

# The Outer Circle

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

PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270

Volume 2, Issue 1

January - February 2008



**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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## ISO Board Actions

### November 11, 2007

*The Board of Trustees of the ISO of SAA, Inc.  
met on November 11, 2007 by teleconference.  
The following is a report of significant actions taken:*

**Adopted:** The following agenda for discussion at the joint meeting:  
Meditation Book Editor/Project Manager  
Translations  
Major Literature Projects  
    Pocket Green Book  
    Audio Literature  
    Meditation Book  
*The Outer Circle*  
Redesign of Literature  
Review of Convention Recordings

**Approved:** A Northeast Region 'Area Convention' to elect our Board member, Alternate, and Prisoner Outreach representatives. Also to fill any vacancy that may have occurred by then. It is to be held around October or November 2008 with the positions going into effect on Sunday of the convention in 2009. We would caucus on a select day and would have the following voter requirements: The voting member must be an SAA member. The voting member must reside, or his / her SAA home group be in, the Northeast Region. The voting member will not vote in another regional caucus for the term the Northeast positions start on. As at the ISO convention caucus, we will fill out a Regional Caucus Report form and Caucus Business form. Those would be sent to the ISO office after the completion of the Area Convention.

**Approved:** To increase the limit on donations by individual SAA members from \$12,000 per year to \$15,000 per year, with the limit automatically increased each January 1 to coincide with the COLA published by the federal government.

**Authorized:** Two staff members as check signers within the office, the Business Services Manager and the Director of Fellowship Services.

**Approved:** The following individuals as signers on ISO bank accounts (removing all others): Carol Ann R., Don K., Ed B., Joe H. and Tim E.

**Approved:** To change Section VI, Tasks A-B of the Job Description of the Director of Fellowship Services to read:

## VI. Tasks:

A. Support Of Members, Groups, Intergroups, *Delegates*, Literature Committee, And Board

1. Either personally or by delegation responds to all inquiries for assistance from individual members, groups, and intergroups.
2. Arranges or delegates arrangements for Literature Committee and subcommittee meetings.
3. Arranges or delegates arrangements for Board and Board committee meetings.
4. Drafts agendas for Board and Office Oversight Committee (OOC) meetings, incorporating into them items submitted by the Director of Business Services.
5. Participates in *Delegate, Literature Committee*, Board and may participate in *Board committee* meetings, carrying out directives of *all* as appropriate.
6. In addition to any specific tasks described in other sections of this job description, actively supports Board committees, their chairs, and *the* Board Liaisons *as they* insure that committees are active and Board assigned projects are being pursued.
7. Prepares and distributes minutes of Board and Office Oversight Committee meetings.
8. Distributes communications addressed to the Literature Committee, the Board, and their subcommittees.
9. Performs or delegates research for ISO historical information or precedents at the request of the Literature Committee or the Board and, with discretion, at the request of individual members, groups, and intergroups.

## B. ISO database

1. *Either personally or by delegation is responsible for all aspects of ISO database management.*
2. Ensures timely entry of new and updated information into database.
3. Takes action to ensure that ISO meeting registrations are kept current.
4. Sees to the weekly updating of meeting information on the ISO website.”

**[Changes added in italics and bold.]**

**Resolved:** That the Board directs the ISO Office to produce a “Welcome Package” for new members of the Board. This package shall include an official Statement of Welcome to the new members, an overview of the Board's policies and procedures for conference/meeting/teleconference conduct, the Bylaws of the ISO, Inc., organizational charts identifying the Board and all its Committees and Subcommittees including membership and officers and/or trusted servants, organizational charts identifying the Literature Committee and all its Subcommittees including membership and officers and/or trusted servants, a description of Board Liaison duties, the 12 Traditions, the 12 Concepts, the Code of Conduct, and anything else the ISO Office shall deem appropriate for inclusion. The ISO Office shall have discretion, pending Board approval, in the selection, collection, organization, and formatting of all materials used in the package and in the wording of any and all new items such as the Statement of Welcome. The package shall be made available to all Board Members and Board Alternates in both electronic and printed forms.

**Approved:** To publish any additional email address that receives copies of email to official service email addresses in both *The Outer Circle* and on the ISO website.

**Resolved:** That the ISO Board delegates its authority to approve Board committee communication to ISO registered SAA groups via postal mail, articles in *The Outer Circle* and the Intergroup-to-Intergroup (I2I) central email address ( [intergroups@SAA-Recovery.org](mailto:intergroups@SAA-Recovery.org) ) to the Board liaisons for their respective committees. All such communications shall be copied to the Board chair.

**Ratified:** The Office Oversight Committee (OOC) membership of Tim F.

## ISO Board Actions

December 7-9, 2007

*The Board of Trustees of the ISO of SAA, Inc.  
met on December 7-9, 2007 in Houston, TX.  
The following is a report of significant actions taken:*

**Approved:** That a committee of at least 3 people be appointed by the Chair to review the By-Laws and report to the May Board meeting.

**Approved:** That the Board chair appoint a Board Charter committee of at least 3 people to report back to the Board no later than the May meeting.

**Approved:** That the Board chair appoint a Convention Charter committee of at least 3 people to report back to the Board no later than the May.

