

# The Outer Circle

The Official Newsletter of the  
International Services Organization of SAA, Inc.

PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270

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**THE ISO ENCOURAGES GROUPS TO REPRODUCE THE OUTER CIRCLE SO THAT COPIES WILL BE AVAILABLE TO ALL MEMBERS. THE OUTER CIRCLE IS MAILED FREE TO ALL WHO REQUEST IT.**

**MEMBER DONATIONS ARE GRATEFULLY ACCEPTED.**



## *Inside this issue:*

### ISO News Section

ISO Board Actions	2
Women's Outreach	3
Men's Outreach	4
Young Adult Outreach	5
Regional Events	5
2008 Convention	6
SAA Basic Text Now Available in Spanish!	8
Fundraising	9
ISO Financial News	10
Organizational Information	30
E-mail Addresses	31
How to Submit a PBR article	32

### Literature Section

Forgiveness	12
Look Beyond the Pain	13
The Procrastination of Addiction	16
Self-Love and Selfishness	18
Accepting Responsibility	20
Some Questions	22
Caught in the Net	23
Fire Drills and Boundaries	24
Expectations: Disaster Waiting to Happen	27
From the Editor	28

*Literature Editor's Note: The ideas expressed in the literature section of the Outer Circle reflect the opinions of the authors of those articles and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the ISO or of the SAA fellowship as a whole.*

*"...an addict will seek help when the pain of acting out exceeds the anticipated pain of recovery. The purpose of this article is to compare the pain of addiction with the pain of recovery to serve as a motivation to choose recovery."*

See Page 13

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# ISO News

## ISO Board Actions

The Board of Trustees of the ISO of SAA, Inc., met on July 28, 2007 by teleconference. The following is a report of significant actions taken.

Approved: That the Board reaffirms the use of the basic outreach postcard.

Approved: That the 2008 local convention registration discount be continued with a May 15th cut-off date, and that the rate be raised to \$50.00 for Saturday to cover the cost of the banquet.

Elected: Eric M. as the Board liaison to the 2008 convention.

Approved: To accept and execute the contract proposal submitted by the hotel on the condition that they will lock in the room rate at \$129.00.

Approved: To include the URL of the women's webpage on all ISO literature pending Literature Committee approval.



## Women's Outreach Committee Update!

*"Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other sex addicts and practice these principles in our lives"*

– step 12

We, the Women's Outreach Committee, are continuing to keep the fellowship updated on our work of connecting woman in SAA.

We have finished working on updates to the pamphlet "A Special Welcome to the Woman Newcomer" It is our hope that it will be available to meetings in the late fall of this year.

Our women's website is still carrying the message and the [grace@saa-recovery.org](mailto:grace@saa-recovery.org) email is still being answered by our trusted servants!

Many of you helped shape our vision for this year by giving us great suggestions at the convention and throughout the year. We as a committee have decided to try and be ambitious and complete six things in the coming year.

1. Dear Grace column in "The Outer Circle".
2. Target women prisoners for outreach, collaborate with the Prisoner Outreach Committee.
3. How to Support Women to Feel More Comfortable in Meetings Pamphlet.
4. How Meetings can Retain Women Newcomers Pamphlet.
5. Focus on new ways to both:
  - a) attract newcomers and
  - b) retain newcomers in SAA.
6. Make the Trusted Servant Guidelines for answering grace email inquiries available to the fellowship as an FAQ list.

Please stay posted for more information on our committee work as we enter our exciting second year!

## Men’s Outreach

### WANTED:

- Men to provide support to men recovering in isolated areas
- Experienced men willing to be long-distance sponsors

*We need your help! We are asking for every group in SAA to provide at least one male volunteer to provide support in one or more of the following ways:*

- Serve as a temporary or permanent sponsor for men needing sponsors
- Accept program phone calls from men in remote areas
- Provide guidance & support to men who have started new groups
- Provide guidance & support to men leading groups that have gotten away from the solution – the 12 Steps

The *Men’s Support Network* List is a list of men seeking long-distance support (including sponsors) and men willing to provide that support. The biggest call has been from men within our fellowship who are seeking long-distance sponsors.

### How to Join

You can join by filling out and mailing in the sign-up sheet below. You can also join by sending an e-mail to [men4saa@saa-recovery.org](mailto:men4saa@saa-recovery.org). Or, you can join by calling Tim at the ISO office at (800) 477-8191.

In recovery, Members of the Men’s Outreach Sub-committee

P.S. If you have additional ideas, please e-mail the Men’s Outreach Sub-committee at [men@saa-recovery.org](mailto:men@saa-recovery.org).

----- cut here -----

### MEN’S SUPPORT NETWORK LIST SIGN-UP SHEET

First name and initial \_\_\_\_\_

City & state or Country \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

Time zone \_\_\_\_\_ Phone number \_\_\_\_\_

Safe to leave a message? \_\_\_\_\_ Willing to be a sponsor? \_\_\_\_\_

Sobriety date \_\_\_\_\_

Willing to offer help to a new meeting? \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to: ISO of SAA, PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270 USA

## Outreach to Young Adults

Many of us in the fellowship have come to understand that sexually addictive behavior patterns often started early in our lives before we understood the exact nature of our problem. Today, our SAA fellowship has matured to a point where we can reach out to young adults who are sex addicts before the divorces, debilitating STD's, job losses, jail sentences, suicide attempts, and other outwardly recognizable consequences of sexual addiction necessarily are obvious.

In what ways can we as a fellowship reach out to young adult sex addicts so they can experience the solution? Is there enough gratitude in our recovery that we can extend the hand of SAA and help young adults find our program? To make progress along this task, the General Outreach Committee has formed a Young Adult Outreach Subcommittee oriented toward carrying the SAA message to young adults aged 18-39 with a current emphasis on college students. This subcommittee needs both the participation of young adults already in SAA as well as the service of those with lengthier life experience who have a desire to help the next generation of SAA members be embraced by recovery.

The Young Adult Outreach Subcommittee has ample room for participants to exercise their creativity and enthusiasm in how this task is to be carried out. If you have an interest in participating on the subcommittee, please contact the Young Adult Subcommittee chair at [yaoutreach@saa-recovery.org](mailto:yaoutreach@saa-recovery.org).

## Northeast (NE) Regional Planning

Members of the Northeast (NE) region have been meeting by teleconference to plan cooperative activities during the regular service year. Facilitated by NE Board representative, Gary C., the group has already met twice, and plans to meet next on Sunday, April 22, 2007 at 1:00 p.m. Central Time. For information on how to participate, please contact Gary at [BoardNE@saa-recovery.org](mailto:BoardNE@saa-recovery.org).

Members of other regions are welcome to meet with one another to discuss cooperative planning as well as by contacting their regional Board representative. Board representative service email addresses are listed in the PBR each month.

