

The Outer Circle

The Official Newsletter of the
International Service 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.

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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.

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ISO News

ISO Board Actions

The Board of Trustees of the ISO of SAA, Inc. voted on August 13-16, 2007 by electronic ballot on the following:

Approved: In cases in which one Board committee needs to communicate with another Board committee in order to accomplish work on an assigned committee task, the Board approves such inter-committee communication via the Board liaisons without review by the Board as a whole. Liaisons will inform the Board chair of the purpose and outcome of all such communication, and any proposed action taken beyond the said assigned committee task as a result of these communications must be approved by the Board as a whole before being implemented.

The Board of Trustees of the ISO of SAA, Inc. voted from August 21, 2007 to September 6, 2007 by electronic ballot on the following:

Approved: To direct the ISO office to plan and implement a mid-winter Board of Trustees face-to-face meeting to be held in Houston, TX in early December 2007.

The Board of Trustees of the ISO of SAA, Inc., met on September 15, 2007 by teleconference. The following is a report of significant actions taken.

Approved: That Santi L. be removed as a member of the Board of Trustees for cause because he is detrimental to Trustees doing their work.

ISO Literature Committee Actions

The Literature Committee of the ISO of SAA, Inc.
met by teleconference on July 22, 2007.
The following is a report of significant actions taken:

Approved: To accept the minutes of the May 23 - 24, 27 meetings in Minneapolis.

Approved: To accept the agenda.

Approved: Jeff W.'s proposed basic cover design and format for the pocket edition of the SAA book.

Approved: That the revisions approved to date by the LitCom be published as the second edition of *Sex Addicts Anonymous*.

Approved: The website announcement as circulated.

Approved: That we translate the Group Guide into Spanish.

Approved: That we put the previous motion about the four translations of the 12-question pamphlet on hold for now.

Approved: To publish *The Outer Circle* on white paper starting with July/August with "The Outer Circle" in green lettering at the top as an interim design.

Approved: The proposed guidelines for submissions for the meditation book.

Feedback on *Sex Addicts Anonymous*

The ISO Literature Committee reminds members that the book, *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, remains open for feedback from the SAA fellowship. We are deeply grateful for the time and effort members spend in providing feedback, and all feedback we receive from members and groups is given full and careful consideration.

Please note that, while we do acknowledge initial receipt of feedback, the ISO is not able to communicate beyond that about how or whether a member's feedback will be used for current or future revisions of the book. Any suggested new writing, regardless of length or content, that is sent to the ISO as feedback on ISO approved literature, becomes property of the ISO of SAA, Inc. and is subject to editing and revision.

Please send any feedback to:

E-mail address: info@saa-recovery.org

Mailing address: ISO of SAA
PO Box 70949
Houston, TX 77270 USA

Guidelines for Meditation Book Submissions to the Literature Committee

The Literature Committee welcomes submissions from the wider fellowship regarding the Meditation Book. Every submission needs to follow these guidelines to be considered for inclusion in the book.

The Meditation Book will consist of 366 entries, each entry representing a specific date of any calendar year, such as January 1, etc. Each entry will be one page and placed according to a specific date as decided upon by the Literature Committee. We are asking members to submit one or more complete entries for their consideration in the book.

When submitting, an entry needs to consist of the following elements:

- a) One Quotation. A quotation pulled from ISO-approved literature. Include the exact quote, the title of the literature used, and the page number. Following, in alphabetical order, are the pieces of ISO-approved literature: Abstinence, Abstinence and Boundaries in SAA, The Bubble, First Step to Recovery, From Shame to Grace, Getting Started in Sex Addicts Anonymous, Group Guide, *Sex Addicts Anonymous* (also known as “The Green Book”), Sex Addicts Anonymous (the introductory pamphlet), Sexual Sobriety and the Internet, A Special Welcome to the Woman Newcomer, Three Circles, Tools of Recovery.
- b) Main body. The main body of the entry will consist of text expanding on the thought or principle expressed in the quotation, offering a perspective on a particular aspect of SAA recovery. The writer may touch on any aspect of recovery including the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, other common SAA tools, principles, and shared wisdom of our SAA program and the fellowship.
- c) Meditation / Affirmation. At the bottom of the page there will be a concise statement epitomizing the text of the page into a meditation, thought, or affirmation—i.e., a form customarily used by readers in a daily spiritual practice.
- d) Word total limitation. The total number of words per submission should be approximately 300 words or less, with roughly 3/4 of that total devoted to the main body and 1/4 of the total devoted to the quotation and the meditation/affirmation. These are not hard and fast word counts; rather they are approximate guidelines.

The writer will need to sign a release form that the meditation, if used, becomes the property of the ISO. By signing the release form, the submitter also grants the ISO the right to edit, alter or change the wording of the submission in any way necessary for inclusion in the text.

We Are Looking for Our Meditation Book Editor!

The ISO will be recruiting an editor for the planned SAA meditation book over the next few months. If you are interested, please watch The Outer Circle for the forthcoming formal announcement of the position.



SAA Group Guide Announcement

The SAA Literature Committee is pleased to announce the initial publication of the 5th Edition of the SAA Group Guide. The Guide has been substantially revised and includes new material taken directly from Sex Addicts Anonymous.

The Guide is designed to give the basic information and materials needed to start and nurture an SAA group. It includes suggested meeting formats and a selection of readings that may be used as deemed appropriate by autonomous groups for their meetings. It also contains general information about the Fellowship, including services and activities of the International Services Organization of SAA and guidelines for participation in regional intergroups. The Literature Committee hopes that local groups will find the Guide helpful in their pursuit of recovery.

The Group Guide is being published in its present form for a period of continuing review before final approval by the Literature Committee. Please submit any comments, suggestions, or recommendations for new material by e-mail to:

Litcom.groupguide@SAA-LitCom.org

or by regular mail to:

ISO of SAA
PO Box 70949
Houston, TX 77270 USA

Deadline for receipt of feedback is December 31, 2007.

Upcoming LitCom Deadlines

by Mike L., Editor, *The Outer Circle*

As you may have noticed, the Literature Committee has been very busy of late with new projects. We are now at the point of looking to the fellowship for help and feedback.

I hope that you have had a chance to review the new Group Guide. The revision, which has been contemplated for quite some time, has been a couple of years in the making. Among other changes and updates, it incorporates a number of readings from *Sex Addicts Anonymous*. Please take a look at it if you have not already done so, and let us have your feedback by December 31.

