feel inferior without your consent." I guess recovery gives me a sense of confidence in myself and a sense that God really cares. It is as though I matter and I can really make a difference in people's lives, and I'm not just the self-deprecating worthless person I used to consider myself. This thought connects with another meditation, "I go through difficulties so that I can be helped, and so that I can later help someone else." When I know I can be an integral part of the human race, it helps me know I'm real and I matter. It's only when I'm present and healthy that I can be of value to others. I really love the promise in the Big Book, "We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it." When I see that my pain, suffering, isolation and loss have a purpose, it takes me away from my pity party and lifts me to a place where I can be meaningfully related to others on real terms in real time. This is so refreshing that it is sometimes hard to imagine that it is real. But it is such a better place to be and live.

Now I can trust in the truth of some of the other medita-

tions. What these meditations give me is the perspective of God's love. The end of one meditation says: "My life is precious because it was given to me by my Higher Power, who loves me." I was overwhelmed recently by something I feel God revealed to me. It was only possible with the growth I've discovered in recovery.

There is nothing I can do that will cause God to love me any more – no amount of endeavor, effort, works, performance or perfection – and there is nothing I can do that will cause God to love me any less – no amount of failure, sin, character defects, shortcomings or inadequacies. God demonstrates love that knows no bounds – human, earthly, physical, mental, emotional or otherwise – none of the earthly boundaries that restrict me and mankind. In essence, God's love is just simply boundless love. And I stand in the middle of both of these performance and inadequacy perspectives unequivocally and undeniably loved, experiencing something I have not experienced in this world that has been so conditional. I'm aware that I will never know the extent and mystery of this concept, but I am learning to bask in it. Ultimately, this helps me appreciate that there is no place for arrogance or guilt in my life. As a result, I'm getting a sense of what peace and serenity are.

Recovery – A Program of Action

By Jim L., Grace Fellowship, Birmingham, Alabama

The Twelve-Step program as developed initially for Alcoholics Anonymous and modified for application to SAA is at its core a program of action. The “thinking” approach is one we addicts prefer. We will think about the problem, think about the consequences, think about recovery, then we wonder why nothing is different. We continue to slip or relapse and perhaps we become discouraged about recovery. The passive approach – based on intellectual assent to the principles of recovery – is not sufficient to achieve the sobriety and serenity that we as addicts so desperately seek. Action is required! And, no one can act for me – except me!

Although the wording of the Steps could hardly be improved, focus on the specific action necessitated by each step might offer additional insights and serve as an adjunct to achieving recovery. For this purpose, I propose a list of action words – active verbs – that have helped me focus my attention on what I had to do to accomplish each step.

ADMIT

The First Step requires that I recognize a problem exists and that I actively admit that it is mine. I must own my

problem. Further, I must acknowledge that it wields a power greater than my ability to control it, and I must admit that my problem is causing consequences in my life that are becoming increasingly unmanageable. This huge, all-important step leads me to a point of surrender – a point where I am willing to seek help.

BELIEVE

The Second Step is the beginning of the spiritual journey prescribed by the program. If I am powerless to fix the problem myself, surely there is a power greater than I at work in this spectacularly complex and beautiful Universe. Otherwise I am hopelessly held hostage by the meaningless forces of chance and the cruel grasp of my own insanity. I have no reason for being and no ultimate purpose. The really good news is that this step doesn't require or even ask for commitment to religion in general or to the God of a particular belief system. I am simply asked to believe that a power higher than myself is able to do more than I can do. In the First Step, I admitted my problem was more than I could handle. When I actively believe in the existence of a power greater than myself, I can then actively hope – I am no longer hopeless, no longer helpless – and I can move forward

into the program with optimism.

DECIDE

The Third Step follows naturally from belief. If I believe God can help, I must actively decide to let Him. To do otherwise would be self-defeating at the outset. Such a decision recognizes that my will – my willfulness – is the main impediment standing between me and God's perfect moral will. My decision at this point to submit my will to God's readies me for immediate entrance into the hard part of the program – Steps Four through Six – in which I must come face-to-face with the full, painful details of my addiction and its consequences.

INVENTORY

The Fourth Step is painful but essential for progress in the program. As soon as possible after deciding to turn my will over to God, I must thoroughly and completely inventory my moral behavior – bad and good. On this step rapid action is recommended. Although the process of inventory may require several weeks, it should be done as quickly as possible to minimize the self-condemnation and depression that typically accompany this step. I find it helpful to think of this step as preparation for the confession that is essential

to redemption – the ultimate goal of recovery. Many addicts bog down at the Fourth Step. To avoid this pitfall, I would strongly encourage each person to meditate and pray fervently with a focus on sobriety, hope, and recovery during the working of this step. I found frequent communication with my sponsor was very helpful during this difficult time.

CONFESS

The Fifth Step comes as a relief if the previous step of self-examination has been thoroughly and honestly completed. To confess is cathartic when done in abject poverty of spirit and total honesty. Furthermore, extending the confession before God to a trusted fellow addict further enhances the feeling of release and ignites the hope that is so vital to recovery. I am graciously reminded that it is here – before I am half way through – that God is beginning to do for me what I could not do for myself.