## **Greetings from the Waves of Change Convention Committee,**

The 2008 Program is quickly falling into place. We decided early in our planning to have a common underlying theme or foundation of spirituality. We work a spiritual program in SAA. We are asking all speakers and presenters to consider how their topic will enhance or encourage their own or another's spirituality. We also are looking for a strong emphasis on OUR literature and OUR 12 Steps and OUR Tools of Recovery. "Our groups are dedicated to serving sex addicts who seek recovery, and the purpose or goal of our service is to carry the SAA message: that freedom from addictive sexual behavior is possible through the Twelve Steps of SAA." (Green Book, page 84) More specifics are listed at the end.

With this in mind we are looking at a three-track tier of workshops. Track one would be primarily for newcomers and those with less experience in recovery. A second track would be directed to those with time in the program. Often life is different after several years of recovery. The third track would be directed towards the physical side of our beings. As one committee member put it something in the line of silly, dopey games. In other words: 'Fun in Recovery'. Soo...

Send us your ideas for what programs you would like to have in your convention next year. We are setting an initial deadline for workshop presenters and ideas of October 31st, with the final program to be posted to the web by mid April. After that date we will still accept suggestions, but they will be used as fill-ins or replacements.

As always, we are willing to consider ANY idea about and/or ANYONE willing to present a workshop. As we are planning to have co-facilitators for all workshops, if one does not meet the guidelines we are prepared to partner them with someone who does. We believe this will help enhance everyone's experience.

Looking forward to meeting you,

Waves of Change Convention Program Subcommittee



*21<sup>st</sup> Annual*  
SAA International Convention



**2008**

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*Sail with us to the calmer  
waters of recovery...*

## **SAA Basic Text Now Available in Spanish!**

The Spanish translation of the SAA basic text, *Sexo Adictos Anónimos*, is now available through the ISO office. Orders from members in California and Puerto Rico have already been fulfilled.

The Spanish translation is currently available only in soft cover, and the price (\$14.00 US) is the same as its English counterpart.

To order, members can go to the SAA Store on the ISO website at [www.SAA-Recovery.org](http://www.SAA-Recovery.org), by mail at the following address:

ISO of SAA  
P.O. Box 70949  
Houston, TX 77270  
USA

or by phone (US and Canada) at 800-477-8191. To call the ISO office from outside the US and Canada, members can use the alternate number 001-713-869-4902. The ISO can ship literature to anywhere in the world.

Please note that the international shipping fee is double that of the US First Class domestic rate. All checks and money orders must be in US dollars.

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## **¡El texto básico de SAA ya disponible en español!**

La traducción al castellano del texto básico de SAA, *Sexo Adictos Anónimos*, ya es disponible de la Organización Internacional de Servicios (ISO). Los pedidos del libro de nuestros miembros de California y de Puerto Rico ya se han cumplido.

Actualmente, la traducción castellana es sólo disponible en rústica, y el precio (U.\$14.00) es el mismo que el de la versión inglesa.

Para pedir el libro, los miembros pueden visitar la tienda de SAA en el website [www.SAA-Recovery.org](http://www.SAA-Recovery.org); si se quiere pedirlo por correo, se debe usar la dirección siguiente:

ISO of SAA  
P.O. Box 70949  
Houston, TX 77270  
EEUU

o se puede llamar la oficina (desde los EEUU y de Canadá) a 800-477-8191. Para llamar la ISO desde afuera de los EEUU o de Canadá, los miembros pueden usar el número alternativo 001-713-869-4902. La ISO puede enviar literatura a cualquier parte del mundo.

Favor de anotar que el precio para enviar libros a direcciones internacionales es doble el del precio doméstico Primera Clase de los EEUU. Todo cheque y giro postal debe ser en dólares estadounidenses.

# Fundraising

## The Outreach Endowment Fund

Last issue's article mentioned the Outreach Endowment Fund. In this issue, the fund will be explained in detail.

The Outreach Endowment Fund is a special way for grateful recovering SAA members to help provide a perpetual stream of revenue for outreach to the addict who still suffers. To set up the fund, the ISO Board of Trustees in 1999 entered into an agreement with the Greater Houston Community Foundation (GHCF), a non-profit organization that manages many trusts and endowments.

The GHCF holds all donations to the fund in perpetuity, distributing 80% of the endowment's annual earnings to the ISO to be used only for outreach. The remaining 20% of the earnings are retained and become a part of the perpetual fund.

Only SAA members are allowed to contribute to the fund, and there are several ways in which they can do so. The first is through direct donations to the GHCF. Such gifts are limited to \$2,500 or more.

Another way to contribute is by transferring to the GHCF stocks, bonds, or other financial holdings.

The Outreach Endowment Fund also allows SAA members to remember the fellowship in their wills. Considering how close to death many were when they came to the program, this option is especially appropriate. Bequests assure members that their gifts will continue to provide outreach even after they are gone.

An important feature of the fund is that it safeguards member anonymity. Because all gifts and bequests are made to the GHCF rather than to the ISO, there is no in-house record of the transaction. All gifts, transfers, and bequests are acknowledged by the GHCF, and tax deductions can be listed under the GHCF's non-profit status.

As of the second quarter of this year, the Outreach Endowment Fund held \$147, 876.88. Last February, the ISO received an annual distribution of \$12,258.00. One way to put the importance of this money into perspective is to note that, through the first seven months of this year, the ISO has spent more than \$10,000 on Prisoner Outreach alone.

It is easy to contribute to the endowment fund. Simply call the ISO office (800-477-8191). You will be put in touch with the GHCF, which will guide you through the transaction of your choice.