Also, I hope you like the newly updated design for *The Outer Circle*. In line with the publication's renewed appearance, we are currently accepting submissions for a new logo. If you have a logo you wish to submit, please send it to us. We have not set a fixed deadline for submissions, so the sooner the better.

One of our most exciting upcoming projects is the meditation book. On page 5 of this issue appear the guidelines for submissions. Please consider writing a meditation and sending it to us. The job description for the editor of the mediation book will appear in a forthcoming issue. If you are interested in doing this valuable service work, please keep an eye on the news section of *The Outer Circle* for the formal announcement.

You can send any of these materials either electronically or by regular mail. The e-mail address is toc@saa-recovery.org and the regular mail address is ISO of SAA, P.O. Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270-0949.

I look forward to hearing from you.

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. 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.

----- 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

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 is in its second year of service work together, and plans to meet next on Sunday, November 4, 2007 at 12:00 p.m. Central Time. For information on how to participate, please contact Gary at BoardNE@saa-recovery.org.

Members of other regions are encouraged to meet with one another to discuss cooperative planning as well by contacting their regional Board representative. You can find your Board representative's service email address listed in each issue of *The Outer Circle*.

2009 Convention

The local fellowship of the 2009 SAA Convention Committee is excited to host the 2009 SAA Convention. Though it seems like that date is so very far in the future, people with prior convention experience assure us that it's never too early to start planning something of this scale and importance. Accordingly, we're getting started!

Our accomplishments to date include signing a contract with our host hotel. That hotel is conveniently located to dozens of great restaurants and the local transit system, which will help you get to and from the local airport and many other local destinations.

We'll periodically submit updates on our efforts. In the meantime, start making your travel plans and come see us in 2009.

21st Annual
SAA International Convention



2008

*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, 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.

¡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; 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 Annual Appeal

As soon as this issue of *The Outer Circle* goes into the mail, work will begin on the ISO's Annual Appeal.

The first appeal, sent out in the late summer of 1993, was not an annual appeal. It was an emergency. The then National Service Organization had just moved to Houston, bringing with it a file cabinet, an IBM 286 and an Apple computer, an impact printer, twelve boxes of literature, \$450 in the bank, and \$5,000 in overdue bills.

The appeal consisted of a letter to the fellowship telling them about the situation. Letters were also sent to all creditors, with each letter including a check for \$1 and a promise to pay the balance owed within three months. It took the fellowship exactly three months to respond with the \$5,000 needed to settle all debts.

Since then there have been no emergency appeals, though the custom of making an appeal each fall has helped keep operating income ahead of operating expenses. The cost of the mailing runs from \$500 to \$700 and the brings in a response of from \$3,000 to \$5,000.

While this year's appeal will again not be due to an emergency, it will be special.

In May, the 2007 Delegates voted to "direct its Literature Committee to produce a pocket sized version of SAA's basic text, *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, for sale by the ISO."

The pocket edition of *Sex Addicts Anonymous* will consist of the first 98 pages, which is that part of the SAA basic text that precedes the stories. This more portable book will be a boon to newcomers and old timers alike. For inmates it will be especially convenient. The goal is to have it available in time for the 2008 Convention.

Another goal is to raise enough money to pay for expenses related to preparing the manuscript for printing and for the first printing itself. This was the course followed for the first printing of the Green Book, and it set into motion a process that has provided the money needed for each reprinting and that has become the model for how to approach big ticket literature projects.

That is what will make the upcoming Annual Appeal special. Its aim will be to raise \$5,000 for operating expenses, plus another \$5,000 to pay for the initial printing of the pocket edition of *Sex Addicts Anonymous*. Please look for it coming soon in the mail and on the ISO website as well. For those who would like to be among the first to contribute, please contact the ISO office (800-477-8191).

ISO Financial News

ISO Income/Expense Summary As of August 31 , 2007

	August	Monthly Average	Year End
NET OPERATING INCOME			
Net Sales	8,163	7,230	57,839
Donations	13,139	13,827	110,613
General Donations	8,901	9,288	74,302
LifeLine Partners	4,111	4,240	33,917
Designated Donations	127	299	2,394
Miscellaneous Income	89	1,978	15,823
TOTAL NET OPERATING INCOME	21,391	23,035	184,275
OPERATING EXPENSES			
Wages/Benefits/Taxes	15,430	15,672	125,377
Program Related	9,088	8,601	68,809
Wages - Other	3,231	3,423	27,384
Benefits	2,035	2,017	16,136
Payroll Taxes	1,076	1,631	13,048
Insurance	273	247	1,979
Depreciation	175	156	1,250
Postage	8	127	1,014
Phone	220	213	1,706
Website Related	38	46	366
Occupancy	1,537	1,386	11,091
Office Related	633	854	6,828
Professional Fees	0	92	737
Financial	953	1,003	8,027
Plain Brown Rapper	1,147	568	4,543
Board & Committees	1,906	1,660	13,281
Total Operating Expenses	22,320	22,024	176,199
TOTAL NET OPERATING SURPLUS	-929	1,010	8,076
NONOPERATIONAL INCOME			
2007 ISO Convention	0	8,316	66,531
Delegate Fees	0	693	5,541
TOTAL NONOPERATIONAL INCOME	0	9,009	72,072
NONOPERATIONAL EXPENSES			
2007 ISO Convention	341	6,242	49,932
Delegate Meeting	0	768	6,143
Convention Related Travel	0	2,112	16,899
TOTAL NONOPERATIONAL EXPENSES	341	9,122	72,974
TOTAL NONOPERATIONAL SURPLUS	-341	-113	-902
ISO SURPLUS – ALL INCOME/EXPENSES	-1,270	897	7,174

When reviewing ISO income, it is more instructive to use net figures rather than gross. While gross income does show how much money flows into the organization, net income tells how much is actually available to pay the bills. Here are the five sources of the ISO's net income and their amounts through August

Donations (individual + group donations – fund raising expenses)	110,153
Literature (sales + shipping fees – literature expenses)	57,839
Convention (convention income – convention expenses)	16,599
Miscellaneous Income (interest + Endowment Fund Distribution)	15,823
Delegate Meeting (delegate fees – meeting expenses)	-602

Thus far into 2007, donations have accounted for 55% of net ISO income, literature 29%, convention 8%, and miscellaneous 8%. The delegate meeting was almost a wash and did not figure significantly as net income.

