

The Plain Brown Rapper

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Our Program in Print

By Bill J., Virginia Beach

My name is Bill and I'm a Sex Addict. Recently I attended the annual SAA International Convention (business meeting of ISO Board) in New Orleans. It was a spiritual experience. I didn't get to stay for the convention itself. My intergroup, Eastern Virginia Intergroup of SAA in Virginia Beach, sent me as a delegate for the Northeastern Region. This all sounds very boring and that is what I expected it to be, just business and voting and such but in fact was just the opposite. The room seemed charged.

I was charged up because I was anticipating seeing the first edition of our new book, "Sex Addicts Anonymous," being presented Friday night. All day we voted on various issues and I couldn't wait to get a peek at our SAA basic text. The business meeting was very organized and ran smoothly. I applaud those responsible for organizing this. Roger, our ISO Board chairperson, presided and did a wonderful job. His time as chair has ended—thank you, Roger, for a wonderful job.

Friday evening the fun began. As we sat in the audience, costumed members danced in the isles and on stage in New Orleans tradition throwing beads, coins, little dolls and other things flying through the air while Cajun music played. We clapped and laughed. What a fun opening. We had a speaker

after this who was amazing--thank you for your honesty, humility and laughter as you told your story. Then the grand finale--our Basic Text of SAA was presented.

The First Edition books of SAA were given out first to people responsible for working on and finalizing the printing of our text. There were many people involved in this ten-year endeavor. Next it was our turn. I was champing at the bit to purchase one and go to my hotel room and devour it. We all lined up one by one to receive our book of gold. I took mine into the hallway and skimmed it before going into an SAA meeting. Sorry, but during the SAA meeting I read my book.

When I got back to my hotel room I read until I fell asleep and then woke up early the next morning before our business meeting began and read as I did my morning exercises. I couldn't put it down. Our SAA book does reflect our program perfectly. Thank you. The jury was out in my case until I got to see the content. I am still reading it. To my surprise, after returning home I found out that my story was in it. What a gift.

There is a lot more I can say about my experience but I'll sum it up: I met many wonderful people, I made connection with others in my Northeast Region (we can now help each other) and I got to see our "Program in Print"--a book that will save many lives and alter my sobriety as I follow its Good Orderly Directions.

Honesty, Accountability and Disclosure

By Jim L.

Honesty is the quintessential virtue to be sought by the man or woman who is serious about recovery from sexual addiction and dependency. We read that without honesty recovery is not likely and, indeed, may be impossible. In other recovery writings we find the shocking assertion that a person with a serious mental illness may even be able to recover, if he or she has the capacity to be honest. These are strong statements, and they have served as the basis of many discussions in my home group and in other twelve-step meetings I have attended. This short paper is an attempt to summarize some of the concepts and principles that have been most meaningful to me from those discussions.

First and most importantly, honesty is absolute. It is the character trait that expresses adherence to truth, and truth is absolute. As soon as I speak something that is not true, honesty is lost. A wise spiritual leader once said that a person can have his own opinion on anything, but a person cannot have his own truth. Francis Schaeffer, the leading Christian philosopher of the last century, used the term "true truth" to distinguish absolute truth from the many flawed notions about truth in our culture today. Indeed, the classical philosophical principle of non-contradiction, which has been accepted throughout the history of

recorded thought, states that the same thing cannot be true and untrue at the same time. So, by definition, truth is absolute, and by extension honesty is absolute.

Because honesty reflects truth, nothing more, nothing less, the various modifiers applied to honesty in our recovery discussions--rigorous, brutal, discreet, compassionate, tender--should be used very cautiously. Modifiers have the potential of condoning a faulty understanding of truth. For example, when I say "rigorous honesty," do I subtly imply that honesty in some form can be less than rigorous? For the sake of recovery, we must never consider anything less than honest to pass as being honest, because honesty doesn't come in degrees; it is not defined or influenced by circumstances. We either speak the truth or we do not. We are either honest, or we are not. Perhaps, instead of "rigorous honesty," we might better say rigorous attention or rigorous commitment to honesty.

The practice of honesty in the realm of human relationships, however, is much more difficult and complex than these relatively simple conceptual and dogmatic statements. Indeed, we must find ways to integrate the absolutes of our belief system into the reality of life in this world, if we are to find practical solutions to the problems that we, as imperfect beings, find in our lives. We must learn how to apply honesty in a meaningful way in order to live with ourselves and with

others in harmony and to develop lasting, healthy relationships. Never should our imperfections justify abandoning the absolutes, but obsessive contemplation of the absolutes also must not cripple our ability to function and to relate to each other. To apply honesty in our lives, two additional related topics seem to deserve consideration, namely--accountability and disclosure.

Accountability is a very simple concept, but its importance can not be understated, because it is the best way to check and validate our own honesty. Simply put, accountability is the practice of voluntarily allowing oneself and one's actions to be scrutinized without reservation by another person. We test our own honesty by using a third-party evaluator, minimizing the likelihood of denial or self-deception. Ideally, an accountability partner for a man should be a man, and for a woman a woman. For an addict and perhaps for others as well, a spouse is usually not the best choice for an accountability partner, both because the marriage relationship for an addict is already strained and because "coming clean" in a marriage may need to be undertaken gingerly under the guidance of a competent counselor to avoid over-reaction and alienation.