# ISO Financial News

## ISO Income/Expense Summary As Of July 31 , 2007

	July	Monthly Average	Year End
<b>NET OPERATING INCOME</b>			
<b>Net Sales</b>	<b>7,003</b>	<b>7,097</b>	<b>49,676</b>
<b>Donations</b>	<b>12,726</b>	<b>13,925</b>	<b>97,474</b>
General Donations	7,434	9,343	65,401
LifeLine Partners	5,178	4,258	29,806
Designated Donations	114	324	2,267
<b>Miscellaneous Income</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>2,248</b>	<b>15,734</b>
<b>TOTAL NET OPERATING INCOME</b>	<b>19,813</b>	<b>23,270</b>	<b>162,884</b>
<b>OPERATING EXPENSES</b>			
<b>Wages/Benefits/Taxes</b>	<b>15,205</b>	<b>15,707</b>	<b>109,948</b>
Program Related	8,787	8,532	59,720
Wages - Other	3,462	3,450	24,153
Benefits	1,866	2,015	14,102
Payroll Taxes	1,090	1,710	11,973
<b>Insurance</b>	<b>273</b>	<b>244</b>	<b>1,706</b>
<b>Depreciation</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>1,075</b>
<b>Postage</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>1,006</b>
<b>Phone</b>	<b>276</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>1,486</b>
<b>Website Related</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>328</b>
<b>Occupancy</b>	<b>1,460</b>	<b>1,365</b>	<b>9,554</b>
<b>Office Related</b>	<b>483</b>	<b>885</b>	<b>6,195</b>
<b>Professional Fees</b>	<b>402</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>737</b>
<b>Financial</b>	<b>1,570</b>	<b>1,011</b>	<b>7,074</b>
<b>Plain Brown Rapper</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>485</b>	<b>3,396</b>
<b>Board &amp; Committees</b>	<b>1,934</b>	<b>1,625</b>	<b>11,374</b>
<b>Total Operating Expenses</b>	<b>22,116</b>	<b>21,983</b>	<b>153,879</b>
<b>TOTAL NET OPERATING SURPLUS</b>	<b>-2,303</b>	<b>1,286</b>	<b>9,005</b>
<b>NONOPERATIONAL INCOME</b>			
<b>2007 ISO Convention</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>9,504</b>	<b>66,531</b>
<b>Delegate Fees</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>792</b>	<b>5,541</b>
<b>TOTAL NONOPERATIONAL INCOME</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10,296</b>	<b>72,072</b>
<b>NONOPERATIONAL EXPENSES</b>			
<b>2007 ISO Convention</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7,084</b>	<b>49,591</b>
<b>Delegate Meeting</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>878</b>	<b>6,143</b>
<b>Convention Related Travel</b>	<b>348</b>	<b>2,414</b>	<b>16,899</b>
<b>TOTAL NONOPERATIONAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>348</b>	<b>10,376</b>	<b>72,633</b>
<b>TOTAL NONOPERATIONAL SURPLUS</b>	<b>-348</b>	<b>-80</b>	<b>-561</b>
<b>ISO SURPLUS – ALL INCOME/EXPENSES</b>	<b>2,651</b>	<b>1,206</b>	<b>8,444</b>

By every measure, the 2007 ISO Convention was a success. The comments about it that have been received have been overwhelmingly positive. In attendance, it was the second largest ever, with a total of 369 members and 29 guests registered. Financially, the net surplus of \$16,940 was enough to cover convention related travel with \$41 to spare. To the 2007 Convention Committee, thank you for your many hours of service that went into making "Back to the Source" a memorable event.

There was a record set at the 2007 Delegate Meeting, with 158 participating. This meant producing some last-minute meeting materials and planning for extra meals, both of which ran up expenses. Still, registration fees paid for all but \$602 of the cost.

The end of July marked one full year of Phase III. One of this project's major goals was to involve more members in service at the international level and to improve communications throughout the organization. With a dozen Board committees meeting regularly and working on a host of initiatives, this goal has been met and, just as importantly, continuity has been established.

To accomplish this, the ISO had to commit to a significant increase in staff and in support services. As it always has, the fellowship has provided the necessary funding, enough not only to pay for the additional operating expenses but also enough to build a net surplus of \$8,444 since the beginning of the year.

The major ingredients for this success recipe include \$28,953 in general donations from individuals and \$36,448 from groups, \$29,806 from LifeLine Partners, \$12,258 from the Outreach Endowment Fund, \$49,676 in net sales, and, of course, \$16,940 from the 2007 Convention. These are big numbers, but perhaps the biggest number of all is 54.7%. That is how much of the total came from donations.

The biggest challenge now is for the ISO to make it through October, a four-month stretch that must be carried solely by donations and sales. The next financial boost will not come until November when – hopefully – responses to the annual appeal and gifts from the Bay Area's Giving Thanks V event will again bring the year to a positive conclusion. Until then, all help will be as greatly appreciated as it is needed.

# Literature

## Forgiveness

Submitted by Clif G.

A short time ago I came home from an SAA meeting and found a letter that my wife had left for me. We have been married for thirty-three years and for twenty-nine of those years I was a practicing sex addict. While stopping addictive behaviors and learning to live a sober life is crucial to our recovery; repairing broken relationships can often appear to be overwhelming.

Although this is deeply personal, I am sharing this with my wife's permission so that others may know that there is hope for damaged relationships and that healing can occur through working the Twelve Steps of recovery.

My wife's letter appears below:

Forgiveness: to grant pardon without harboring resentment. To renounce anger or resentment against. To absolve from payment of.

How hard is it to grant pardon? Depends on the sin, huh? Suppose someone commits an injustice against you, and it is such a big injustice, in your estimation, that it has caused a huge, gaping wound in your life that you have had to heal yourself without any assistance from anyone. You have had to tend to it alone because you believe there is no one who could possibly understand what you are going through. Do you forgive the person who inflicted this pain? Or do you harbor it, and uncover the scar regularly just to remind yourself of what you have been through? Do you stroke it every so often just so you can sit there remembering the agony it has caused you because you enjoy being a martyr? What pleasure does it bring you? What are you getting from this behavior? Is it better to have this terrible pain set aside in your inner attic to be brought out and admired and tried on again and again, or would you be better off putting it out on the curb come trash day? Can you even allow it to leave you? Or has it become a familiar "friend," one who applauds you when you put on your "victim" pants? Have you come to rely on this pal of yours to agree with you when you are narrowing your eyes, licking your wounds, and hugging yourself, rocking back and forth, bearing up alone, poor you? Will you even be okay without your friend?

Well, I would like to try to let it go. I would like to try on forgiveness. I am tired of entertaining resentment. So, at the risk of sounding arrogant (which is not my intention), I would like to extend my forgiveness. I realize that you don't need it. I realize that you have moved on. But I also believe that,

though you don't require it, you might like it. I am doing this for myself as well as for you. What happened to me was absolutely and completely unwarranted and unfair, but the need to punish for my pain is past now. I am tired of being victim to my resentments. And though I may look back from time to time and wish and wonder, I will not stand and stare behind me. I am committed to moving forward and starting again every day to attempt to do my part to make life better for us.

This has been a long time coming, and I am sorry for that. I needed to work through some things before I could get to this point. But I think I am there now. I no longer feel the need to make you wallow. I admire that you have risen above the need to be forgiven. I admire what you have done with yourself. And though it is the hardest thing I have ever done, I want you to know that you are completely forgiven, and I stand beside you in this recovery you have created for yourself. At the same time, I would like you to forgive me for my contribution to our tangled issues, for I know that I am neither flawless nor blameless myself.

## **Look Beyond the Pain**

by Jim L.

A common saying heard at twelve-step recovery meetings is that an addict will seek help when the pain of acting out exceeds the anticipated pain of recovery. This statement is, of course, a generalization that assumes an aversion to pain—a characteristic that seems to be true of most of us. The purpose of this article is to compare the pain of addiction with the pain of recovery to serve as a motivation to choose recovery.