By the end of the year, donations as a percentage of total net income will have to grow by about 10%, if the ISO is to finish the year in the black as it has for the past several years. That the ISO has been able to do this has been due mainly to the Giving Thanks event put on annually by the Bay Area fellowship and to the arrival of relatively large individual year-end donations.

Perhaps, as the fellowship grows in awareness of the ISO's reliance on donations, the burden will shift from the few to the many. Only then will the ISO become truly stable financially.

Literature

How I Got into Recovery by Richard W.

My name is Richard and I am a sex addict. For 13 years, as a happily married father of two and an elementary school teacher, I had participated in behaviors that can best be described as anonymous sex with men. I didn't consider myself gay but was always afraid that people would find out what I was doing. They would see me as a gay man and I would be destroyed and looked upon as something horrible. It would end my marriage and I would be completely alone. This thought, along with the fear that I had contracted some sexually transmitted disease, terrified me. Together, they were usually enough to get me started on "acting out."

My early days of acting out didn't often include the terrifying thoughts. Most days, whether I was in the U.S. or in an overseas location, I thought that no one would ever suspect what I was doing. I had my fantasies, obsessions, and the people and places where I could go to have them fulfilled. I had no regard for the fact that my behaviors were (and still are) punishable by arrest, imprisonment and even stoning and/or beheading in some countries. Rationalizing for "acting out" purposes, I convinced myself that sex was just another normal body function. After all, I had been engaging regularly in sexual behaviors. I had also been masturbating often, at school, at home and anywhere I felt the urge. Masturbation was acceptable. "What's wrong with this behavior?" I said to myself.

Since 1975, starting shortly after I got married, I had been participating in dangerous behaviors that could jeopardize the well-being of my wife and my children. I didn't care about myself. The shame and disgust I always felt after I "acted out" were what I deserved. I rationalized my actions by thinking that "if they really knew who I was, they wouldn't want to be near me." Then a voice, a feeling and sometimes a compulsion I could not stop, would say, "Go act out! That will make you feel better."

Day in and day out, whether I was at work or on vacation, my mind would be full of sexual thought. Any time I started thinking clearly about what I had done in the past, whether it was concerning sex, social mistakes, or anything else that would make me feel like I was absolutely nothing but crap, I would get the urge to "act out." If I felt ashamed and saddened by things I thought I would probably do in the future, I would "act out." These thoughts, along with worrying about what I was going to do when the compulsion would start up again, were always available to take me over the edge into my behaviors.

Some days the knowledge that I was breaking all the codes of conduct and

tenets of religion, marriage and common decency would repeat itself in my mind over and over again. These thoughts would ruminate in my head until I could barely stand it. I would suddenly hear, and sometimes even feel in the tightening of my chest, a clear and desperate voice say, in what seemed to be a helpful, loving and seductive manner, "Go act out!" Some of the questions that repeated themselves in my mind were "Am I gay?", "I have used masturbation since I was four. Can I go on participating in this behavior?", "Do I have AIDS?", "Does my wife know?" I really felt out of control, especially because these thoughts mixed themselves with such mundane matters as "What should I do about this or that?" or "Where should I go for lunch?" Some days, particularly when I found myself busy with other activities such as work, eating, or watching movies, the voices repeating these questions quieted down, but not very often.

In the summer of 1987, I was in a hotel room in a European city arranging for an apartment and all the necessities required to move my wife and children from the Middle East to a brand new life in this city. During preparations for the move the thoughts came back once again: "I cannot continue with my life like this. I'm constantly filled with fear about my health. We must return to the U.S. I must tell everyone that this is not going to work. But what will I tell them? How can I explain it to my wife and close friends? Still, I know we cannot move here. I must go back to the U.S." But why was I starting to have these thoughts? What had happened to me in the past few days? I didn't know why we had to go back. Maybe I was frightened about having to do everything myself in this new city. I wouldn't have servants and an all-powerful company to do all the work for me. I would be on my own. Was this is a good move for us? Could my wife work? How would we be able to raise our children? Who could stay home with them? What about money and all of our belongings?

The result of these questions haunting me over and over again was that I lost myself in a four-day binge. I spent four days in an almost constant state of illicit sexual excitement, searching for anonymous and dangerous sex with men, looking at pornography and, in general, getting all of my addict's sexual fantasies fulfilled. I searched everywhere in a city where I did not speak the language and so did not know where to go or who to see in order to get my addict's wishes met. Still, I had learned that in Europe I could easily fulfill my addict's needs and desires, and with a little resourcefulness, my addict was able to find what he was looking for. For those four days my addict did everything he wanted and then I went back to my hotel ready to go on with my life and arrange for the move.

But, sitting on my bed, looking at all the pornographic magazines surrounding me, something happened inside of me. Something made me focus on what I had been doing these last days. I reached the understanding that I was going to go to another location simply to do the same things I had been doing for years and years all over the world. I was still going to have anonymous sex with men. I was still going to find some man to have a relationship

with that was strictly sexual. Nothing was going to change. My life would go on and the thoughts concerning sexually transmitted diseases would continue hanging over me. "We cannot move here," I thought. This understanding shook me, made me tremble, and startled me with the truth to the extent that I suddenly and finally came to my senses. I was filled with fear and needed assurance that I could give up the dream that my addict been living. While I needed friends to tell me that I could come back to an overseas career later, I wouldn't be able to tell them in return that I only wanted to come back when I was able to work without the veil of shameful and frightening behavior constantly reminding me of what I had done and urging me to do the behaviors again and again.

Now that I had come out of my sexual stupor, something happened to me. I began to feel like I was on a railroad track and a big killer of a train was absolutely headed right for me. This train was going to hit me, and that would be the least of the other incredibly bad things that were about to happen to me. I would feel unbelievable shame because I would be revealed as gay. I would develop an incurable disease, if indeed I had not done so already. My life, my future, my (primarily material) success, and my marriage would all be over. What was I going to do? How could I carry on? Should I just let the train roll over me or should I get out of the way? It was at that moment that some part of me that *wanted* to live, that *wanted* to see more of life, that *wanted* to breathe, eat, play, and go on with all my success, decided to get off of the track. It was a completely normal urge to survive. I listened to it and I acted upon it.