An accountability relationship can be established with a twelve-step sponsor or with another person who is trusted implicitly--trusted to maintain complete confidentiality and trusted to tell you what he or she really thinks, even

if it is adverse or painful. I needed someone who would see through my rationalizations, my excuses, and my flimflam--who would call a spade a spade. I needed an umpire--a referee, if you will--who would blow his whistle or throw his flag when I was out of bounds or if I committed a foul. Because lying to myself and to others was a dominant feature of my addiction, I needed help in the process of becoming honest. Accountability afforded me that opportunity.

Ideally, accountability is a two-way street. Two men or two women strike an agreement to be accountable to each other. An unequal relationship, such as between mentor and student or counselor and client, introduces different dynamics that may impede the free exchange of information. Accountability meetings should be scheduled regularly and can be accomplished in person or by telephone. Face-to-face meetings are preferred and should be used as frequently as possible, since both parties have the advantage of observing eye contact, body language, and other clues that may corroborate honesty or may suggest that a person is being less than totally forthcoming. Regardless of the mode of communication, however, a relationship of openness and acceptance is essential for achieving the true intimacy necessary for successful accountability--indeed, for genuine friendship.

Disclosure is a much more complex issue. It refers to voluntarily providing information about oneself to another person or persons. Two questions immediately surface,

Honesty, Accountability and Disclosure Continued

By Jim L.

“How much do I tell?” and “To whom should I tell it?” After experiencing the dramatic relief of telling others about my sexual addiction in my early twelve-step meetings, I almost felt a compulsion to tell my whole story to anyone and everyone who would listen. That was a very bad idea! As I learned, everyone is not prepared to accept the kind of information sex addicts might share in the mode of full disclosure. In addition, a principle found in the ninth step seems to apply here, as well – to avoid harm to others in the course of our recovery.

Honesty should always be practiced in disclosure. Although we should never fabricate an explanation for our behavior, we are not obligated to volunteer more information than a person needs to know under a particular set of circumstances. In a marriage relationship the goal must be full disclosure. True intimacy is probably not possible in the absence of full disclosure. All circumstances, however, do not require full disclosure. Casual friendships, business relationships, and social interactions do not always require full disclosure. This point is vividly illustrated by the experience of a friend who is a convicted sex offender but who is now in recovery. He had a painful experience after voluntarily giving full disclosure to the governing body of a particular church. Gripped with concerns about li-

ability, the church officers developed an elaborate list of prohibitions, which included restricted access to church facilities and functions and applied continuous monitoring of him while at church. He and his family were stigmatized and became, in effect, outcasts within their own church. I would be hard-pressed to see any benefit that resulted for him or his church from his full disclosure. Disclosure, however, must be given, when required by law, as may be the case for sex offenders who are on probation or supervised release.

Consultation with a competent counselor about the extent and style of disclosure under a particular set of circumstances is strongly recommended. Counselors who have experience with sex addicts and sex offenders will be sensitive to the hazards and the legal implications of disclosure, and their advice is well sought. Your sponsor and accountability partner may also be of assistance in planning disclosure, especially as it relates to working of the first, fifth, and ninth steps of the SAA program.

In conclusion, honesty is essential to recovery. Let us resolve to be honest. Accountability provides a useful tool for achieving honesty. Disclosure, when done honestly, thoughtfully, and discreetly, improves our ability to develop and maintain healthy, meaningful relationships – an important adjunct to recovery.

Distractions

By Santi L.

We are all guilty of being distracted. We are all guilty of working on the things we consider vital and important--only at the expense of our relationship with God

Being distracted from God means being preoccupied with someone or some thing to such an extent that we experience a degree of separation from God. Sometimes these distractions come from evil temptations while at other times they come from our motivations and mind-sets.

Not all distractions are alike. There are times when the sinful lures of the world distract us and turn our attention away from God. We can also be distracted by our own good intentions. Our work, families, hobbies, even our service to church have the potential to distract us from God.

“Lower-level” temptations toward immorality, lust, pride, gossip, deceit and the like distract us from God. These temptations tell us we need to do this certain action to be fulfilled, or that we have a right to do it, even though we know that it may well be opposed to the way God would have us think and act. Whether they come from the devil or our own fallen nature, these temptations deceive us by encouraging us to focus only on the supposed benefit of the temptation. Then, when we have given in to them, they prey on

our consciences, often leading to a most bitter aftertaste filled with guilt and shame.

Generally, the lower level distractions are not too hard to spot. By contrast, the higher level ones, the ones that are rooted in good intentions are murkier. We can become distracted from God when we allow our responsibilities, our goals and the normal demands of life to dominate our minds and pre-occupy us. Work, financial issues, our homes, our marriages, our families; as important as these activities and responsibilities may be, they too turn our attention away from God by offering a false sense of security or fulfillment.