What is the pain of acting out for the sex addict? After all, isn't sex a pleasurable thing? Isn't sex the ultimate expression of intimacy between two persons? This may be true for a healthy individual but the pleasures are only momentary when we become obsessed with sexual thoughts and images or when sexual activity becomes compulsive, interferes with normal everyday life, and takes us outside the bounds of appropriate social behavior. They rapidly give way to secrecy, fear, shame, and isolation—resulting in escalating emotional pain and chaos.

Behind secrecy lurks the fear of being discovered or being considered a pervert. Lies beget more lies. Behind shame lurks doubt about myself and a tendency to isolate from friends, family, and loved ones. Am I the only person in the world struggling with these thoughts and compulsions? Would anyone like me if they really knew about me? Behind compulsive masturbation lies unrelenting self-deprecation. Behind repeated anonymous sexual encounters hides the question of whether I am even capable

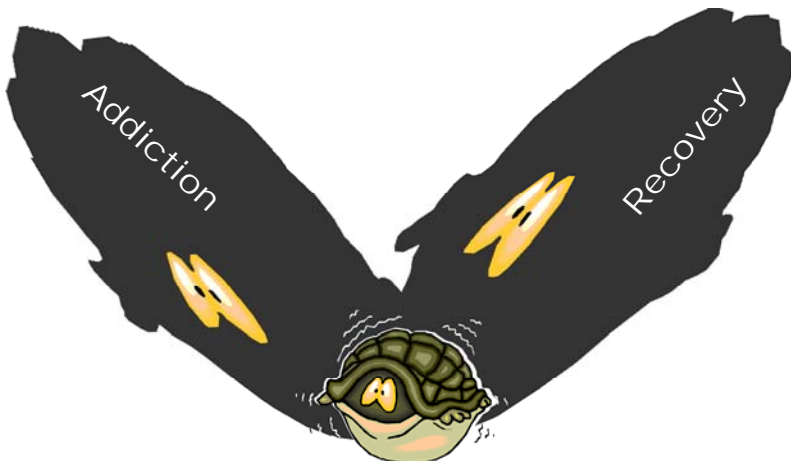
of normal relationships. Clandestine visits to adult bookstores or prostitutes conceal disgust and self-loathing. What makes me continue to do this when I know it is self-destructive?

Nothing about this picture is pretty. Nothing about it feels good. Nothing about it moves me toward being the person I aspire to be. Nothing about addictive sexual behavior promotes a healthy sense of self. I want to stop, but I find that I cannot, and the cycle repeats itself with ever-increasing emotional pain. I medicate my pain with more sex, and the result is more and worse pain. Self-doubt erodes into self-hatred. And can there be any greater pain than hating oneself?

Out of this downward spiral of pain and loss of self comes the realization that I am truly powerless over my behavior—that my life has truly become unmanageable. I am an addict. But am I ready to admit my powerlessness? Am I too ashamed or too cowardly to reach out for help? What other alternatives do I have? Is there any hope for me? Or am I forever damned to live in this abyss of pain and self-destruction?

Well, there is good news and bad news! The good news is that the recovery program found in the twelve steps and the fellowship of SAA offers hope for the addict who still suffers, but the bad news is that the path is not without some pain of its own. So, what then is the pain of recovery?

For most of us, walking into a recovery meeting for the first time is a frightful experience. Being honest after years of lies and secrecy is scary and difficult. The first time I verbalized the nature of my sex addiction I felt stark naked—completely exposed as the scumbag that I was, the hypocrite that I had been for years. Fear-laden questions ricocheted around in my mind. Would people bolt for the door when I told my story? Would I be accepted despite my sexual behavior? Would I find the same rejection here that I had recently experienced from my spouse, my sons, and my church?





Although I felt immediate acceptance and great personal relief from sharing in a recovery meeting, there then arose the specter of actually working through my problems—working the twelve-step program. The admission of weaknesses and faults did not come easily for me. Admitting to character defects, moral failures, and perverse behavior was an unbelievably painful process. I felt like I was being dragged backwards through the mess I had made of my life! Then the specter of making amends to those whom I had hurt hit me. I was horrified! Just the idea was so painful and scary that I almost abandoned recovery to avoid it.

There was also the pain of letting go of an old friend; after all, my acting out behavior had become my closest friend. It was my primary mechanism of coping with emotional and relational stress. I was terrified that giving up my addiction would leave me desperately empty, alone, helpless, and ashamed. How would I deal with unbearable loneliness and isolation?

But my venture onto the path of recovery soon began to yield positive results. The first noticeable escape from pain came from the restoration of hope. I had become hopelessly mired in my addiction. I had prayed for deliverance many times only to fall again—sometimes within hours. It had become clear to me that reliance on my own power was failing, but I had not known where to turn. Initially, it was the group that rekindled my hope. I saw evidence of recovery in fellow addicts. I knew their stories, some of which were even more disheartening than mine, and yet I saw hope, contentment, and signs of healthy relationships in their lives. Then I was reminded by the program that the real hope lay in my Higher Power, who could and would do for me what I could not do for myself. This was the turning point.

Although working the twelve-step program takes time, and there are many emotional ups and downs along the way, benefits began to accrue rapidly. A re-invigorated connection with God opened for me a new vision of following His will instead of my own self-will. I began to see the reality of a healthier me. I began to imagine the possibility of healthy relationships—free from the codependency and pathological responses of the past—friendships based on mutual giving rather than self-centered taking. A concept of true intimacy began to emerge. And best of all, the fear and pain of exposure, rejection, and isolation soon began to fade.

Pain, it is said, is a necessary part of the human experience, if we are to learn and grow into the persons God created us to be. I believe this to be true. I am tempted to speculate—jokingly, of course—that I should be very smart and very mature, as a result of the pain I have experienced. Perhaps a more accurate assessment is that I proved to be a painfully slow learner. All I know is that the really good news is that by God's grace I was able to look beyond the pain and grasp the hope that is ours if we work the program and depend on our Higher Power to deliver the fruits of recovery.

# The Procrastination of Addiction

by Robert S.

June 25, 2004

P.B. and M.  
Calvary Hospital—Room 602  
1740 Eastchester Road  
Bronx, NY 10461

Dear Friends P. and M.,

How great to visit with you by phone a couple days ago! As I sat there while we were talking, I saw the pony tail and the impish smile that seemed always to be there. And the BMW close by. The whispers of today can never erase the sound of your voice I still hear in my head.

I suppose pictures and sounds, with all the other phenomena of recall in the human brain are what can make life an adventure of keeping friends forever, encapsulated in whatever time frame in which we wish to keep them. And as evident perhaps, on the same side, is the propensity to fantasize our way into some of those traps in life we might well know of. Enough philosophy...!