SURRENDER

The Sixth Step is one I describe as the action of no-action. To surrender involves sitting back, relaxing, letting go, and being willing to turn the whole mess – character defects and all – over to God. For many of us letting go is more difficult than anything else. To the extent that we are not willing and ready to let go and surrender, however, we will

Recovery – A Program of Action

Continued

By Jim L., Grace Fellowship, Birmingham, Alabama

fall short of the peace and serenity promised in true recovery.

ASK

The Seventh Step follows immediately and takes only a few seconds. After confession and surrender, a simple prayer to ask God's mercy and guidance, as suggested in the Big Book, is sufficient acknowledgment of the work of Steps One through Six. God can and will remove our defects of character. This is a high point of the spiritual program, which will be enhanced and enriched by the remaining five Steps.

LIST

The Eighth Step prepares us for making amends and is another difficult task. It requires painful recall and, again, total honesty to list all whom we have offended. As with the Fourth Step, the Eighth is best done as quickly as possible. Delay at this point simply causes discomfort and may cause a regression in recovery or a relapse. Using the fourth step inventory as an aid to recall can facilitate the Eighth Step.

APOLOGIZE

The Ninth Step should be approached proactively, as soon as the Eighth Step list is made. The key issue here is to apologize – making amends for my own sake, which is not in any way contingent upon the recipients' responses. The Big Book is a helpful guide here, as well. Although this step may take some time to

complete, progressing to the next step should not be delayed waiting for specific opportunities to complete the ninth step.

RE-ASSESS

The Tenth Step is a wonderful reminder of my human condition and the fact that the program – like our spirituality – lasts a lifetime. Since I will never reach moral and relational perfection, I will need continually to re-assess and admit my recurring faults, errors, and offenses. Instead of causing me to feel depressed, as many find the Fourth Step does, this step serves to keep me centered, reminding me that in my imperfections I am better able to see God and ask for His will for my life.

SEEK

The Eleventh Step tells me how to attain the ongoing spirituality that I need to achieve long-term sobriety. Prayer and meditation are active ways I seek God's will, wherein lies my recovery. SAA is a spiritual program, and feeding of my spirituality is essential to healthy sexuality.

REACH OUT

The Twelfth Step actively pulls me out of myself, as I realize what God has done and is doing for me and I reach out to help fellow addicts. My self-centeredness diminishes and my concern for my fellows in-

creases. Addicts in recovery consistently testify and it has been my experience that helping other addicts is therapeutic for oneself, for as a servant I experience the full impact of the program, and my own recovery is enhanced.

I submit that the key to success in the Twelve Step program of SAA is action. The opposite of action is inaction; inaction typically means re-

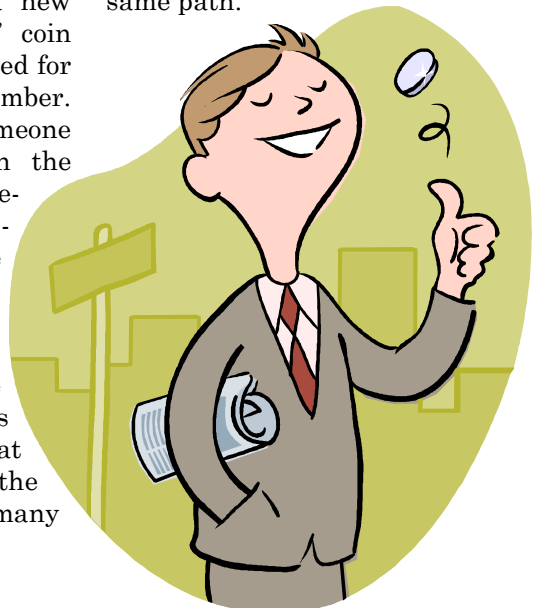
gression; and regression takes me in a direction I don't want to go – back into the addictive cycle of self-destructive behavior. If you are new or having a trying time, I support you in considering the actions described here as you read the Twelve Steps. I remember that my recovery depends on my actions. No one else can do it for me; no one can push me or shame me into it; I must take action myself!

A Notch in the Coin

By Mic H.

In one of the meetings I attend there is a tradition which I would like to see adopted by other meetings. When a member is presented with a new “From Shame to Grace” coin the previous coin is recycled for later use by another member. For example, when someone receives a one-year coin the nine-month coin is returned to the group's supply. This is a practice common in many groups; however, in this particular group a file is used to make a small notch in the coin. When the coin is once again given out that member will know by the number of notches how many

other recovering addicts have carried that coin previously. It is a powerful message that others have successfully walked the same path.



Recovery Through Will versus Will Power

By Joel

Last Wednesday I went to see a surgeon. I had never met him before but he came highly recommended by my gastroenterologist. The surgeon asked some questions, did an examination, and gave me some options. But the choice was obvious, I need surgery to fix my problem and that will happen next Tuesday. He told me that I will be in moderate pain for a while, but after that my problem will go away.

So what does that have to do with recovery or the topic I want to discuss here which is will power? More on that later.

“Will power” has always been something I wondered about. On the surface, what that term always meant to me was my attempts to try to stop my compulsive behaviors on my own and thinking I had the problem tackled and under control. In reality, though, I was never able to stop and constantly failed. The dictionary defines “Will Power” as follows: Noun. Control exercised by deliberate purpose over impulse; self-control.