If we wish to grow closer to God, then we need to address both the lower-level distractions as well as the higher-level ones.

It sounds like a lot of hard work, doesn't it? Before we lose hope in managing our distractions let's call upon God for help. Let's pray for discernment, quiet to still our hearts and the courage to take the appropriate action, even if it means not getting something we really want. He stands ready to give us the grace we need to overcome these distractions that keep us from experiencing the intimacy with Him that is there for the taking.

The Wall-That's-Not-a-Wall

Submitted by Van B.

I have been in need of recovery for many, many years, despite the fact that I have lied and denied the addiction for as long as I could. It is with this resistance in mind that I submit a short essay written by my wife about what it has been like for her to live with me as an addict. Without her holding this very sharp and clear mirror up to my behavior, I would have continued to deny the very thing I need most...honesty.

Today, at our Saturday meeting, I summarized what was in this essay and told the group that I have been a liar and have been secretly plotting not to change but merely to figure out how not to get caught. Changing while not changing is a very tricky skill but I have mastered it for all these years. Now is the time to change and I thank her for showing me who I had become.

The title of the essay is: The Wall-That's-Not-a-Wall, which follows:

February 28, 2002

There's an image that came to me that very accurately conveys the gradual insidious nature of addiction in my relationship with my husband. This perfectly captures for me what living with an addict is like as well as the perverse effect it has on each of us.

I see my husband and me in a large field. Around us are some small stones. Soon there are more, and they are easy to step around. In fact, they are hardly in the way at all.

In a little while, a few stones are stacked on top of each other. It's a loose arrangement, hardly worth mentioning. So I don't.

Pretty soon it looks like there's the beginning of a wall, but when I mention it, my husband tells me it's not a wall. It only looks like a wall. He's just stacking a few stones randomly. He's sweet. He smiles to reassure me.

After a while, the wall-not-a-wall is ankle high, but it's easy to step over, especially since it won't get any higher. Not much is said, but who cares? It's not a wall.

Years go by and the wall is waist high, then chest high, then neck high. But my husband and I can still talk to each other over the wall-that's-not-a-wall. We're kind and considerate, but not loving or truthful: he never admits it's a wall, and I never insist that he tear it down.

One day I notice that the wall is high above my head. I call to him, and he laughs and tells me his stack of stones got out of control. He makes me dinner, and tells me he loves me. The wall stands firm.

One day I get curious. I start really looking at the wall-that's-not-a-wall, which I must admit looks exactly like a wall. Its length

is just a bit longer than my arms. I walk to one end and discover that parallel to it is another wall just as high. Parallel to the end of that wall is another wall just as high. Parallel to that wall is another wall just as high. I return to where I started and realize that he hasn't built a wall. He's built a fortress, a windowless, doorless prison.

When I look up, I see his face. He smiles, waves and blows kisses. He slides the roof over his head and anchors it in place. When I speak to him now, he doesn't answer. I don't think he can hear me.

That's what it's like for me to live with an addict.

Van B. continues:

Now comes the hard part. I have taken each of the many lit-

tle stones that made up my wall and thrown them out...for the last time. I can do this because I can do almost anything one day at a time, one hour at a time. That's the way for me to be strong and brave and begin to have even a slight chance of success.

After over 55 years of addiction, I can break free and exercise some healthy choices. As my therapist says, "The pains you are trying to medicate with masturbation will remain for a long, long time. They may never go away. The question facing you now is, 'So what are you going to do about it?'"

My motto has become: meditate, don't medicate. Clearly my addiction has been my attempted solution, not my real problem. It is time to address the real problem and not run away from it.



A “God” Moment and Guilt

By Jeff R.

In the relatively brief time that I have been involved in SAA, I have found that guilt seems to be a common thread of the men who struggle with sexual addictions. From what I’ve observed, the vicious cycle of preoccupation, ritual, acting out, and despair/guilt have been common patterns of the men in my support group.

It has taken me a long time to reach an understanding of my God as one who does not want me to feel guilty. The God of my understanding wants me to draw close to him and feel his forgiveness and grace. Just recently, I had what I call a “God” moment when I truly felt the presence of God with me and his direct intervention in my life. It all focused around this concept of guilt.

I was sitting in the back of church during the service and the message was based on the concept of not worrying about tomorrow. Let me preface that I went to church that morning feeling extremely guilty from my acting out behaviors during my marriage and for hurting my family. During the service, I felt tears welling up a few times, but nothing severe. The tears were not tears of conviction, but from the guilt that I felt. At the end of the service, during the altar call, I felt compelled to go to the front of the church to just kneel before God and pray, but something kept holding me back.

I saw a gentleman in the front row go to the altar and approach

one of the musicians, but I didn’t think anything about it. I have seen both men before at church, but did not know either one of them. The next thing I knew, one of them approached me and said that he felt led by God to ask me to come down to the altar and pray with me. He asked if I would be willing to go to the front and through my tears I nodded my approval.