*P. died on July 16, 2004. This letter was never completed or sent. And this is what this article is all about: The Procrastination of Addiction.*

How sad it is to be reminded of the times, places, and circumstances wherein I have been the offender—and the victim—of procrastination.

I have reviewed the above letter many times. I saw M. at the '07 convention in Minneapolis, but I will never see P. again except in my mind, just as I hear his voice as in the above letter. I can't really call it a "letter" since a letter is a missive written by someone and sent, by whatever means, to another. What I have set down here is merely a "writing."

It is not that I think P. would have been so overjoyed because of receiving a letter from me, yet I know that we were friends, and mutual supporters of our common work in SAA. Whether in his last days or not, I really do believe he would have appreciated it, however long, short or full of BS it might have been. And in P.'s case, we each could pass some BS and delight in the fact we were human, and had the capacity to laugh at ourselves.

But I think of my procrastination at the time I needed help, and did not seek it. This fellowship began thirty years ago; and thirty years ago, had I searched to find it, I might have saved a marriage and future interface with my stepchildren and children and their progeny.

I marvel at my second marriage, that by way of the twelve steps and twelve traditions of three programs, we not only endure, but thrive, with some joy and happiness we have found, separately and together in life. We do try always to live in the present, and work to succeed in it.

What is lost to postponement might be forever lost, as again in the case with another departed friend. In serving together on the ISO Board years ago, and interfacing at delegate meetings on many occasions, we shared a mutual recovery support, even among so many differences in other areas of life. Amid a flurry of letters back and forth in mid-2003, I needed to write one more. He passed away before I wrote it. Is there hope? If so, there must be change. The change is supposed to begin with me.

On the Saturday AM phone meeting today, a member read part of the Fourth Step from *Sex Addicts Anonymous*. How timely it was for me. Two more examples:

I have known since last Wednesday that the men's outreach subcommittee was to meet tomorrow, yet it was only today that I sent the agenda to the members.

I have two letters from prisoners awaiting answers; I have written twenty-nine letters to one and seventeen to the other, yet for the last several weeks, these two remain unanswered.

When do these "revelations" about our defects of character begin the process of change?! Isn't it about time I do something about "keeping on top of things"?

There's another look at "procrastination" that I need to examine. Does it mean that maybe I have some misanthropic tendencies? Don't I really *care* about myself or others? Have I not grappled yet with those narcissistic traits? Have I not relied on a Higher Power to remove these defects of character? Perhaps I'm just dishonest, yet...

After some seventeen-plus years in this fellowship, I am not completely free of the complications of life that landed me here. That is why I must use the tools of this program—often. That is why every meeting, be it face-to-face, or over the phone lines, is important to me. One of my sponsees has an affirmation: "I'm \_\_\_\_\_, and listening is not enough." I will grant him that we all must *do something* after we listen. *But*, we surely do have to open our ears and minds to make sure we have secured the message we needed to hear.

I got it this morning at the Saturday morning phone meeting.

## Self-Love and Selfishness

by Ben

As children we were all taught the “Golden Rule”: to treat other people the way we want to be treated. This great guideline comes from the teaching to “love your neighbor as yourself,” later confirmed by a distinguished teacher as being at the core of all God’s laws. Similar teachings are found in every major religion or philosophy.

The emphasis in the teaching is usually on our behavior towards other people. Rightly so, I might add. But the real catch, especially for me as an addict, is learning the second half of this command, “as yourself.”

As an addict coming into recovery I begin to discover the many truths about myself. I also am uncovering my many faults, along with my false beliefs, self-lies, deceptions and so much more. One of the things I have to question is whether I have ever truly loved myself.

In searching myself and listening to my fellow sufferers, I suspect that most of us have never loved ourselves. In fact, oftentimes this self-loathing is at the core of the addictive cycle:

1. I feel bad about myself.
2. I act out.
3. I feel good in the bubble.
4. The bubble bursts.
5. Again, I feel bad.

In recovery I can begin to love myself. Even with the very first step, recognizing how out of control (doomed) my life is, there is a spark of self-love. Otherwise, I would stay in my addiction, which, left unchecked, will kill me. My acknowledgement in that first step means I have recognized that I do have value; that I am worth saving.

And with those first three steps I plunge into the abyss of the unknown: recovery. Why? There may be many reasons we come to that first meeting but under them all is that spark of caring about ourselves.

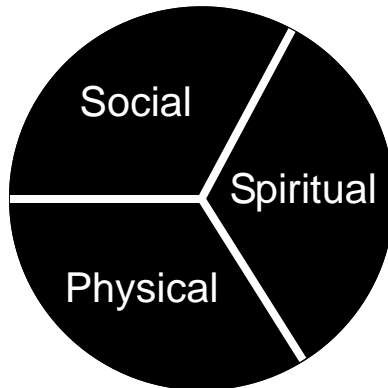
Many might want to say that our whole problem has been self-love, the overriding compulsion toward sexual behaviors focused on satisfying ourselves. In recovery we can begin to see the true nature of our behaviors. We learn we have been using sex to cover our true feelings, to substitute for other needs, or to hide from our own inner self.

Loving ourselves means we must provide for our physical, spiritual, and social needs. As addicts we were lost in a misdirected effort to make the physical satisfy all three needs.

In recovery I surrender my destructive habits and begin to establish positive behaviors that address all three areas. These “outer circle” habits are what I need to be a whole person. In doing these things I am learning to love myself.

The addict in me tries to trip up my recovery program, questioning if this new pattern is selfishness instead of self-love. Selfishness is when we meet our own personal needs at the expense of others. I may, in recovery, need to commit more time to meetings, meditations, reading and doing healthy activities. It may seem I am taking time from family or work. The truth is that my addictive behaviors took so much more away. It took time and money, but most of all it took me. How often did I tolerate or neglect my obligations, impatient to get back to my acting out?

When I think of this definition of selfishness, I realize it is another very good way to describe my addiction; meeting my needs at the expense of others, indeed even at the expense of myself.



## Accepting Responsibility

By Guy

Sarah's phone started ringing. She turned her back to me and answered it—it was her mother. I swiveled on the bar stool and looked through the sliding glass door to the downtown skyline. I stepped up, Sarah fixed on my movements while talking on the phone. I slid my fingers into the handle on the door and pushed it open, stepping out into the sunlight.

I approached the railing on the balcony, my hands gripping its rough metal, knuckles turning white, smoldering cigarette dangling from my half open mouth. I was not looking at any of the other buildings, or across the blue sky as I had done so many times before. My gaze was cast downwards—down to the pavement, seventeen stories below. I worked my foot in between the bars of the railing, my sole resting on a horizontal bar that tethered the vertical ones together. I could feel the muscles in my arms and legs starting to tense, my arms pushing down on the railing, my gaze still fixed on the pavement that seemed so very far away.