So the natural question I asked when getting into recovery and continue to ask to this

day is “so now what is the difference? Am I not now staying sober through exercising my control over my recovery through will power?” My natural answer and the “recovery answer,” of course has been “No.” I do not stay sober through my own will power. In fact, starting in step 3, I have turned over my sobriety to my higher power or g-d.

But now if I am to be totally honest, I need to look into that answer a bit deeper. If I have turned it all over and am letting myself surrender to be controlled from externally, then shouldn't I just do what I am told and nothing else? By do-



ing anything else, am I not making decisions on my own again – hence, back to controlling my sobriety through will power?

This may sound like an intellectual exercise, but it is much more than the eternal debate about whether if g-d knows all, then how do men and women have free will. The issue of how I stay sober is perhaps one of the core issues and activities of my recovery.

Again – what is at stake here? It's about how do I stay sober. If I go to meetings, for example, is it because I decided to go – hence will power – or is it because something outside of me is really making me go? Do I have to believe that I am possessed, for example?

So there are lots of questions and issues, but how do I reconcile them all? How do I feel comfortable with my ability to stay sober today and be in recovery without having to say I am doing it through my own decisions?

Here is some personal insight and experience:

1. First, the main question for me is the phrase “will power.” It is crucial for me to admit that I stay sober partly through my will but that I am not in charge. I DO NOT have to give up my will to stay sober, just my “will power.” The dictionary defines will as “Faculty by which a person decides what to do.” I can decide what to do without any control. I know that deciding what to do does not make it happen. I have

to get help, team up with other people to turn the decision into action. Having a “will” to stay sober and in recovery is OK. Being in control is not – so what is not OK is the “power” in “will power.”

2. Another way of looking at this is by discounting the inverse. That is, my will is necessary but not sufficient to my sobriety. If I do not have the intention to stay sober, it is not going to happen. The 12 Steps or any program of recovery for that matter is all about changing my mindset – changing my patterns of behavior. What I learn, for example, is that to stay sober I have to (a) want to stay sober and (b) participate but not lead in the effort to stay sober. During the very long period during which I was acting out I had to control everything in my life. Being able to do anything over which I did not have total control was foreign. If I wanted to do an activity with others – even something simple like going on a bicycle ride – it required that I say where and when and for how long. If anyone else had anything to do with planning it, I would not enjoy the activity. The 12 Steps and recovery changed all that. It showed me another way of life. A way where I can be happy, where I can be content, where I can see beauty and feel good about life even if I had nothing to do with

Recovery Through Will versus Will Power Continued

By Joel

planning and controlling it. I have recently done something I never thought I would do – give up a 30-plus-year profession and start all over again. I have no clue how it will end, I do not know if I will ever be successful or even earn significant money, and I have not felt this alive and happy in about 10 years. How can that be? I should be scared out of my mind – everyone else around me is. The reasons are as I stated above – (a) I want to be a composer and producer and (b) I will participate and work hard at learning my new profession and being successful, and I am happy and content to let others help me do so.

The world is competitive, but that does not mean that I cannot let others help me succeed. I can't and don't have to do it alone. And the most important word to this new path in my life is "trust." Trust means that I don't have to know what goes on inside the box – the result is what I need to look at. Trust means when I look back at what has happened it looks good and I like the result but along the way it may not make any sense at all. Trust means that I may not be at all familiar with those (people or spiritual or other-

wise) to whom I turn over my keys to success. Trust means that my sponsor who has led many others ahead of me down the path of sobriety had the experience and background to do the same for me. I was not totally sure where he was leading me and I did not have anything concrete by which to judge his ability to do so, but letting him lead me "felt right." So as regards to will power, discounting the inverse means I have to be willing but then participate and let others do for me what I cannot do for myself. It means living in and being content in a world of contradiction – it means doing counterintuitive things – but sobriety means reprogramming, and I have to forget about what does not make sense – that is what kept me in my addiction. What now makes sense is constantly living successfully in contradiction – or, as my sponsor says, "surrender wins the war."

So here are the things I find crucial to remember:

1. Doing things requires a will to do so and I will fail if I act without intent.
2. I do not have the power.
3. I am not performing actions through will power, just will.
4. I win by living in contradiction, where things that formerly did not make sense now do.

5. I do not have to understand the solution or the messenger to get what I have come for – I do have to trust them both
6. Trust means, among other things, that I am not alone and that many have preceded me. Trust means looking at the results and being willing to go through the same box to get what I have come for.

So now what does this have to do with my surgeon and surgery? I came to him because someone I knew told me that he had expertise to address my problem. He has been doing this for a long time and knows

what he is doing. I have no clue what he does or how his process works. In fact, it is not important. I won't even be awake. What is important is that I have the intention to improve my physical health and even though I did not know him before last week, it feels right to trust him to help me get to where I want to be. Getting there is not a walk in the park. I will have much pain initially and will have to participate in making the pain go away long-term, but over time as a participant and by turning over the solution of my problem to a surgeon, I will eventually get what I have come for. And I think all of this sounds very familiar.

Towards an SAA Sobriety Definition

By Chris C. (Indianapolis, IN)

Beginning with AA, the central message of 12-Step recovery has been that any addict can quit the behavior/substance and be restored to sanity. Basic to the definition of addiction is the understanding that the addict cannot partake of the addictive behavior/substance in any way; even a little means the addict is in active addiction and is in danger of returning to the old using patterns. 12 Step recovery requires abstinence from all forms of the addictive behavior/substance.