When we reached the altar, the musician met us and they both again asked if they could pray for me. At that moment, my tears became stronger and I lost any composure that I had. Both men put their arms around me and just held on until I could begin hearing their prayers. This was their prayer, “Lord we ask you today to remove the guilt from this man’s heart that has kept him bound for so long. We don’t know what his struggles are, but we know that guilt is keeping him from drawing closer to you, so we pray that you remove this from him.” These were two men who did not know about my sexual addictions and the guilt that I was feeling. They went on to pray for my strength, my healing, and my family, but their ultimate request was for God to lift the guilt.

I processed this for several days and realized that guilt was holding me back from healing and from my relationship with

God. I still have days where I feel guilt and remorse, but I am now able to keep those feelings in perspective and not be so condemning of myself. I have shared this story with the SAA group that I facilitate and have seen God begin working in their

hearts as they also struggle with guilt.

It was this "God" moment that reassured my Step 2 statement, "We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity."

Overcompensation

By Scotty W.

My wife and I had a very helpful conversation today, and I thought I'd share. As always, take what you like....

Early in my recovery, I wrestled with terrible feelings of insufficiency (as I'm sure many do). During these times, I remember hearing myself frequently saying "I need to do such-and-such" or "I need to talk to so-and-so," in my conversations. Problem is, if I didn't accomplish something I said I "needed" to accomplish, I would beat myself up for not doing something I "needed" to do, which allowed me to further reinforce my negative image of myself.

Recently, I noticed I was taking a totally different viewpoint on the "I need to" issue. I've come to recognize this phrase as one of the former self-defeating "traps" in which I caught myself, and now I try not to use it, because of my sensitivity to the phrase. (So far, so good, right??).

However, when other people--like my loving wife--use the phrase "We need to..." anywhere near me, I get all prickly, and

react in a way that seems almost offensive, as if I'm defending myself from some terrible adversary or threat. The phrase still has an affect on me.

I feel I'm over-compensating on the entire "need to" issue.

Early in my recovery, this phrase was a setup for a personal put-down, mainly my feelings that I couldn't accomplish the things that "needed" to get accomplished. Later in recovery, I just avoided using the phrase. But now I'm coming to realize that NEITHER approach is particularly healthy.

This is yet another example of how my "black or white" perfectionist thinking is being challenged by the multitude of grays that exist in real life. Is change comfortable? Not really. Is change difficult? Definitely. Is change worth it to me?

Absolutely.

Be well.

Lifting the Obsession

By Olin T.

I have been a member of the SAA fellowship for twelve years, and in the program almost fourteen. During that time I have worked the program (to varying degrees), and heard countless shares. One of the things I learned was to pray to my higher power for the obsession to be lifted, not to ask to be “cured.” Year after year I added this plea to my prayers. Sometimes it was the only thing I prayed for. But as the years went by, the obsession stayed with me. I learned to set it aside for days or weeks at a time, but it always came back. I began to wonder if I was really dedicated to the program, or was perhaps constitutionally incapable of being sober for extended periods.

I have never considered myself a slow learner, but in this case I developed a type of tunnel vision that prevented me from learning the lesson I was seeking to understand. In hindsight I see that I was trying to use the force of my will to remove my compulsive obsession. By wanting the obsession to be lifted with every ounce of my being, I assumed it could be removed. It did not occur to me that this contradicted the wisdom of the program that I couldn't recover myself, but need the help of a power greater than me. I simply assumed if I was asking HP to remove the obsession, I was seeking such help. But in reality I wasn't open to my Higher Power's

help: I was so busy trying to shove the addict out the door myself I couldn't even listen to my higher power. Forgotten were the stories about God's will being communicated in a still, small voice. How could I hear a quiet message while I was screaming, begging and pleading in a very loud manner?

It is hard to say what changed. Perhaps I simply grew so tired of the struggle that I had to stop and rest, and in that quiet moment I finally heard the voice of my Higher Power. This is likely, because it happened after a fresh “bottom” for me. Finally I was at the point where I had had enough. The pain of acting out was worse than the discomfort of withdrawal and learning new ways of taking care of myself. It was then that the thought slowly spread through my mind that I was looking for the wrong thing. I was expecting my prayers to be answered by a sudden removal of all (or at least most) desires to act out. I could be locked in a room full of fantasy sexual partners and be disdainful and disinterested. Then I would know my Higher Power had lifted the obsession. It did not happen this way. What I realized was that I was powerless over my compulsions, that I alone could not always find the strength to say no to them. But with the help of my Higher Power and the program, I could find the serenity to step out of the fog of the obsession and make a sensible decision about my path forward. I realized that,

when I used my program, I had the ability to make a decision whether or not to act out. This did not mean I would not act out, but now the choice was mine and I was no longer doomed to act out whenever I had the opportunity. This lifting of the obsession was moving from a state of powerlessness to the realization that a power greater than myself could restore me to sanity--so long as I made the decision to turn my will over and let that happen.