In the beginning, after returning to the U.S., I tried to control my behaviors by going to counseling. I had three or four sessions a week with a litany of counselors, psychologists, psychiatrists and pastors. It was my work with my pastor that helped me understand that I had an addiction, a sex addiction, and that I could be helped. He was the person that pointed me to SAA. At first, I was put on many different types of medication, but to no avail. I couldn't understand what was causing these insatiable cravings. It was not until I started attending SAA meetings, chairing them, organizing them, and advertising them, that I truly began to see that my life *could* change. I understood that it would take time, patience, and honesty, and that it would be something that I didn't have to do alone.

Now, by the grace of my Higher Power, I can state that my addiction is not what it had been before. I have a peace and understanding of life that allows me to see my creator's power all the time. I remind myself constantly that I only have today to live and that I must let myself and all of my future be enveloped in the light of my creator. In this manner, I can go on, living each day as a special gift, being as optimistic as possible, something that I was never able to achieve before. Life is good and goes along at a lovely, methodical, slow pace. I find that I often hear, almost daily in fact, a sweet loving voice coming from nowhere and saying "you don't have to worry; everything is in the light and is taken care of."

Dear Grace

Submitted by SAA Women's Outreach

Statement of Purpose for Dear Grace:

To reach out to all women with a desire to stop addictive sexual behavior through this printed medium and share with the fellowship the types of questions the Grace e-mail receives.

Names have been changed to protect anonymity

Dear Grace:

I went to SAA for a while and I couldn't handle all of the God stuff, but I can't stop sexual acting out either, what should I do?

Agnostic in Alaska.

Hi, Agnostic:

The first thing that comes to mind is that Sex Addicts Anonymous is a spiritual program based on the principles and traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous. Membership is open to all who have a desire to stop addictive sexual behavior. Our fellowship is open to women and men, regardless of age, race, religion, ethnic background, marital status or occupation. So you are welcome here!

Belief in a Higher Power can be difficult for many of us in SAA who come to the program with a faith that was damaged in one way or another, or those of us who never had any spiritual beliefs at all. Some of us came from strict, judgmental religious backgrounds that reinforced our fear and shame. Many of us didn't believe in God, or were uncertain as to what spiritual beliefs we were willing to accept, if any. Whether we are atheists, agnostics, or those with strong religious convictions, we may find ourselves having reservations about spirituality.

One of the aspects of coming to believe in a Higher Power is finding out what spiritual concepts make sense to us. We need to be willing to set aside old ideas and prejudices, try new solutions to old problems, and listen to the spiritual experiences and ideas of others in the fellowship. What works for others may not be an exact fit for us. But if we are patient and open-minded, we will discover an understanding of a Higher Power that is unique to us, and that we are comfortable with. Ultimately, the specifics of our belief are not as important as faith. The most important thing is to attend meetings live or on the phone and get help from a sponsor to stay sober. Keep coming back!

Turning Off My Radar

by Mike T.

[Editor's Note: This article originally appeared in the October 1996 issue of the SAA newsletter.]

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

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

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

I discussed it with my therapist, who recommended that I carefully consider the ultimate consequences of this behavior. What will eventually happen if I keep indulging in my habitual practice of staring at attractive women?

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

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

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

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

I will begin to blame others for my pain, and I will stop trusting them, espe-

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

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

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

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

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

Isolated in Okinawa by Marty B.

Hi, my name is Marty and I am a sex addict. I am a newcomer to SAA. I am currently in Japan and have started my recovery process. Without benefit of a local sponsor I have acquired an “E-sponsor” from the Men’s Outreach Network (thanks, Dave). We correspond weekly. It was my first contact with another sufferer who felt like I did. He was very supportive and gave me some initial guidance and acceptance. Another sex addict and I have started a local closed/mixed group (thanks to Paul). Our group should be registered soon. For now it is just the two of us. We meet weekly and share with each other. We are hoping to gain some new members, expand our group, and reach out to other sufferers. I have read all the PBRs back to January 2003. I would like to pass my deepest gratitude to all past and future contributors to the newsletter. Aside from the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, the PBR has by far been the most helpful and inspirational to me in my recovery. I am looking forward to returning to America and joining a group (thanks again, Dave), asking for a local sponsor and starting the “work.” I have made it to Step Three and so far my HP has graced me with serenity and acceptance of his will. If I may, I'd like to pass a helpful quote to all newcomers: “Believe, let go, and pray.” Thank you, PBR, for being a small oasis in my desert of addiction. Sober from inner-circle behavior since 23 Apr 2007.

I wish you all Serenity and Sobriety.

Las consecuencias de la adicción o el mito de Sísifo

por Rodolfo

Hola. Soy Rodolfo, un adicto al sexo en recuperación. Quisiera compartir algo que siento se ha constituido en un punto de inflexión en mi recuperación.

Hace cuatro años llegué a SAA. Soy de Argentina, y vivo en Buenos Aires. Aquí somos lamentablemente pocos compañeros y la recuperación se hace muy difícil, si no hay compañeros con tiempo de abstinencia, dispuestos a compartir el programa, además de las dificultades y negaciones que, todos saben, conlleva el tener esta adicción. Pero les aclaro, que pese a todo, hay gente aunque poca, que me ha ayudado mucho. Pese a ser grande, esta adicción nunca me dejó, por ejemplo, encarar mis estudios con dedicación, y cuando pude tener el suficiente tiempo de abstinencia y recuperación decidí terminar mis estudios universitarios de una buena vez. Entonces dejé de venir por casi ocho meses a la comunidad. Pero luego me aferré al programa de nuevo y así tengo un año limpio de mi peor conducta que es el sexo anónimo, y llevo cinco meses de ningún tipo de práctica adictiva. Soy gay y estoy en pareja desde hace mucho tiempo. Quise proteger mi vida y a mi pareja de mi peor enemigo: la adicción sexual.

Alguna vez quise mandar algo escrito por mí al boletín, pero la verdad es que nunca tuve algo interesante para compartir según mi punto de vista. Hasta hoy. Esto sí creo que es bueno para que todos los que se acercan a SAA puedan leerlo, por eso es que me animo a contarles esto, tan increíble, que me está pasando.