I had never very seriously considered suicide in quite some time. In this moment, however, it seemed like the best thing to do. It did not seem like much of a stretch to pull myself over and tumble through that autumn afternoon, because in my mind I had already jumped long ago, and I had fallen much farther than seventeen stories.

Fifteen minutes ago, Sarah told me what had happened, and what was going to happen now. I had come home early from school, so the police were not there yet. But I knew what was going to happen. I was going to lose my job. My graduate program was going to kick me out. My friends and family would disown me. It would be all over the media. I would become a pariah. So I thought.

Some of those things came true, some did not—but that is beside the point. As I stood there, trying to work up the courage to push down just a little bit more and lift myself over the railing, I looked back and saw Sarah, standing there and staring at me. I guess if I had to pick something that stopped me, it was that. I can't really think of anything else. I flipped my cigarette over the balcony and came back inside, collapsing on the bar stool, sobbing like I had never sobbed before.

I was arrested, and I spent that night in the detention center because my parents could not get the bond money together until the following morning. Probably the thing that disturbed me the most, oddly, was that I didn't even get a pillow. As if I had become such a piece of garbage that I didn't even get to have the comfort of something on which to prop

my head. So I lay there on my vinyl cot, staring through the Plexiglas at the control center for the unit, alternately trying to hate Sarah for going to the police, blaming her for my own actions, and thinking of ways to commit suicide right then.

Even then, I couldn't hate her. I still loved her very much. I still do today. Blaming, however, was a bit easier. "Why didn't she confront me?" I asked myself. I told myself that I would have changed. That I would have gotten help. That I would have come clean and admitted everything. That she didn't need to do what she did.

So I held onto those beliefs, and that fostered resentment in me towards Sarah for going to the police to report my illegal activities. I have let go of that resentment today, because I have come to the realization that I am a low-bottom drunk.

How many relationships had I ruined because of my addiction? How many people had I hurt, either directly or indirectly? How many times had I almost been caught? How many lies had I told to cover my addiction? How many nights did I spend wallowing in guilt and self-pity because I had completely lost control of this area of my life? How many times did I swear I would never look at pornography again? How many times did I swear I would break off all of my affairs with other women? How much did my meaningful relationships with friends and family suffer because I had spent most of my time alone and locked up in my room? How many times did I stay up the entire night before an important presentation because of my addiction? How many times had Sarah confronted me about my usage of pornography? How many times had I been caught in a lie or an affair?

Looking over that list of questions, it becomes painfully obvious that I had lost so much and yet I had never acknowledged that I had a problem. This is what it took. It took my getting arrested. It took my losing graduate school and my job, and maybe my freedom. So I can't really be angry with Sarah because I happen to have a thick head. That is not her fault. She did the right thing, and she did it for the right reasons. If I have a right to be angry with anyone, it is with me. I could have been courageous and confessed that I had a problem, and that I needed help. I could have confided in Sarah, or in Tarah, or in Anne, or in any of the other women who cared about me, that there was a reason behind my distance. If I had been a high-bottom drunk, maybe I would have done those things. But this is what it took.

Now the consequences are mine to accept because my behavior is mine to own.

## Some Questions

by Anonymous, Northern New Mexico

I have been a member of SAA since January of 1999. I came into the program badly addicted to internet porn, compulsive placement of personal ads, and a past history of acting out in public places with potentially self-damaging results. Working the steps through step 11, I found relief from a lot of my compulsions.

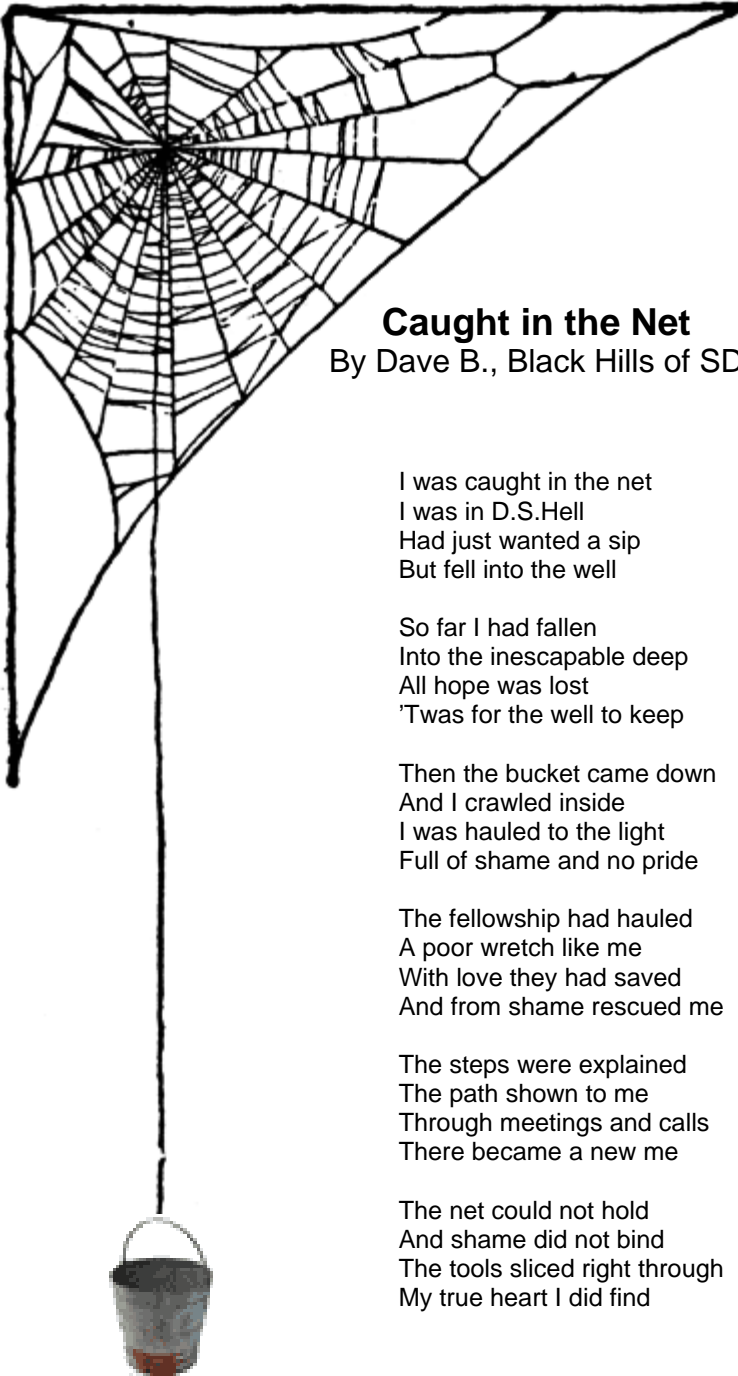
Now I am hardly an SAA poster child. I am prone to relapse. I stop going to meetings for periods of time, and slowly the porn thing creeps back, along with the obsessions with finding "Mister Right" (who doesn't exist), and fantasies of self-damaging sexual behavior. So I am far from being "cured" as a sex addict.