Since this finally sank in,

I have achieved the best period of sobriety I have ever experienced. Most of that has been achieved in serenity, not through white-knuckling. The addict isn't down and out yet, though. Turning my will over and realizing that my decisions have to be guided by wisdom beyond my own, with my willing cooperation, is a daily or even hourly or minute by minute event. The temptations will not go away. But I have the support and tools I need to make wise choices in my life, thanks to the program.

Feel the Pain, Live the Moment

By Mike B.

Feel the pain, live the moment
 Don't hide behind your addict's lies
 Don't allow yourself to act out
 It's your addiction, in disguise

Feel the pain, live the moment
 No matter the hurt inside
 Remember your addict fought against
 All the tears you've never cried

Feel the pain, live the moment
 Only in facing what we fear
 Can we conquer our addict's urge
 And begin to see things more clear

Feel the pain, live the moment
 For this is where recovery rests
 Step-by-step and day-by-day
 Overcoming our addict's tests

Feel the pain, live the moment
 You will get through, you will survive
 The hurt is but a reminder
 You feel pain, because you're alive

May 13, 2005

Step 5 Worksheet

Submitted by Anonymous

[Editor's Note: The following article represents a method of working Step 5 that has worked for some members of our fellowship.]

Step 5:

Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

Overview: Step 5 is usually an oral presentation of Step 4 to a sponsor. This sheet is a preparatory list for making that oral presentation. It may help to have step 4 with you as you fill out this worksheet.

1. List ways you communicate with your God or Higher Power.
2. Have you reviewed your step 4 list of wrongs? Have you admitted to yourself all those you have harmed?
3. What are your thoughts about an admission to God that may not be an admission to yourself. Is it possible to admit to yourself and not to God?
4. You will need another human being to make your admission of wrongs.
 - A. List some important character traits of the person you will select.
 - B. List some characteristic of the person you admit to that may be deter your being honest and candid.
 - C. List a few people or type of people who might be selected to hear your fifth step. (Examples: your sponsor, a trusted SAA member, a clergy member, a sibling, etc...)
 - D. List some people who you would not want to hear your fifth step and why. (Example: A past acting out partner, an employer, a police officer, etc...)

5. Explain the difference between being explicit and being exact. Is it possible to be explicit in a manner that lets you be inexact? Explain:
6. Consider where and when you would feel most comfortable in giving your 5th Step. Describe such a place. Explain why.
7. Have you practiced giving your 5th Step? Have you timed it? If not, do you have an idea how much time you'd like to set aside to give your 5th Step. How much time do you want?
8. (optional) In some cases, a support person has been asked to attend the 5th step. This person is not there to hear your step but there to provide you with moral and emotional support. If you were to include a support person, describe some of the characteristics and what support you would ask.
9. To complete this list... write the specific names of people you are considering asking to hear your 5th Step.
10. Set a date by which you will select a person to hear your 5th Step.

11. Set a date by which you intend to ask this person to hear your 5th step. _____
12. Who will hear your 5th Step? _____
13. Where will you give your 5th Step? _____
14. When will you give your 5th Step? _____
15. If all of the above spaces are blank, what fear is making you reluctant to fill in some person, place, or time?

Step Three

By Jim H.

“Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understand Him.” I guess the question is how do I work this step in my daily life and how have I done it in the past. Its meaning is pretty clear since I’ve been studying these same words since July 23, 1987. The first part involves making a decision to turn towards God and away from self, selfishness, self-will, self-reliance, self-serving, etc. It asks me to decide if I want to go in the direction of the light or continue on in the direction of darkness.

The tricky part is that often I have a certain affinity for the darkness and habits grow comfortable even if they lead to self-destruction. So of myself I am unable to really do this. I need to get help from God, however I may understand God. It is comforting to know that this step asks me to turn myself to His care and not his stern, austere, demanding, unloving direction.

To me, this is a promise that I’ll be loved, rocked and cradled even if I place my trust in Him. From experience, I know that it doesn’t always feel like that at the time. Giving up lifelong habits can be an emotionally and psychologically painful experience.

This step asks me to turn over my entire being, “my will and my life” to God, because I am really sick in this and many other areas. Half-baked efforts and surrenders will get me nowhere, and for success here I need nothing less than a complete surrender to God. Then I am promised that He will love me and see me through. More importantly, out on the other side I will find a new life that is indescribably wonderful, full of integrity, happiness, and usefulness. If I do this step, and then do it again if I feel my commitment to God’s will faltering, I can find recovery from my addiction. Of course, I need to move on to Step 4 as part of my commitment to do God’s will and not just my own.

That Well-Known Vacuum

By El Rojo

On page 26 of the Green Book, as part of the discussion of the Second Step, there is some mention of the various stumbling blocks that some of us have encountered in developing spiritual beliefs and in particular in grasping a concept of a Higher Power. Step 2 of the AA 12+12 goes into

even more detail on these difficulties. I have had most of these difficulties at one time or another. In fact, when I first got into 12-step recovery, I had a very difficult time with the concept of a Higher Power. I had to make the group my higher power and it stayed my higher power for some time.

I have heard time and time again at meetings that all of us have a "God-shaped vacuum." I might have been more skeptical of this idea were it not for an experience I had some five years before I first got into recovery, and I thought I would share it here.