An additional element of this core message is that through working the spiritual program of the 12 Steps, addicts will be relieved of their cravings and will not have to fight against their desires for the behaviors or substances. The Big Book of AA goes so far as to state that “If tempted, we recoil from it as from a hot flame. . . . That is how we react so long as we keep in fit spiritual condition” (pp. 84-85). By abstaining and growing spiritually through working all of the 12 Steps, our Higher Powers will free us from the addiction’s

Towards an SAA Sobriety Definition Continued

By Chris C. (Indianapolis, IN)

grip. This is the restoration of sanity.

In SAA, abstinence presents some unique challenges. While we are clear that celibacy is not the end that most of us seek, we are not clear on what abstinence does mean. The result is confusion about our core message within the fellowship. I have visited meetings and talked to SAA members for whom the operative definitions of abstinence have been: (a) stop all addictive sexual behaviors, (b). reduce their frequency, or (c) eliminate only the most dangerous behaviors. Clearly only option A. is consistent with the broader¹² Step recovery history. It is also the only option that is consistent with our First Step and Third Tradition.

Our Abstinence pamphlet is clear that each of us needs to define and abstain from all our acting-out behaviors. Unfortunately, it is possible that this is where options B. and C. creep in. The addict within misinterprets the word “define” as meaning “choosing,” thus suggesting that each of us chooses which behaviors we want to stop and which we get to keep doing. The end result has been that some of us have been led to “define” a few of our favorite

acting out behaviors into our middle or outer circles, thus equating active addiction with recovery and healthy sexuality.

To deal with this tendency, perhaps a better term would be “abstinence from all self-identified sexually addictive behavior.” Instead of “defining,” the word “identifying” recognizes that our addict has already picked which behaviors it likes. So we don’t choose which behaviors belong in which of our circles; instead we recognize our addictive behavior patterns. (For a more complete discussion of this point, see the Sponsorship Corner article in the September-October 2003 issue of the PBR.)

This sobriety definition recognizes that it is still the task of each recovering SAA member to make clear what sexual behaviors are addictive. It does not tell people what behaviors to abstain from; rather it says that to be sober means to identify and to abstain from all their acting out behaviors. This is a more honest application of the ideas of both the Abstinence and Three Circles pamphlets.

I would like to encourage all members of the fellowship to discuss this sobriety definition in their meetings and to communicate their views through letters to the PBR.

Under New Management

By Craig S., Houston, Texas

I attended an SAA meeting the other day where I heard a newcomer describe being in recovery in terms of being “Under New Management.” Wow! I lit up and had a good laugh when I heard that. Having been attending meetings for over fifteen years, I was reminded that we all help each other--long time members and newcomers alike. I never know how or when I will say something or hear something that will benefit others or myself. This is, in my opinion, the spiritual nature of our fellowship.

At any rate, when I heard the idea of being under new management, I envisioned a shopkeeper putting up a sign which announces to the public that things are going to be different at that place of business--better service, better products, better prices--you name it, the plan is to improve the functioning of that business.

How like recovery, I thought! When I came into the program, I decided to function under new management--God’s management. I decided to do what the Big Book points out--“. . . we decided that hereafter in this drama of life, God was going to be our Director.” (p.

62)

I thought humorously that I might stencil “Under New Management” on my forehead, so others would know things are changing, but then I really had second thoughts about such an idea.

I did think again about how my life is and might continue to be different as I surrendered to God’s will for

me--healthier living, more loving relationships, improved self esteem, greater peace of mind. Because I have found that all these things, and more, are possible if I will surrender the leadership of my life to a Power greater than myself.

I also know that I don’t have to stencil anything on my forehead or announce the change in any verbal way. People will know something has changed when they see my behavior--toward myself and toward others.

Thanks to a fellow recovering sex addict, I have been reminded of how much I have gained by being in recovery, how much I stand to grow when I listen to long time members and newcomers alike. And, most of all, when I remember that since admitting my powerlessness, my life has truly been “Under New Management.”





Back Up a Step

By Anonymous

“Marcus” (not his real name) is a fairly new sponsee who came to SAA after three years in another fellowship. After a few months checking us out, he realized the seriousness of his sex addiction, hit bottom and was given the gift of abstinence from his addictive behaviors. He did some great work on the first three steps in his first few months and seemed ready for Step 4.

He had worked Step 4 in the other fellowship a couple of times and we discussed what format he might use this time. His past experiences had been with the three-columns approach suggested in the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* (pp. 64 to 71). For those who are not familiar with this, it is well worth examining. Page 65 gives an example for examining resentments. The first column lists each person we resent, the second lists the specific cause, and the third identifies how it affects us. The last column

identifies effects on security, self-esteem, ambitions, personal relations or sex relations. It also notes how fear is a common and destructive thread. This can be a helpful format for doing a Fourth Step and Marcus had found it so in his other program. However, he thought maybe he wanted to try something else.

I suggested a worksheet that had been passed around which gave a list of character defects, asked for a list of manifestations of each defect and then for stories about each manifestation. Marcus wanted to try that and took off working on what he saw as one of his major defects. After writing as much as the worksheet suggested, he moved onto another defect. This is where he struggled.

Marcus found himself writing for a while and then fighting work on the inventory. He didn't feel right doing it, and was ashamed to tell me about it. When we finally did talk about it, I suggested that he try an old

piece of AA advice. The saying is, "If you are having trouble, back up a step and work on that."