An analyst told me once that people in crisis need two things: a witness and a community. Meetings are a great place to find witnesses to the pain my addiction causes me. Sponsorship gives me a witness, too. But community? That is another matter. One of the difficulties I have encountered in my area of the country is that most of the SAA members I have encountered here do not return phone calls. They just don't. For the first few years, I would find myself in a bad way, pick up the phone list, make some calls, leave some messages, and there would be no response. After a while I stopped trying. Now I thought for a long time it was because I am one of the few openly identified gay men in my SAA group, and that the men in the group were uncomfortable talking with me outside the meeting for that reason. (I find it difficult to approach the women because I was sexually abused by a woman throughout my childhood.) But I found out it is not just me. My erstwhile sponsor, who is straight, who has a much better sobriety record than I, and who would be considered one of the oldest local "old-timers" still attending meetings regularly, tells me that SAA people do not return his phone calls either.

Has anybody else out there in SAA land encountered this phenomenon? Any ideas what causes it? Is it that as sex addicts we are so used to compartmentalizing our lives that we do not even think of bringing SAA into our schedule, outside of formal meetings? Is it a symptom of the morbid fear of intimacy I experience so often as a sex addict? And what can I do to find more genuine community within the fellowship?

Thank God for a straight friend in Colorado—we talk on the phone several times a week. (And in case you were wondering, no, my sponsor doesn't return phone calls either—at least, not right away. Four or five days is the average lag time.)





## Caught in the Net

By Dave B., Black Hills of SD

I was caught in the net  
I was in D.S.Hell  
Had just wanted a sip  
But fell into the well

So far I had fallen  
Into the inescapable deep  
All hope was lost  
'Twas for the well to keep

Then the bucket came down  
And I crawled inside  
I was hauled to the light  
Full of shame and no pride

The fellowship had hauled  
A poor wretch like me  
With love they had saved  
And from shame rescued me

The steps were explained  
The path shown to me  
Through meetings and calls  
There became a new me

The net could not hold  
And shame did not bind  
The tools sliced right through  
My true heart I did find

## Fire Drills and Boundaries

by Marilyn S.

*[Editor's Note: According to the author, this piece is "a slightly updated article that I originally wrote that was published in PBR about 1989 or 90."]*

Conceptually, a fire drill or emergency plan is designed to provide a methodical approach to a potentially hazardous situation or event. It requires little or no problem-solving in the throes of a crisis. Each action one chooses in an emergency can be critical to the safety and well-being of self and others. There may be little margin for error. One must consider that a well-constructed plan developed in anticipation of a future need, and not conceived in haste or fear, would provide structure in a chaotic situation.

I have found this to be a saving grace in my own recovery program. I have developed my own fire drill and have helped others in the program to individualize theirs.

I accept the premise that when I am preoccupied, obsessing, or have been exposed to one of my triggers, that I am in an altered state of consciousness just as is someone who has taken a drug. It is mood-altering and clouds my judgment. I accept the fact that I may not make decisions to protect my best interests at that time. This is where the "fire drill" comes into play.

I developed my fire drill to protect me from myself. I desire to love and nurture myself, to protect and shield myself from harm. I lose sight of that desire when I am in my addictive state. I lose touch with the pain, the consequences, and reality. I fall back into my old patterns of self-abandonment. My fire drill is a concrete example of self care. I have written it and keep it in my wallet for immediate access. Even though I know what is on the list, in a crisis I can see the black-and-white protocol in front of me, and all I have to do is follow it. I do not have to trust selective memory, or judgment, or my impaired thinking. It builds in a delay for my compulsiveness/impulsiveness. It feeds my hunger for nurture.

I make myself follow the drill even when every fiber of my being is screaming for release through acting out, because I know that I can always act out after I follow my fire drill *if I still want to*. I want to give myself a chance to do a reality check when I am in that altered state. I want to give *me* a chance.

I have both a preventive maintenance contract and a list of boundaries. I implement the fire drill when I feel slippery or cross a bound-

ary. My boundaries are tight to keep potential back doors closed.

My acting-out behaviors involve sensuous and seductive dressing and southern-belle demure. To bolster my ego and self esteem, I have attracted men to me to “prove” I was a desirable female. All it really proved was that I was available. I sought affirmation through external sources. The episode of acting out which led me to SAA did not involve my usual rituals. I was friends with a married man at work. Over a four-month period of time, we became intimate in conversation and camaraderie. I violated my value system by being sexual with him twice in a three-day period. It was highly addictive, and I knew I could become quite enmeshed if I did not seek help. I joined SAA and had three and a half months’ sobriety (dryness?) when I acted out with him again. At this point I realized that I could not remain “friends” with him. He did not desire to change the physical aspect of the relationship, had no regrets, and the allure was too great for me.

My boundaries are:

1. I will not call X.
2. I will not be alone with X.
3. I will not go to X’s house.
4. I will not drive by X’s house.
5. I will not allow X in my house.
6. I will not have sex with X.
7. If X calls me, I will call someone from the group immediately.
8. I will not fantasize about X.
9. If I have to work directly with X, I will make alternate lunch plans.
10. I will not watch any show with a particular actor in it (X looks like this actor).
11. I will not go out to a bar.
12. If I go out with a friend, I will not find an alternative way home.
13. I will not use mood-altering substances.
14. Before I become sexual in a new relationship, I will discuss it with my sponsor (this certainly stops impulsivity).
15. I will report obsessive/compulsive thinking and secret behaviors to my sponsor and/or group.
16. I will not utilize fantasies/materials that involve multiple partners, violence, or abuse.
17. I will not ritualize the process of dressing, personal hygiene, or socializing.

If I find myself crossing my boundaries or teasing my disease, I implement my fire drill aggressively. My fire drill follows:

1. I say the serenity prayer (I have a rosary that I can use to say the prayer on each bead).
2. I get on my knees and pray to my Higher Power for healing.

3. I call SAA members until I can make contact with someone to talk it out. I call more than one person.
4. I listen to the tape I have by a well-known writer on loving myself (I keep copies at the office, car, and home).
5. I do physical exercise for thirty minutes. I set a timer.
6. I take a hot bath.
7. I hold one of my dolls (for at least ten minutes).
8. I play some of my music boxes (for at least ten minutes).
9. I read a meditation.
10. I spend the night at a friend's house.
11. I increase meeting attendance to at least four times per week for a two-week period (more if feasible with my work schedule).
12. I make daily contracts for my behavior with my sponsor and other group members.
13. I journal about my thoughts and feelings. I outline the pros and cons of the behavior. I share this with an SAA member.
14. I re-evaluate my circles, my preventive maintenance, my boundaries, and my fire drill with my sponsor to identify loopholes, and to provide more structure. I renew these contracts.