Back in the mid-80s, when I was still searching for some things to do with my life that could at least occupy my time when I was not acting out (I had not successfully found a way to act out 24 hours a day, or even just during all my waking hours, hard as I had tried), I got involved with the local public access radio station. I really enjoyed my involvement there, and at one time or another stepped into all the aspects of the station. I started out just helping take pledges during the fund drives and organizing the record collection, and as time went on I started doing more on-air things. I did almost all the programs they had at one time or another: talk shows, news shows, gay shows, the drive-time show on one 4th of July (which kept me from acting out on the particular day, another story for another time), even programs in Spanish. I even had my own program in the middle of the night for a couple of years. Speaking into a microphone came very easy to me, especially after all the things I had said into CB microphones for the past couple of years as part of my addiction. At least everything I was saying now

was legal; it also helped that on FM radio nobody can talk back.

One program I was never involved with was the atheist program. I considered myself an agnostic although I never dared cross that invisible line into atheism. Even before recovery, I easily grasped the concept "Who are you to say there is no God?" certainly applied to me. From hanging out at the station, I did make friends with some of the folks who did the atheist program and toward the end of that December they invited me to their Winter Solstice party.

I went, and there were some 20-30 people in attendance. To my utter amazement, there was only one topic of discussion the entire evening: an entity which most of them chose to call God. I moved from conversation to conversation and all the conversations were about God. Granted, these were more along the lines of philosophical discussions, some tinged with anger, and still, God was the topic of the evening. And a lot of these folks had a much stronger concept of God than I could have ever hoped to at the time.

When I left at the end of the gathering, I clearly had not come up with any concept of God. That would have to wait until I got into 12-step recovery and even then I resisted for a long time. Still, when I began hearing about the God-shaped vacuum in all of us, my mind went back to this gathering. I certainly had seen one group of atheists who demonstrated this vacuum loud and clear.

From the Editor

By Mike L.

Greetings once again from sunny and beautiful Ft. Lauderdale. I think I said in the last issue of the PBR that I fully expected to be back in Houston by June 15. Well, that date has come and gone and I'm still here. It does look like there's an almost 100 percent chance that I'll be back in Houston by July 15. I'll have to wait and see. Things did turn out well here in terms of what I came down here to help work on, and I'm grateful for that. Now we're in the process of packing up the office and basically winding things up. Four and a half months is a long time and it's almost over.

After some constant going back and forth in my head as to whether to leave Ft. Lauderdale for a week and attend the convention in Houston, I ultimately decided to stay here. I had my doubts all along as to whether it was the best decision, and I followed the progress of the convention in my mind throughout that particular weekend.

As I think I said in the last issue of the PBR, I've attended every convention since Ann Arbor in 1995 and I still remember the Friday of that weekend as one of the most beautiful days I've ever experienced anywhere, both in terms of the actual weather and also just the excitement of being at the Delegate Meeting.

The principal thing I missed at this year's convention was being able to be present for the presentation of the Green Book, otherwise known as our SAA book. I still remember the excitement of the first convention workshop dedicated to brainstorming ideas for the book, back in Minneapolis in 1996. I did have a chance to go by the office a couple of weeks after the convention was over and pick up a copy of the book. It was wonderful to finally see the book and hold it in my hand. It's a fantastic book and one that I've been very proud to read. I'm very grateful to the many generations of Literature Committee members who toiled over this book, and I think the result was well worth it.

I think the greatest lesson I've gotten from missing this year's convention was being reminded that recovery goes on. I'm sure that somewhere in the back of my head there was a voice telling me that the convention really couldn't happen unless I was there. And yet when I visualized the convention during that weekend, I could sense it happening, I could feel the members of the fellowship that I had asked to cover my responsibilities doing just that and I was okay with all of it. Similarly, I never felt that my recovery was any less strong just because I was not experiencing the wonderful atmosphere of this year's convention. Recovery goes on and life goes on.

I've finally had a chance to assess how I've been affected by having my daily routine affected for over four months and what things in my life have turned out to be the most irreplaceable.

One of the items on the list has been music. My partner suggested that I at least bring a portable CD player with me and my response was "I don't need it." It didn't take me long to realize that I did, and once I had done all the tourist-type things that I was interested in I still felt that certain emptiness resulting from a lack of music in my life. So I ended up buying a portable CD player down here and building a small library to keep me going. I'm planning to do more with music in my life once I get back to Houston.

Another item on my short list of what I have really missed is being with my partner. We've had a very enjoyable life together for the last couple of years and have done our best to keep things going by regular phone conversations. Things have been rough from time to time and now that I'm almost home I think we're going to make it.

The third and final item has been recovery. Because I've chosen to do my time down here on foot, giving me at least a little exercise along with the not-always-healthy food we eat, I haven't been able to make any meetings in person. I've made up for the lack, to an extent at least, by reading from some of my daily meditation books. They've been a real blessing to me.

Anyway, these are some of the experiences and benefits I have had as a result of not attending the convention this year. I have certainly received gifts, and next year I'm looking forward once again to receiving the gift of the convention.