He did this. He went back to his Step 3 and looked to see if this particular character defect somehow was something he would not or did not want to surrender to his HP. He spent a lot of time searching himself over this and found that while he was afraid to surrender it, he was willing to. His problem wasn't at Step 3.

We then explored backing up half of a step. In other words, Marcus went back to the first character defect to see if there was something there that was holding him up. He realized that he had a lot more to write about that particular item in his inventory. While he had written out the ten or twelve items that the worksheet had suggested, he recognized that he had more manifestations and more sto-

ries he needed to explore. It was as if that particular defect was keeping him from moving on to the next. After he went back and wrote as much as he felt he could, Marcus found that he naturally went on to the next defect and completed it.

This seems to work when peo-

ple get stuck. Backing up a step or a half step can help us find what we may be missing. Sometimes we cannot see what is interfering with our progress; the problem has not yet entered our consciousness. By backing up,

we allow our Higher Power to show us a possible source of the obstacle.

The Sponsorship Corner welcomes questions, comments or articles from any SAA member. To submit something, please send it to: pbr@saa-recovery.org or mail it to PBR Editor, c/o ISO of SAA, P.O. Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270-0949.



From the Editor

By Mike L.

Yesterday I was talking with someone about a friend and said that I had reached the decision to “let him be himself.” This is a fairly common expression that I often hear around 12-step groups and similar fellowships. The person I was talking to asked me to stop and look at that expression “let him be himself.” I knew instantly what he was getting at and started to say that he was just playing semantics. It’s true, however; even though I learned long ago that I don’t have the power to cause somebody to act out or get drunk or angry, it never occurred to me until yesterday that I don’t even have the power to let anyone do or be anything, not even himself.

Obviously, this whole issue of being okay (let’s say it that way) with a friend being himself is only going to arise when there is a conflict, a potential conflict or a conflict that I have dreamed up in my ever-active mind. I’m not going to worry about somebody being himself if that falls directly in line with what I want for him or for me or for our relationship. When the opposite happens, it’s a good time to stop and say the Serenity Prayer, as indeed it almost always is.

So I now have something else to add to my Sixth and Seventh Step list of character defects: the need to control others. Letting go of my initial resentment that I’ve got to start working on myself again--as if I had ever gotten to a point where I could stop--I’m reminded of what it says in the 12+12, that none of the Steps other than Step One can be practiced with complete perfection; Steps 2 through 12 represent ideals or goals. I’m probably going to have to keep going back to various Steps through the course of my life, not just to stay sober but to stay sane as well. And so the foundation of my life remains the 12 Steps.

These thoughts were going through my head as I was reading some of the articles submitted for this issue of the PBR; I was constantly being reminded of the power of the program and the power of the Steps. We have articles by Ric M. and Jim L. that are directly about the Steps, while many of the other articles focus on one particular Step or another. Even the articles that don’t mention a particular Step have a Step focus; for example, Andrew M.’s article on his experiences with meditation hearkens back to Step 11 and the letter that prisoner Ron K. sent in serves as a reminder of what of Step 12 asks.

One article that particularly got my attention was Chris C.’s article on an SAA definition of sobriety. It reminded me that we as a fellowship are still fairly young compared to some of the groups that have gone before us and that we still have some growth pains to

endure. Some of the material in the news section of this issue of the PBR also addresses this question of growth pains. For me at least it's a good time to once more say the Serenity Prayer, remember that my Higher Power is in charge and know that things, despite my best efforts to bend them to my will, are going to happen just the way they are supposed to.

I do think we have a particularly good group of articles for the PBR this month. Of course, the PBR can't happen without you, the members of the fellowship. By the time you read this, I will have started putting together the May/June issue and still I'll be looking for material for July/August. I'm looking more for prose than poetry and as always I'm looking for material that is about recovery, focusing on the solution rather than on the problem. If you've got an article that you started a while back and never finished, now might be an excellent time to finish it and send it along. You can send it to pbr@saa-recovery.org; the old-fashioned way still works too, so you can mail your submission to PBR Editor, ISO of SAA, P.O. Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270-0949. Please be sure to indicate on the envelope somehow that your submission is for the PBR so I'm certain to put it in the right pile of mail. If you'd like to write something for the May/June issue and haven't submitted it already, please do so as soon as you can. The May/June issue of the PBR also traditionally reports on the convention so if you want to write about your experiences there, please send in your submissions by the first few days of June. And if you'd like to write something for the July/August issue, please get it to me by early June as well.

As always, I hope you enjoy this issue of the PBR. And keep those cards and letters and e-mails (and articles) coming.



A Letter from a Prisoner

By Ron K.

Dear PBR Editor:

In the midst of writing to my long-distance sponsor, with whom I correspond through prison outreach, I had to stop and write you.

In your "From the Editor" in the September/October PBR you also addressed the issue of SAA's prison outreach program as did Tim E. in his open letter to the fellowship of SAA. Over a year ago I wrote SAA's office in Houston asking for information to help me try to get a group started here in the prison where I am. I also asked for someone who would be interested in corresponding with an inmate who was also a sex addict. Eventually I got the information and the first of many letters from the man who is now my long-distance sponsor.