Hace aproximadamente cuatro años que empecé a sentir fuertes dolores musculares, a veces muy intensos. Al principio se trataba sólo del brazo y la mano derecha (mano con la que practicaba diariamente mi práctica adictiva en solitario). También tenía contracturas en el hombro derecho, en la parte entre el brazo y el hombro más precisamente. Luego, este dolor comenzó en la espalda, en la juntura de los dorsales. Todo venía acompañado de "parestias," que son los conocidas "hormigueos" o calambres. Después, también tuve un dolor en el pecho, que me hacía pensar (o temer) por el corazón. Hasta que di con un kinesiólogo (fisioterapeuta creo que le llaman en los EE.UU.) que trabaja la quiropraxia y otras técnicas manuales y lo hace con deportistas y bailarines. Me dijo lo que tenía y me propuso unas sesiones terapéuticas caras, pero que decidí pagarlas por mi propio bienestar. El asunto es que tenía toda la parte escapular casi paralizada. O sea, que tenía un abarrotamiento muscular mayor y que esto impedía la movilidad en toda la parte superior del torso y repercutía en las extremidades. Hoy, puedo sentir, tal vez por primera vez, porque no recuerdo antes esto que siento: las vértebras de toda mi columna. O sea: yo endurecí mi columna al punto de no sentirla y quedé rígida, casi inmovi-

ble causándome todos estos problemas.

¿Y qué tiene que ver esto con la adicción? se preguntarán Uds. Pues bien: horas y horas de estar parado en sitios inapropiados, casi rígido, a la espera de conseguir a alguien para tener contacto sexual anónimo. Horas y horas de caminatas en busca de “la presa.” A esto hay que sumarle el miedo que todo esto me causaba, la tremenda soledad del adicto, y el estado de estar alerta y la tensión que esto significa. También hay que sumar horas y horas de gimnasio, si bien nunca levanté mucho peso porque sencillamente no lo aguantó. Debo confesar que tengo casi treinta años de gimnasio, que por supuesto, era una extensión de mi práctica adictiva. Para un gay adicto al sexo, un gimnasio es como un supermercado de víveres, claro. Luego apareció la internet y el uso devastador adictivo del ordenador, horas y horas de chat o en busca de material pornográfico para satisfacer al adicto. Ya estaba allí en SAA y por supuesto no era consciente del daño que me estaba lentamente ocasionando.

Hoy, por primera vez, me siento fluido. Siento mis piernas y mi cuerpo sano y estoy liberando mi espalda de esta pesada piedra de Sísifo, que, como Uds. saben, por desafiar a los dioses, tenía todos los días que llevar una pesada piedra hasta la cima de una montaña, y desde ahí dejarla caer. Entonces la piedra rodaba y llegaba al fondo donde quedaba inerte y Sísifo tenía que volver a buscarla para llevarla de nuevo a la cima y así . . . siempre. Sólo por hoy no soy más Sísifo, gracias a SAA y a mis compañeros en este duro pero maravilloso camino de la recuperación. Gracias a todos por poder leer esto que es parte de mi recuperación. Saludos desde el grupo más austral del mundo, desde Argentina, “estrella del sur.” Fuerza y adelante!



The Consequences of the Addiction or the Myth of Sisyphus

by Rodolfo

Hi. I'm Rodolfo, a sex addict in recovery. I would like to share something that I believe has constituted a turning point in my recovery.

I came to SAA four years ago. I'm from Argentina, and I live in Buenos Aires. Here there are unfortunately few of us and so recovery is very difficult, without companions who have some abstinence, and who want to share the program; not to mention the difficulties and denials that, as everyone knows, come with this addiction. But I'm here to tell you that, despite everything, there are people, few in number though they may be, who have helped me a lot. Even though I am physically large, this addiction never let me, for example, pursue my studies with dedication, and when I succeeded in having enough time in abstinence and recovery I decided to terminate my university studies once and for all. Then I stopped coming around SAA for eight months. But then I seized the program again and thus I have a year free of my worst behavior, which is anonymous sex, and I have five months without any kind of addictive behavior. I'm gay and I have been in a relationship for a long time. I tried to protect my life and my partner from my worst enemy: sexual addiction.

I have tried to send something to the newsletter, but the truth is that I never had anything interesting to share as I saw it. Until today. I do believe that it is good that everyone who comes to SAA be able to read it, so that is why I have plucked up the courage to tell you this story that, incredible as it is, is happening to me.

About four years ago I started to feel strong muscular pains, sometimes very intense. At first they were only in my right arm and hand (the hand with which I carried out on a daily basis my solitary sexual practices). I also had spasms in my right shoulder or, to be precise, in the part between my arm and my shoulder. Then the pain started in my back, where the dorsals joined. All of this was accompanied by paresthesias, that prickling or tingling sensation. Then I also got a pain in my chest which caused me to think about (or fear for) my heart. That's when I found a kinesiologist (I think he would be called a physiotherapist in the United States) who practices chiropractics and other manual techniques with athletes and dancers. He told me what I had and proposed some therapeutic sessions which would be expensive, but which I decided to pay for, for my own well-being. The problem was in my entire shoulder area, which was just about paralyzed. That is to say, I had a major muscular tightening that was preventing mobility in the whole upper part of my chest and that was affecting my extremities. Today, I can feel, perhaps for the first time, since I don't recall from before what I am feeling now: the vertebrates of my whole spinal column. Or to put it another way: I had hardened my spinal column to the

point of not being able to feel it, and it became rigid, almost immobile, causing me all these problems.

“And what does this have to do with the addiction?” you are probably asking yourselves. All right, then: hours and hours of being motionless in inappropriate places, almost rigid, waiting to find someone with whom I could have anonymous sex. Hours and hours of cruising. To this I have to add the fear that all of this was causing me, the tremendous solitude of the addict, and the resulting states of vigilance and tension. I also have to add hours and hours of going to the gym, even if I never lifted much weight because I couldn’t stand to. I have to confess that I’ve been going to the gym for almost thirty years which was of course an extension of my addictive practices. For a gay sex addict, a gymnasium is like a supermarket. Then the internet appeared and my devastating use of the computer, hours and hours of chatting or searching for pornographic material to satisfy the addict. I was in SAA and of course was not aware of the harm that I was slowly causing myself.