ISO News



ISO Literature Committee, ISO Board, & Board Committees

Notices and News Bits PBR Subscription Renewal

Last year the ISO spent \$10,194.00 to print and mail hard copies of the PBR to the approximately 1,740 individuals and groups on its mailing list. In order to keep the mailing list up to date, at least once each year the ISO requests verification of address. We know the newsletter is getting delivered. What we do not know is whether or not it is being read.

The ISO Board wants people to receive the PBR free, but it does not want to use the fellowship's valuable resources to mail it to individuals and groups who are not actually reading it. With this in mind, at its meeting in New Orleans, the Board directed the ISO Office "to put a notice in the next two issues of the *Plain Brown Rapper* to individuals and groups that anyone who wishes to continue to receive a copy of the PBR must notify the ISO Office and to publish this notice annually." The second of two notices appears below.



ATTENTION ALL GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS **WHO RECEIVE *THE PLAIN BROWN RAPPER!***

Unless you notify the ISO Office by September 15, 2005, that you wish to continue to have the newsletter mailed to you, your name and address will be removed from the PBR mailing list.

**Mail your request to continue to receive the PBR to
ISO, P.O. Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270**

Phone in your request to continue to receive the PBR at 800-477-8191

**E-Mail your request to continue to receive the PBR to
info@saa-recovery.org**

The PBR will continue to be posted on the ISO website
(www.saa-recovery.org) for viewing and downloading.



ISO Financial News

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 intended to be funded by the convention surplus and delegate fees. Any convention surplus not used for travel expenses is used to fund the ISO's various reserves.

ISO Income/Expense

Daily Operations - June & Year To Date

Income	June	Monthly Average	Year To Date
Net Sales	12,069	7,920	47,521
Undesignated Donations	10,275	9,162	54,976
General	7,573	6,338	38,035
LifeLine Partner	2,702	2,824	16,941
Miscellaneous Income	10	33	199
Total Income	22,354	17,116	102,696
Expenses			
Wages/Benefits/Taxes	8,415	8,388	50,329
Wages - Outreach Related	1,161	1,816	10,894
Wages - Other	5,319	4,470	26,819
Benefits	1,376	1,555	9,332
Taxes	559	547	3,284
Insurance	519	211	1,264
Board/Committee Expense	584	648	3,886
Postage	167	288	1,730
Communications	462	434	2,605
Rent/Utilities	1,184	1,098	6,587
Office Related	813	620	3,724
Financial	829	515	3,090
Plain Brown Rapper	92	770	4,617
Translations	0	163	975
Total Expenses	13,065	13,135	78,807
Surplus/Shortfall	9,289	3,981	23,889



ISO Financial News Continued

Sales of *Sex Addicts Anonymous* have been even better than expected. The first printing sold out early in the month and a second printing was on order. With orders continuing to stream in, a third printing was made as soon as the second arrived. The injection of cash could not have come at a better time.

The \$4,693 netted by the 2005 ISO Convention and the \$3,976 paid in delegate registration fees were not nearly enough to offset the \$18,558 needed to pay for the Delegate Meeting and the travel expenses of staff, Board, and Literature Committee members. It took June's entire surplus to make up the difference. This is the second consecutive year the convention and delegate fees have not generated the surplus needed to pay for travel expenses and the Delegate Meeting, prompting the Office Oversight Committee to undertake a review not only of the income and expenses of the Convention and Delegate Meeting but also the financial goals of the two events. The committee's findings will be presented to the Board of Trustees.

The introduction of *Sex Addicts Anonymous* in New Orleans had a chilling effect on convention sales of non-SAA literature. Most of the inventory had to be shipped back to the ISO Office. The trend continued in June, which saw non-SAA literature sales drop 50%. For many years, non-SAA literature has been an important source of ISO income, with half of the gross profit from these sales being used to help build up the prudent reserve. The Board anticipated the loss of as much as half of all non-SAA literature sales once *Sex Addicts Anonymous* became available and took this into account when setting the sales prices for the new book. This provides part of the answer to a question that has been posed by several members, namely, "How did the ISO arrive at the prices it charges for the Green Book?"

Six elements were factored in when setting the sales price of *Sex Addicts Anonymous*. These were cost from the printer, freight, outreach, loss of non-SAA literature sales, royalties, and desired income margin. A brief definition of each cost might be helpful.

The cost from printer and freight are self explanatory and are set by the respective vendors of these services. The 15% royalty paid to the anonymous manuscript authors is a contractual obligation established when the book project was originally launched in 1995. Outreach costs are based on recent history of prisoner requests for free SAA literature.

The loss of income element results from the anticipated drop in non-SAA literature. The desired income margin simply means the surplus needed from each book to help pay for carrying out the work of the ISO. Last year ISO daily operating expenses were \$181,560. Approximately one-fifth of these expenses was covered by the income margin of literature sales.