As a recipient of these letters of hope and encouragement, I can empathize with Tim E.'s plea for more members to step forward and help us that are sex addicts as well as incarcerated.

Of late we have started on my three circles and my sponsor is constantly driving home that I am not unique. To paraphrase a recent letter – and I hope he won't mind my doing so – there is a solution to our

sexual addictions as well as a solution to our guilt and self-loathing . . . that being the 12-step fellowship of SAA . . . one does not have to hold in the pain of sexual addiction alone . . . there is a time to come when one will continue to move ever more deeply into the happy joyous time of being free and sober.

Because of the help this man has given me as well as that of a second man who is now writing to me, I am moving, ever so slowly, towards that day when I can say "I've been sober for . . . (X amount of time) now."

I pray that your words and those of Robert S. and Tim E. are heard and you are flooded with responses to help in SAA's prison outreach program.

It is hard enough being on the street and dealing with one's sexual addictions, but it is doubly hard being incarcerated and alone and not knowing where to turn for help.

I wish I could thank each and every one who takes the time to correspond with fellow sex addicts in prison and offering help and encouragement that there is hope and we are not alone. To quote from the Promises, "no matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others." Without those "others" we in prison will surely be lost.



ISO News



ISO Literature Committee, ISO Board, & Board Committees

ISO Board Minutes

**The Board of Trustees of the ISO of SAA, Inc.,
met via teleconference on February 10, 2004.**

The following is a summary of the meeting.

A special meeting was held to provide the Board with the opportunity to receive and gather more information related to the SAA Book Project, with the majority of the time being allotted to the authors and the editors of the SAA Book manuscript and to the Literature Committee to give them time to speak on matters they deemed pertinent to the issues at hand.

The authors and editors spoke first, followed by members of the Literature Committee who wished to do so. The final twenty minutes of the meeting were devoted to questions from the Board and staff and to discussion during which all who wished to participate did so.

Without any formal motions being introduced, it was decided by consensus that a series of meetings would be held as follows:

Date/Time: Tuesday, February 17, 7:00 p.m., Central Time
Participants: Authors and Editors

Date/Time: Sunday, February 22, 6:00 p.m., Central Time
Participants: Literature Committee

Date/Time: Sunday, February 29, 7:00 p.m., Central Time
Participants: Board of Trustees





ISO Board Minutes Continued

The Board of Trustees of the ISO of SAA, Inc., held a special meeting via teleconference on February 29, 2004. The following is a report of actions taken.

Adopted The following statement prepared and agreed upon by the authors and editors of the SAA Book manuscript and subsequently approved by the Literature Committee:

The authors and editors met by teleconference on Tuesday evening, February 17. We were able to share our thoughts and feelings honestly together, including conflicts and hurts that had been previously hidden from one another. It became clear that we all shared some responsibility for the serious problems that have beset the book project. In the past, indirect communication has been the source of much conflict and distrust between us. We have agreed to continue talking directly with each other, with a candor that had been previously missing. We have agreed that, in order for the book to be completed in a timely manner, we will work together as before, with the difference that we now explicitly acknowledge the role of the editors in producing text that embodies the decisions made at the ISO-funded retreats. All such text will be submitted to the LitCom and the authors as before. The authors will participate in the LitCom's process of feedback and suggestions for revision, and their input will be discussed and considered in a spirit of respect and cooperation. The authors and editors plan to meet for another teleconference soon in order to iron out further details of our working relationship. In the main outline we agree: we will work together to complete the book this year, with the Dallas convention as a target date for the draft to be officially submitted. We wish to express our gratitude to the members of the Board and the Literature Committee, who encouraged our meeting and prayed for us, and to our Higher Power, who does for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

Approved A motion to reinstate access by the editors to the SAA Book website.

Approved Rescinding the Board's decision to recall hard copies of both drafts of the SAA Book manuscript.

Approved Rescinding the Board's decisions to remove the SAA Book from the Literature Committee until it is resubmitted and to authorize Roger B. to consult with an attorney in regard to establishing milestones and penalties.

Approved A motion that a hard copy of the statement with actual signatures be prepared and kept in the ISO Office.

Approved A request that the editors continue to submit monthly status reports to the Board.

**The Board of Trustees of the ISO of SAA, Inc.,
met via teleconference on March 20, 2004.
The following is a report of actions taken.**

Approved The 2005 Convention logo.

Approved A motion to maintain the 2004 Convention fee schedule in 2005.

Approved Distribution of 80% of the Outreach Endowment Fund's 2003 earnings to the ISO to help pay for outreach related expenses.

Approved A raise of fifty cents per hour for Jonathan C.

Approved Authorization for the ISO Office to proceed to have the electronic meeting information on the SAA website translated into Spanish.

Approved Research of the cost of proofreading current and future SAA literature.

Approved A motion to allow the ISO Office to sell SAA literature to the Buenos Aires meetings at cost and without a shipping fee, with other requests for special pricing to be decided on a case by case basis.



ISO Board Minutes Continued

Approved A policy on Protection of Member Anonymity and Confidentiality. (The policy in its entirety appears on page 25 of this issue)

Approved Endorsement of the ISO Office's action in its handling of a recent call that involved ongoing illegal behaviors and authorization to continue in this same course until the Board's pre-convention meeting in May.

The Board's next formal meeting is scheduled to be held in Dallas, TX, on May 26 - 27, 2004.