For other members of the group, we have developed fire drills which include making a cassette tape/CD about the consequences of acting out and the desire to take personal care. The tape will be played when desiring/starting to cruise a park or rest area. This is especially helpful when you may no longer be capable of the internal dialogue. The fire drill is simply:

1. Listen to the tape.
2. Stop the car at the nearest pay phone and call SAA members until you reach someone. If you have a cell phone, drive to a lighted safe area to make phone calls.
3. Contract to call the person when you are home.

Additional steps are added based on individual needs and behaviors. It helps to write out these boundaries and fire drills in the presence of another group member. Signing it, dating it, and having a witness sign it makes the "contract" more real. Validating these guides with the other group member helps keep them focused and comprehensive. The other group member (preferably your sponsor) is familiar with your behaviors and may help identify areas that you may not see through your denial at the time. It helped me to stay honest about one behavior that I did not particularly want to let go of.

For me, the exactness of these guides gives me the structure I need. One must be willing to make the investment in self to develop them and put them into practice. I am not perfect, but I have made progress with the use of these tools and I will continue to utilize them.

## **Expectations: Disasters Waiting to Happen!**

By Santi L., Charlotte, NC

The circumstances of life are ever-changing, as we are daily faced with new challenges and opportunities. Learning to recognize the ebbs and flows and responding to them accordingly, while maintaining a consistency of purpose throughout, brings true peace and contentment without regard to external conditions.

One sage wrote that “The problem is not that there are problems. The problem is expecting otherwise and thinking that having problems is a problem.” Pain is the touchstone to growth. If I believe that there will come a time when I have no problems, I am on the path to disappointment. But once I recognize that there will always be problems to face, and that within those problems lie opportunities for character and spiritual development, over time I will develop the ability to examine them and recognize many growth possibilities.

Whenever we place expectations (of God, of others, of ourselves or life in general) as a condition for our happiness we set ourselves up for disappointment, failure, depression, and loss of self-esteem. So, I ask myself, I thought I was supposed to have faith? I am. But there is a huge difference between faith and expectations. Faith is knowledge that whatever happens (be it logical to us or not), things will turn out for the best according to His will for us and others. Expectations are quite different. We look for a resolution based on our idea of how things should work out. Our expectations always seem rational to us, and therein lies the problem. We are setting the standards, the order of events, the results which will take place if our conditions are met. Sounds like playing God to me! We are back to playing the director and orchestrating all the events, people and situations to receive a desired outcome. All the work is done with a purpose or result in mind. What a waste of physical and spiritual energy.

We must get to a point where we recognize the need to stay in the here and now, where we live for today and stay in the moment. Then we experience the paradigm shift that convinces us we are not directors but simply players whose only role in life is to do the right thing, regardless of the circumstances. We are only responsible for the process, not the result. We do the work and the outcome is God's. All He will ever want from us is to “do the right thing”; not think the right thing, but do the right thing.

## From the Editor

by Mike L.

Welcome to the first issue of The Outer Circle! The Literature Committee has responded to the desires of the fellowship and, after a year of discussion and soliciting suggestions, has come up with this new name for our newsletter.

This year SAA is celebrating its thirtieth anniversary. We recently had the twentieth annual SAA convention in Minneapolis, and on the Sunday afternoon of the convention we observed the thirtieth anniversary of the founding of the fellowship by walking around Lake Harriet; it was a conversation that took place thirty years ago while the two founders of SAA walked around this very lake that resulted in the birth of our fellowship.

SAA has certainly matured significantly since its founding. The number of groups has certainly increased: we now have meetings in forty-five of the fifty states of the United States and in thirteen other countries. The amount of work that the ISO office is required to do has required the addition of several staff members over the past few years. We have seen a significant increase in the quantity of our literature, with the publication of our basic text being a major step forward. And now we well along the path toward putting together our own meditation book (stay tuned).

Similarly, I believe that the quality of the articles in the newsletter has steadily improved. This improvement is the result of more members in the fellowship attaining greater maturity and having the opportunity to delve more deeply into what the SAA fellowship has to offer. This greater maturity and depth in turn relate back to the wonderful messages that are a part of our literature, and especially basic text. And yet the seeds for our fine articles have long been there; in fact, one of the articles in this issue is an updated version of an article that appeared in the newsletter many years ago.

Given the improvement in the quality of the newsletter, I suppose it was only a matter of time before the fellowship began to consider changing the name. I'm happy with the positive and more inclusive message that the name "The Outer Circle" sends, and I'm equally optimistic that the new format of the publication will be appealing as well.

Another article in this issue expresses the desire for more and deeper contact than the author is currently experiencing in his local groups. Along those lines, it is worth pointing out that long-distance support and sponsorship are offered by phone or e-mail for those

SAA members who are not able to obtain sufficient local contact.

The Men's Outreach Committee can be reached by e-mail at:  
[men4saa@saa-recovery.org](mailto:men4saa@saa-recovery.org).

Women's Outreach information is contained at:  
[grace@saa-recovery.org](mailto:grace@saa-recovery.org).

Also, numerous telephone meetings are available.

So I'll close by saying that I hope you enjoy this first issue of our new and improved newsletter. I hope that reading The Outer Circle becomes (or remains) part of your outer circle.



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**Outer Circle Staff**

Mike L. — Literature Editor

Carol Ann R. — ISO News Editor

Jonathan C. — Layout Editor

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Newsletter Editor			Mike L. <b>Secretary</b>	



## E-mail Addresses

The following is a list of Board E-mail addresses and the LitCom e-mail addresses for the various regions, and the ISO staff E-mail addresses. The Board, LitCom, and the staff are always happy to hear from the fellowship.

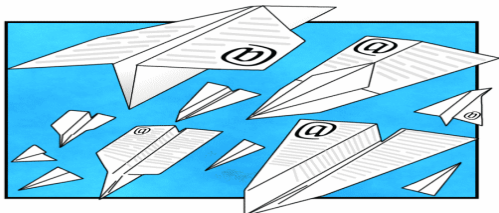
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South Central Board Member and Alternate: BoardSC@SAA-Recovery.org  
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Southern Pacific Board Member and Alternate: BoardSP@SAA-Recovery.org  
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Information Technician: Webmaster@SAA-Recovery.org

The SAA-ISO Board of Directors has established an e-mail box which may be used to register complaints from the fellowship about the ISO staff.

OOChair@SAA-Recovery.org



## How to Submit an Outer Circle 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: [newsletter@SAA-Recovery.org](mailto:newsletter@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. 10, Feb. 10, April 10, June 10, Aug. 10, Oct. 10**

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