The sales price of the soft cover version of *Sex Addicts Anonymous* is the result of the following calculations:

Cost from printer:	2.35	16.8% of price
Freight	.18	1.2% of price
Outreach	.66	7.1% of price
Income Loss	3.00	21.4 % of price
Royalties	2.10	15.0% of price
Desired Margin	5.71	40.8% of price
	14.00	

Corresponding figures for the hard cover version:

Cost from printer:	3.98	22.0 % of price
Freight	.18	1.0% of price
Outreach	.66	3.7% of price
Income Loss	3.00	16.7 % of price
Royalties	2.70	15.0% of price
Desired Margin	7.48	41.6% of price
	18.00	

So far, the profit margin has made up for the shortfall in convention surplus and delegate income, while providing the cash flow needed for up front payment of the second and third printings. Also, in May and June, the profit margin has made it possible to set aside \$4,099 toward the cost of translating *Sex Addicts Anonymous* into Spanish, a project that will take an estimated \$15,000.

Hopefully, such good news about the success of the Green Book will not make the need for individual and group Seventh Tradition donations seem less necessary. First, while the income margin from literature sales paid for one-fifth of last year's operating expenses, donations still had to pay for about three-fourths! Second, sales figures thus far are probably at their highest level possible. Members and groups are still ordering first copies. Once these demands have been filled, orders will likely decrease noticeably, coming predominantly from newcomers and people outside the program.



By the time this issue is being read, the 2006 Convention website should be operational. Call the ISO office for details. Once there, members will be able to register online or use the registration information to register by phone (800-477-8191). For those who prefer to register by mail, the registration can be downloaded. There will also be a special convention mailing in September.

Cutting Costs

In order to reduce printing costs, only the registration form will be mailed this year. Forms for speakers, workshop presenters, and talent show participants will not be included in the special mailing or inserted into future PBRs. The forms will be posted on the convention website for downloading and will also be available from the ISO Office upon request.

Financial Assistance Grants

Here is a refresher on the policy for financial assistance grants. Each year, twenty-five members receive financial assistance in the form of a free convention registration, this year worth \$140. These grants are awarded on a first-come-first serve basis. Because the awards are a one-time benefit, those who received financial assistance last year are ineligible for future assistance. So far, three members have already requested and received financial assistance grants for the 2006 Convention. Taking advantage of this offer could not be easier. Simply call or e-mail the ISO Office and make the request. Procrastinators beware! These grants get taken quickly.

Hotel Reservations

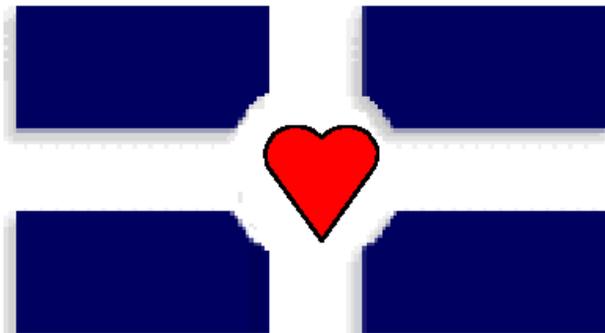
For those who are certain they will attend next year's convention, now is not too early to make hotel reservations. Visit the Convention website or call the ISO office to find out more about the hotel.

Agenda Item Request

Each February the ISO publishes the *Call to Convention*. This document provides all the information needed by delegates to participate in the annual Delegate Meeting. Among other things, it contains all New Business that has been received by the January 31 deadline for submitting such items. New Business items are important, because they are published in the *Call to Convention* and take precedence over any Additional Business items submitted after the January 31 deadline, including those items submitted during the Delegate Meeting itself. In order to give all individual members and groups the opportunity to submit New Business items the New Business Item Request Form is printed on the next page and is also being inserted with this issue of the PBR.

Guidelines for Submitting New Business Items to be Considered at the 2006 ISO of SAA Delegate Meeting

All items are to be submitted in writing to the International Office by January 31, 2006. Items received after that date will be kept for consideration as Additional Business.



Healing at the Crossroads

NEW BUSINESS ITEM

(Short Title)

Champion's Name: _____
(Can be SAA individual member, group, intergroup, committee)

Proposed Motion: (Proposed motion just as intended to be voted on by delegates)
“ _____

_____”

Issues/Background:
(Whatever the champion deems relevant to the issue, e.g., presentation of an existing situation or policy, why change is needed, how the proposed motion makes that change. This part should be concise but can consist of one or more paragraphs. In short, here the champion is "speaking for" the motion.)

Other Concerns:
(Perhaps the proposed motion will impact another area, e.g., a significant rise in expenses or loss of revenue. Perhaps the champion foresees what some of the objections to the motion might be and wants to address these objections beforehand.)

Priority:
(Some actions need to be taken immediately, others can be implemented over time, others still might be contingent on some other action taking place.)

Please do not hesitate to call the ISO Office at 800-477-8191 with any questions you might have.

Mail Or E-Mail New Business Agenda Items To:

ISO, PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270
or
info@saa-recovery.org

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

3890-D North Freeway
Houston, TX 77022

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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

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Board Alternate

Literature Committee

Lit. Com. Alternate

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