ISO Policy

Protecting Member Anonymity And Confidentiality

1. ISO staff, trusted servants, and volunteers who perform duties or service for the ISO must take utmost care to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of all SAA members. Whether dealing with people inside or outside the fellowship, an SAA member's name, postal mailing address, e-mail address, phone number(s), occupation and any affiliations can be given out only with the expressed permission of the member and for the expressed purpose intended by the member.
2. Members who volunteer to serve as meeting contacts have expressed their willingness to be contacted by people who wish to obtain information about specific meetings. Their names and telephone numbers/e-mail addresses are not to be given out for any other purpose. Members who volunteer to have their name and telephone number/e-mail address listed on the ISO website are understood to have expressed a willingness to have this information exposed to the public. This does not mean that they have expressed a willingness to have the ISO staff, trusted servants, or volunteers give out this information for a purpose other than to obtain information about their meetings.
3. When people inside or outside the fellowship request to communicate with an SAA member for a purpose for which permission has not been expressed, with the requestor's permission, the requestor's name, telephone number and/or e-mail address, and the nature of their business should be passed along to the SAA member with whom communication is being sought.
4. When sending an e-mail to multiple addressees, use the "bcc" option for listing all addressees rather than the "To" or "cc" options. The sender's address can be listed in the "To" option. This procedure assures a member's address is not being distributed without their expressed permission.
5. Never assume it is permissible to share information about an SAA member based on familiarity with that member or based on that member's role in the ISO. For example, while it is

ISO Policy Continued

permissible to give out an ISO staff member's business phone number or business e-mail address to anyone who wishes to communicate about ISO or fellowship matters, without expressed permission to do so, it is not permissible to give out a staff member's home telephone number or personal e-mail address even for ISO or fellowship purposes.

6. It is not permitted to divulge personal information about an SAA member without their expressed permission. For example, if the ISO is in need of the services of an attorney, a member attorney's name or phone number or address should not be given to the ISO without first obtaining from the member attorney permission to do so.

ISO Income/Expense

Daily Operations February & Year To Date



ISO Literature Committee Minutes

**The ISO Literature Committee met by teleconference
on February 22, 2004.**

The following is a report of actions taken.

Approved: A statement prepared and agreed upon by the authors and editors of the SAA Book manuscript. (The statement as part of the Board minutes for February 29, 2004, which appear on page 22 of this issue)

Approved A motion to send the Tools of Recovery for translation [into Spanish].



ISO Financial News

ISO Income/Expense Summary Daily Operations January - February

This report does not include income and expenses associated with the annual ISO Convention or the Delegate Meeting nor does it include travel expenses, which are for the most part funded by the convention surplus. Money not used for travel expenses is used to fund the ISO's various reserves.

		Monthly	Year
	February	Average	To Date
Income			
Net Sales	4,017	4,538	9,074
Donations	7,072	13,950	27,897
General	4,710	11,271	22,540
LifeLine Partner	2,271	2,354	4,705
Designated	88	324	645
Miscellaneous	3	5	7
Total Income	11,089	18,487	36,971
Expenses			
Wages/Benefits/Taxes	7,043	6,679	13,355
Outreach Related	1,846	1,635	3,267
Other	4,189	4,064	8,125
Benefits	546	547	1,092
Taxes	462	437	871
Insurance	101	103	203
Committee Expense	124	172	341
Postage	313	289	576
Communications	1,171	800	1,597
Rent/Utilities	1,105	1,076	2,150
Office Related	949	1,035	2,067
Financial	420	380	758
Plain Brown Rapper	1,440	799	1,595
Literature Development	0	1	0
Translation	0	1	0
SAA Book	0	1	0
Total Expenses	12,666	11,322	22,642
Surplus/Shortfall	-1,577	7,166	14,329

After a gloomy first half in 2003, the ISO's financial picture brightened remarkably by year end. In fact, January's huge jump start in revenue (\$20,000-plus in donations!) was fueled in part by gifts that were mailed in December but processed after the New Year.

At last year's convention, the Board of Trustees told the fellowship just how critically slow the flow of donations had become. Individual members and groups responded enthusiastically, so much so that a mid-year shortfall of \$8,292 in donations became a \$1,587 budget surplus when the books were closed on 2003.

In October ISO began to catch up on reserve deposits it had not been able to make since November of 2002. January's spike was enough to complete full funding.

These events give ample reasons for gratitude but not enough for complacency. The following record of weekly gift giving so far this year charts a familiar and discomfiting trend.

Jan 01-04	\$ 415,	Jan 05-11	\$8,855,	Jan 12-18	\$6,087,
Jan 19-25	\$3,042,	Jan 26-Feb 01	\$2,282,	Feb 02-08	\$1,039,
Feb 09-15	\$2,535,	Feb 16-22	\$1,629,	Feb 23-29	\$1,465,
Mar 01-07	\$1,059,	Mar 08-14	\$2,643,	Mar 15-21	\$2,552,
Mar 22-28	\$ 315				

Had the first two weeks of this January been like the first two weeks of 2003, donations would be only \$220 ahead of last year's sluggish pace. Hopefully, this trend and pace will not continue, bringing us back full circle to where we found ourselves last May.