Today, for the first time, I feel limber. My legs and my body feel healthy and I am freeing my back from this heavy weight of Sisyphus who, as you know, because he defied the gods, eternally had to carry a heavy weight to the top of a mountain, and from there drop it. Then the weight would roll to the bottom where it stopped and Sisyphus had to go find it and carry it back to the top and thus . . . forever. Just for today I am no longer Sisyphus, thanks to SAA and my companions in this hard but wonderful road of recovery. Thanks to all for reading this piece which is part of my recovery. Greetings from the southernmost group in the world, from Argentina, “the star of the south.” Onwards and upwards!



Reaching Addicts Though Mailings to Therapists and Clergy

by Dean L.

How do addicts find SAA? One hundred SAA attendees were surveyed and the results were:

#1. I heard about it in another Twelve-Step meeting.

#2. My therapist sent me.

Response #1 (other Twelve-Step meetings) indicates the value of posting literature at locations where recovery meetings take place. Also, sex addicts attending other Twelve-Step programs may consider the value of appropriately disclosing their issues, strength and hope in ways that acknowledge the availability of SAA.

Response #2 (therapists) showed the value of making sure all local therapists know about local SAA meetings.

The description in *Sex Addicts Anonymous* of Tradition Eleven says "In our public relations, we strive to make our existence and our message known, so that sex addicts seeking help will know how to find us."

So, first the San Francisco Intergroup and next the California Central Coast (Santa Barbara Area) Intergroup decided to raise therapist awareness through a mailing. These campaigns and the mailing materials were sanctioned by ISO.

Your Intergroup can easily duplicate these efforts.

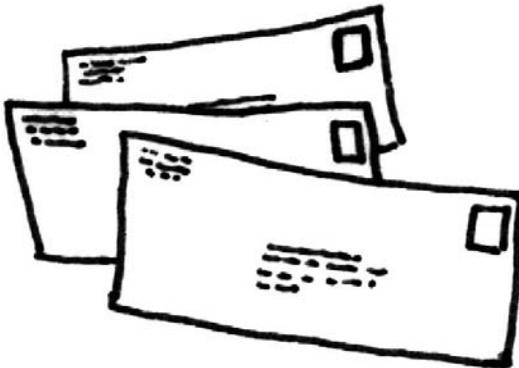
Here are the steps we took:

1. Defined the geographic region where we had meetings.
2. Contacted a mailing house and asked for a quote for printing and mailing to therapists in that region. Both Intergroups decided to use the same marketing agency, which we found to be professional and discreet. Because they used bulk mailing techniques they were cheaper than our using volunteer labor licking stamps.
3. We sent an envelope to each therapist containing:
 - a. A letter in their language highlighting the issue of sex addiction and the availability of SAA as a resource. This was written with input and approval from therapists and ISO.
 - b. We hired another group to create "business cards" stating how to contact SAA and find a meeting. Therapists can hand these cards to addicts.

- c. A list of local meetings.
4. The cost came to about 65 cents per package sent. Money was raised by passing an extra basket for several months. SAA members were generally very enthusiastic about this outreach effort and some members chose to make special larger individual contributions in the spirit of the Fifth and Seventh Traditions.

The Santa Barbara area membership was sufficiently enthusiastic that it contributed funds to send the outreach package (with a different letter) to local clergy. The same mail-order house generated the clergy contact list and handled the mailing.

To see a copy of a sample letter to therapists and to see the sample business card, go to <http://www.bayareasaa.org> and click on "outreach material." You can also contact Carol Ann R. at the ISO (dfs@saa-recovery.org) or Dean L. at gratefulness@earthlink.net.



In my Pocket

by John R.

A few months ago I decided to carry my SAA desire chip in my pocket where I normally carry my change to remind me constantly that I am in recovery. It has worked pretty well. When I think about acting out I touch the chip to help me remember what is important. Two weeks ago I decided to examine the chip in detail. On the front it says "One Day" and "From shame to grace." On the back is the Serenity Prayer. Looking more carefully, however, I noticed that what was printed on my chip was, in fact, an error. What it actually said was "God grant me the things I cannot change" instead of "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change." What's up? Am I being sent a special message?

Thinking about it, I came to realize that the message I was getting was perfect for me. I desperately need for God to put obstacles in my path that I, by myself, cannot remove. I need to live a life where I am not in charge. Since my disclosure of my sexual behavior my wife and I have been separated, despite continuing marital therapy that hasn't been resolved. I can't change that. My son is ten miles north of Baghdad and will be there until February, and his unit has orders to return in January 2009. I can't change that. I go to my SAA and AA meetings and work the steps and in the process I have come to believe that I have defects of character: I can be rageful, I constantly find myself taking the victim's seat, I am narcissistic. I am working on these shortcomings with my therapist, but I'm not seeing a whole lot of progress. At this point I'm not sure that I can change these serious defects. What to do? First I have to surrender to the fact that this is just the way my life is. In a perfect world I could instantly change myself, but my reality is that I am an imperfect human being, carrying a lot of baggage. The only way out for me is to hand myself over to the care of God as I understand him, trusting that only through his grace can my life be made more tolerable. I have to pray that he will give me insight into what his plans are for me. I have to pray that through some change in me he will make me a more effective and loving husband, father and participant in my fellowships.

It is interesting that we, unlike the ninety percent of our fellows who are not addicted and/or are not in recovery, have been brought to understand that we are truly flawed. Working the steps, attending meetings, being involved in service activities constantly remind us that we are not perfect, that we have miles to go before we rest. In a way it is as if we are members of the elect – those who have been specially chosen to understand what life is really all about.

I need for God to put these obstacles in my way continually so that I can remember my shortcomings and my need for a power greater than myself to show me the way and to give me peace.

Spiritual Transformation

--Let's Get Started!

by Santi L.

I once read something that said that in order to become a butterfly, one must want to fly so much that one is willing to give up being a caterpillar. So it is with butterflies . . .and so it is with us. In general, we addicts are motivated to a particular course of action by one of two compelling forces, either through fear of pain or loss (losing what we have), or through an anticipation of pleasure (getting what we want) or gain.

When we truly recognize the immense reward which comes from our daily transformation by working the steps, and we focus on the changes God is helping us with each and every day, we will, instead of looking upon our development with fear and uncertainty, change and thereby be transformed, ignoring any perceived obstacles on the path to our destination. Necessarily, past hurts and rejection, prior experiences, and preconceived notions must be forgotten and left behind. Any short-term discomfort or trials that must be borne along the way will seem a small price to pay, when our focus is ever on the final result. Remember, there can be no conditions to our commitment to spiritual growth.

Once stretched to a new dimension of understanding, faith and belief by working the program of recovery, the thought of returning to former ways will not be an option.

Steps One through Three are designed to restore our relationship with God. As we begin to work these first liberating steps we do not let any prejudice we may have against spiritual terms or against the church or temple we grew up in deter us from honestly asking ourselves what the steps mean to us. This was all we needed to commence spiritual growth. The idea that we might encounter an entity, a higher power interested in our welfare, was all we needed for a start. The concept of something watching over us should not be all that difficult to embrace, especially when we look at the mess we have made of our lives, the risks that we have taken, the severity of our disease and the fact that we have somehow survived . . . so far.

As wonderful as it is to restore and develop a living relationship with God through working the first few steps, we should sense that his spirit calls us to much more. Equally as important and equally promising is his desire to transform us. In fact without this transformation it will seem as if we have only traveled partway. Obviously we need to be in touch with God daily as we seek to be changed, and we need to recognize that it is only through growing closer to Him and striving to grow in his likeness (Steps Six and Seven) that we will ever achieve what we so much desire and are called to.

In as far as the program of recovery is concerned, we are to strive for per-

fection and accept progress, not strive for progress and accept failure. It sounds impossible, but at the same time God wants us to know that he has given us everything we need to be perfect, to become more and more like him. We do not need to wait to die to experience God in all his fullness. We can be changed "from one degree of glory to another" right here and now. Let God's spirit fill us with his love and set us free of everything that does not conform to God's intention for our lives.

One character from a famous musical calls us to give in to "the power of the night" and when he does, it is very seductive, much like the temptations that are sent our way daily. Some of us even blame God for the inability to deal rightly with those temptations that come our way, as if somehow it is his will. But, do we actually believe that it is God's will for us to live out our lives in the darkness of our mind, being a prisoner to our addiction, without his love and care and that of our brothers and sisters? Does that sound like a Higher Power or a Lower Power?

God has a deep desire to transform us by the renewal of our minds. He longs to show us the way to perfection. He is the only one who can transform us, but we have an important part in this transformation process by diligently and persistently working the steps with a sponsor to the best of our abilities, no matter what happens. Recovery cannot be contingent on outside influences.

Immediately after the Third Step prayer, the Big Book states that "little permanent effect will take place unless at once followed by a thorough fearless and moral inventory of ourselves." My experience tells and shows me that God will not do for us what he has given us the power to do ourselves! It's up to us . . . and God. We may never find out what the exact formula is, how much of our spiritual growth is a result of our work and how much is God's grace. It really does not matter. What does matter is that we know that it is up to us to yield ourselves to him. It is up to us to learn through daily prayer and daily examination the ins and outs of our inner lives. Our part is doing a thorough Fourth Step and then, as we work the rest of the Steps, we continue that Tenth Step process throughout our lives, learning how we react to the good and bad events of our days. It requires self-examination so that we can see how our emotions, memories, hang-ups, and imaginations affect the decisions we make and the actions we take. It requires determining which aspects of our lives we should treasure and develop, and which parts need to be discarded and put to death. It requires not only making sure that the major character defects stay dormant but also that we look for those deep seated co-addict type of defects like people pleasing, being over-judgmental, being controlling or needing to take care of humanity in order to feel okay. There is much work to be done if we are to succeed in our spiritual transformation. For most of us this is a lifetime process and Action is the key word in our recovery.

Thought to ponder . . . Growing old is inevitable, growing up is optional; growing spiritually will define us.

Coming to Terms

by Aaron G.

[Editor's Note: Aaron writes to The Outer Circle from prison.]

I have had a hard time with the terms “child molester” and “pedophile.” I have never been attracted to small children. Before I was arrested I had an interview with a detective asking about what I had done. She said that she had met and talked to my victim. She told me that due to her stage of development, I was *not* a pedophile. Many other people, and myself, agreed with this statement.

I started over-analyzing the terms. By the definitions in my medical dictionary, again I was not a pedophile. The definition of a pedophile is: “the act or fantasy on the part of an adult of engaging in sexual activity with a child or children.” The definition of “child” is: “a person between birth and puberty.” The definition of “adolescent” is: “a young person who has undergone puberty, but not reached full maturity; a teenager.” These definitions strengthened my previous beliefs. They took me away from the point.

I cannot let small differences in definition alter reality. A young teenager is still a child. I molested a young teenager; I molested a child. Her lack of full development, mentally and physically makes her a child. It makes her vulnerable.

Through my contacts with SAA and the newsletter, I have come to find that I am not alone. I have choices, people who understand my issues, and support. I know that with these things I can be more than just a label.

I have had to come to terms,
I am a child molester.
But through SAA
I am a child molester who can recover!

Why Shouldn't We Laugh?

by John R., Miami, FL

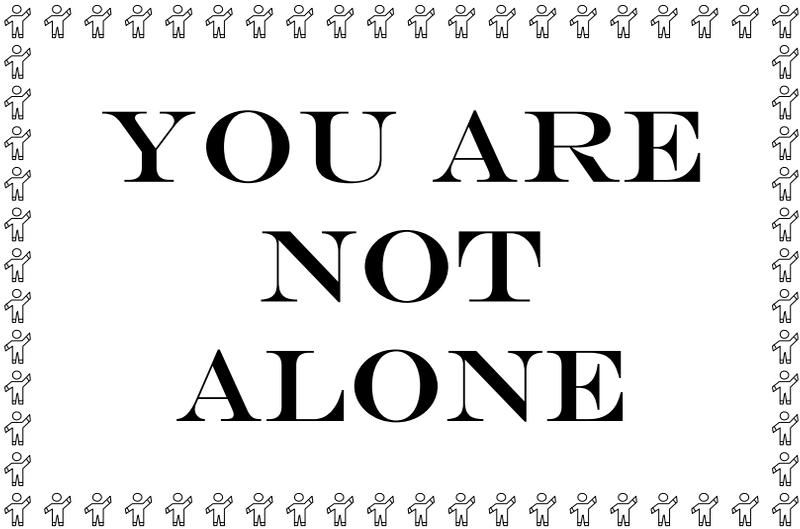
I was listening to another SAA member share some of his First Step with me recently. I was moved by the endless tales of obsession, compulsion and fear, misdirected desires, longing and hurt. I was tearful as I identified with the speaker and, reflecting on my past, said "I always just wanted to be OK." I wanted to fit in, to belong, not to feel outcast, an outsider. Such a rich fantasy life I developed, to ease the pain, to escape into, to feel OK. After a while, I could not "differentiate the true from the false." I always craved the power to transform my life, and this craving manifested itself in obsession with many seductive sexual fantasy images which I thought would fix me if I could obtain them and possess them. Eventually such fantasy turned into action in the form of sexual acting-out. These patterns carved their way into my nervous system, and with the addition of alcohol and drugs in my teen-age years, multiple addictions grew and flourished: I had been an addict waiting to happen. After hitting a high bottom on drugs and alcohol, I still had many more years of acting out sexually before the grace of God carried me into SAA.