Notices & News Bits

More SAA Literature Translated Into Spanish; More To Come

By the time this issue of the PBR reaches its readers, two more SAA publications will be available in Spanish: *Abstinencia Y Limites En S.A.A.* (*Abstinence and Boundaries in S.A.A.*) and *La Burbuja* (*The Bubble*). These bring to six the number of Spanish translations, the others being *Sexo Adictos Anónimos*, *Los Tres Círculos*, *El Primer Paso Para La Recuperación*, and *Para Comenzar en Sexo Adictos Anónimos*.

Abstinencia (the *Abstinence* pamphlet) is now being formatted and will soon be ready. In the process of being translated are *A Special Welcome to the Woman Newcomer* and *Tools of Recovery*, both of which might be available at this year's convention.



PBR Name Change

Every now and then, discussion arises about changing the name of the ISO newsletter from The Plain Brown Rapper to something else.

Last May the 2003 ISO Delegates voted to venture beyond the discussion stage by passing the following recommendation for the Board's consideration:

"To consider changing the name of our international newsletter, The Plain Brown Rapper, taking suggestions throughout the year, and deciding on a name at next year's Delegate Meeting, using the Delphi technique."

At its meeting in August, the Board voted to accept the delegates' recommendation, thereby setting into motion the following process:

From now until the opening of the 2004 Delegate Meeting, SAA members are invited to submit suggestions for a name for the newsletter. This does not mean the name will be changed. That decision will rest in the hands of the delegates.

"The Plain Brown Rapper" is automatically one of the names submitted. It, along with all other suggestions, will be placed on a list from which each delegate will choose her or his top three choices, with a first choice receiving three points, a second choice receiving two, and a third choice receiving one. The name garnering the most points will become (or remain) the name of the ISO newsletter.

Suggestions can be called into the ISO Office (800-477-8191 or 713-869-4902 outside the U.S. and Canada), e-mailed (info@saa-recovery.org), or sent by postal mail (ISO, P.O. Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270).

Suggested names will be printed in the PBR and posted on the ISO website (www.saa-recovery.org) in the order in which they are received. Once a name is printed or posted, it need not be submitted again. There is no limit to the number of different suggestions an individual member can make.

The List thus far is:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1) The Plain Brown Rapper | 13) The Outer Circular |
| 2) The Sunburst | 14) Seeds of Serenity |
| 3) Day by Day | 15) Serenity Trail |
| 4) The Freedom Ringer | 16) The Helping Hand |
| 5) The Journal Of Spiritual SAAtiety | 17) Fellowship Chronicle |
| 6) The Liberty Lighthouse | 18) Freedom Messenger |
| 7) The Grace Of God Gazette | 19) Lift Up Your Hearts |
| 8) The New Life Times | 20) The Spirit Messenger |
| 9) Nurture News | 21) The Give-Back Gazette |
| 10) The Wings Of Grace Flyer | 22) Surrender & Service News |
| 11) New Life Lighthouse | 23) The Recovery Digest |
| 12) From Shame to Grace | 24) Hope Horizon |

How to Submit a PBR article

First:

Write from your experience, strength, and hope. Others may need to hear exactly what you have to say.

Second:

Send your article by e-mail to: PBR@saa-recovery.org

or mail to: ISO
P. O. Box 70949
Houston, TX 77270

Third:

Send the **Article Release Form** below. Download an extra from the SAA website if needed or feel free to make copies.

“Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to other sex addicts...” Step 12

Submission deadlines:

Dec. 1, Feb. 1, April 1, June 1, Aug. 1, Oct. 1

Release Form: I hereby give this newsletter, its successors, assignees, and those acting on its authority permission to copyright and/or publish any articles, poems, other written material, or art work pertaining to my personal story of recovery from addiction and my personal experience with or opinions about the SAA fellowship or program. I understand that additions may be made to my written material and that it may be changed or edited. I further understand that every effort will be made to assure my anonymity. I possess full legal capacity to exercise this authorization and hereby release the ISO newsletter from any claim by myself or my successors.

SIGNED: _____ **DATE:** _____

WITNESS: _____ **DATE:** _____

Mail to: ISO, P.O. Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270

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Sex Addicts Anonymous is a twelve-step program of recovery based on the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous. Our primary purpose is to stop our addictive sexual behavior and to help others recover from their sexual addiction. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop addictive sexual behavior. Our fellowship is open to women and men regardless of religion, race, ethnic background, marital status, sexual orientation, or profession. Our members define their own sexual boundaries with the guidance of their sponsors and other group members. We encourage our members to discover and explore what healthy sexuality means to them.

Region

Board Members

Board Alternate

Literature Committee

Lit. Com. Alternate

Great Lakes	Roger B. <i>Chair</i>	Ken S.	Elizabeth S.	Vic K.
Intermountain	Shelley K.	Jeanette W.	Chris D.	Vacant
North Central	Greg B. <i>Secretary</i>	Jim A.	Tim L. <i>Secretary</i>	Thea D.
Northeast	Phil D.	Gary C.	Tony Z.	Tom K.
North Pacific	Mary Joy S.	Tim E.	Jeff W.	Lawrence S.
South Central	Judy N.	Darryl H.	Greg G.	Nate G.
Southeast	Francie E.	Carla P.	Joe T. <i>Chair</i>	Don C.
Southern Pacific	Ed B.	Larry O.	Thom C.	David B.
At Large	Don K. <i>Treasurer</i>		Mike L. <i>(PBR Editor)</i>	