There's a good reason that one of the most prominent signs in recovery rooms reads: "You are not alone." Because for me and many addicts I have heard, the disease of sex addiction breeds in isolation and loneliness. A recent meditation spoke to the idea of loneliness, describing it as a transition period between feeling disconnected and being connected, and representing a deep longing for connection. It's easy for me to get stuck in the negativity, in the problem. "Live in the Solution," as one program friend has said. My one problem is a conscious separation from God, manifested in multiple addictive behaviors, self-centeredness and destructive character traits. My solution today is described precisely in Step Twelve: "a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps."

One of the bright spots of my recovery today is working with others as a sponsor, or "spiritual coaching" as I consider it. This yields great dividends in feeling useful and connected to others and helps overcome my excessive concentration upon myself. My recovery book tells me: "If sex is very troublesome, we throw ourselves the harder into helping others. We think of their needs and work for them. This takes us out of ourselves. It quiets the imperious urge, when to yield would mean heartache." Asking for help is another way to reduce my self-centeredness. My experience is that the solution is implicit in my acceptance of the problem. By process of elimination: If I'm powerless, what do I need? Power! If my life is unmanageable, what do I need? A Manager! That's exactly what I get by working SAA's Twelve Steps. A seed contains the innate, divine wisdom to produce a flower. Just give it fertile soil and sufficient nutrition. This is how I grow in SAA.

One renowned author has stated that: "The deeper pain carves into my being, the more joy I can contain." Despair and shame have carved deep chasms into my psyche; then, by the grace of God, my spirit awakened. Now, the scale has been reversed, an opposite image presented, and to the precise extent that I have descended into addiction, can I now scale the heights of joy in connecting with others and carrying the message of hope. My great passion for recovery now comes from a place where I can feel OK about myself, and grow in my relationships with God and other people, because I'm connected to a Power greater than myself which will solve my problem.

"We absolutely insist on enjoying life," says my recovery book, and "Why shouldn't we laugh? We have recovered, and have been given the power to help others." May God grant us that it always be so.



YOU ARE NOT ALONE

From the Editor

by Mike L.

Greetings and welcome to the September/October issue of *The Outer Circle*. I hope that you have had a good summer.

And speaking of summer, I recently read another in the series of mystery books that I started reading back in the 60s. I devoured a number of them while I was in high school and every couple of years I pick up another one that I might have missed before. Summer reminds me of these books for two reasons: First, I mostly read them during summer vacations, and second, in the mythical city in which this series of police tales takes place, it seems as though it is always either summer or winter, either miserably hot or extremely cold. In that regard, even though the city described in the books is a thinly-disguised version of New York, I think the either/or of the weather probably more aptly describes my hometown of Houston. I only mention this series of books because they take me back to a time in my life when everything was easier and simpler and before my various addictions had kicked in. I'm grateful to be in recovery today and grateful that I'm still able to go back and enjoy those things from my childhood that meant so much to me at the time.

Earlier today I wrote a letter to a prisoner who asked me whether I thought he was an addict and whether he needed the program. He told me a little of his history to help me in making the decision for him. I gave him the only answer I am able to give anyone: that I can't decide who needs the program. Each person has to make that decision individually. We do have a 12-question pamphlet called "Sex Addicts Anonymous" available to assist in answering the question. I can say that I have yet to encounter someone in the program who answered only two or three of the questions "yes." Usually all twelve questions received a "yes" answer or else the member says something like "I answered ten of the questions 'yes' and two of them 'no,' and on those two I was lying."

I have this topic in mind today in particular because of the numerous sex scandals that have been making the front pages of late. While it would be easy for me to say "Well, this one is a sex addict, and that one is a sex addict," the truth of the matter is that I don't know who is and who is not. And no matter how much I might want to believe that this or that given person is an addict, I can only make that decision for myself. I know that I am a sex addict and I know that today I might well be in a hospital, in jail or dead if I hadn't sought the help of the program. I'm grateful that SAA was here to provide that help for me.

I'm excited to report that we have a story in Spanish in our pages this issue. We are fortunate to be able to follow it with an English translation of the story. We have translated quite a bit of our literature into Spanish over the

years, and the fact that we are now receiving original literature in Spanish signals the start of some exciting new times for our fellowship.

As always I'm looking for material to print in *The Outer Circle*. If you have a story to submit, please send it to me at toc@saa-recovery.org; you can also send it to me by snail mail c/o the ISO at P.O. Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270-0949. As always, I'm looking for material that focuses on the solution rather than the problem, and I'd especially like to see more quotations from our own SAA literature, especially now that we have our own book. Is there a passage in the SAA basic text that has been especially meaningful to you? Please write and share it with us.

Enjoy the early days of fall. I will talk to you again soon.



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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.

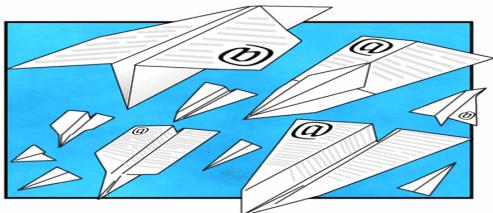
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The SAA-ISO Board of Directors has established an e-mail box which may be used to register complaints from the fellowship about the ISO staff.

OOCchair@SAA-Recovery.org



How to Submit an Article to *The Outer Circle*

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: toc@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:

Jan/Feb, 2008: November 12, 2007; Mar/Apr, 2008: January 7, 2008; May/June, 2008: March 10, 2008; July/Aug, 2008: May 12, 2008; Sept/Oct, 2008: July 7, 2008; Nov/Dec, 2008: September, 8 2008

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:** _____

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