**Resolved:** That the Board approves the creation of a committee to establish a job description and duties, qualifications and compensation for the position of Director of Business Services to be submitted to the Board for its approval by May 1, 2008. This committee's work shall begin on February 1. The committee shall be composed of seven persons, to include one current Trustee to be appointed by the Board Chair, one former Trustee to be appointed by the Board Chair, and one member of the Office Oversight Committee to be selected by its membership. The composition of the committee shall include at least one woman, and one person each with expertise in the following areas: business management, human resources, and business communications. The Board Chair in consultation with the current Director of Business Services shall appoint the remaining members of the committee.

**Appointed:** One member to each of the following new Board committees by the Board chair: to the By-Laws Committee, Ken S; to the Board Charter Committee, Eric M; to the Convention Charter Committee, Ted M; to the DBS Search Committee, Wharton S. The Board Chair will aim to fill all these committees by December 31.

**Approved:** That the Chair appoint a committee consisting of three Board members or alternates to consider proposing a set of standing committees for the Board, and that the committee report back by the March Board meeting." [Recording Secretary Ted M. Noted – this motion refers to the "Internal Policy committees" proposed on Saturday.]

**Approved:** That the Chair appoint a committee of at least three persons plus the Director of Fellowship Services to propose a Service Letter to the delegates and to report back by the March Board meeting.

**Appointed:** One member each to the new committees: to the Standing Committees committee, Mark S; to the Service Letter Committee, Ed B.

## ISO Board Actions

December 15, 2007

*The Board of Trustees of the ISO of SAA, Inc.  
met on December 15, 2007 by teleconference  
with the Literature Committee.*

*The following is a report of significant actions taken:*

**Approved:** A committee to develop a position and compensation for a contract person to act as Meditation Book Editor.

**Appointed:** Three members to the Board's Meditation Book Editor Committee by the Board Chair: Ken S., Thea D. and Jerry B.

## ISO Literature Committee Actions

### September 23, 2007

*The ISO Literature Committee met on September 23, 2007 by teleconference. The following is a report of significant actions taken:*

**Approved:** That the Sept/Oct issue of *The Outer Circle* be published as soon as possible, awaiting only the "Dear Grace" column and an announcement about the job opening for the meditation book editor.

**Approved:** The descriptive content about *The Outer Circle* for immediate posting on the website.

**Approved:** That the URL of the women's webpage appear directly under the main URL of SAA on all ISO literature where the main URL appears.

## ISO Literature Committee Actions

### November 25, 2007

*The ISO Literature Committee met on November 25, 2007 by teleconference. The following is a report of significant actions taken:*

**Approved:** The story submission guidelines with the changes.

**Approved:** Translation of an article from the Jan/Feb issue of *The Outer Circle* and publication of the article on the website with an indication that the Literature Committee is looking for articles in Spanish.

**Approved:** The Meditation Book Editor job description.

**Approved:** The proposed Bylaws amendment regarding conference approval of literature as written.

"SAA literature shall be designated as Conference Approved upon submission by the Literature Committee and affirmative vote of two-thirds of the certified delegates at a regular annual meeting (international convention) of the Fellowship. Conference approved literature may be revised and submitted for re-approval only by the Literature Committee."

## How Can We Sponsor the “Tsunami”?

In his speech at the opening ceremonies of the Minneapolis convention, Pat C. referred to a “tsunami” of suffering addicts making their way towards our fellowship. This prediction resonated intuitively with many in ISO service who had already begun to see the initial signs of an influx of new members. At the end of 2007, we have data to validate these perceptions:

- More than 100 new meetings were added to the ISO meeting registry
- Mixed meetings that formerly had few or no female members are asking how to retain an increasing number of recovering women
- The number of calls from teen or adults on behalf of teens has doubled

### **What can those of us who are currently in SAA recovery do to be of greatest assistance to a rising tide of newcomers?**

First, the most vital answer is - **Stay sober**. We can begin by actively living the message that we hope to carry to those who are suffering. In order to stay sober, every one of us can do what we are all here to do – **Work the Steps with an SAA sponsor**. We can become fluent with the SAA message as it is described in our basic text and work with someone we respect to put the message into action in our daily lives.

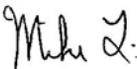
Finally, the work of Step Twelve will call us to carry the message personally – **Sponsor others**. This is not a time for false humility or underestimating ourselves. Sponsoring others is a vital aspect of staying sober ourselves. None of us will do it perfectly - we will all make mistakes. But there is no mistake any of us can make that our Higher Power cannot correct.

- If you have not already considered sponsoring, please do so.
- If you are not sure how, ask.
- If you are already sponsoring, encourage your sponsees to do so as well.

In this way, we can all work together to support the increasing numbers of sex addicts reaching out to us for help.

In your service,

Mike L.



*The Outer Circle* Editor

Carol Ann R.



ISO News Editor

## Stories Submissions Proposal:

The ISO Literature Committee continues to accept stories for consideration for future editions of *Sex Addicts Anonymous*.

The following are some general guidelines and information for personal story submissions (subject to modification):

### Content Guidelines for Personal Stories

Stories in our book, *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, are the most personal way to help carry the SAA message to the addict who still suffers.

While there are no strict requirements for submitting a personal story, the ISO strongly recommends that the member's story describe:

- what it was like before entering SAA,
- what happened to bring you into SAA,
- what happened within SAA,
- what it is like now with the ongoing experience of SAA recovery.

It is also recommended that the story emphasize the qualities of a member's "experience, strength, and hope" in SAA recovery. Some members also disclose their length of abstinence in SAA recovery, a choice that is left up to each member who submits a story.

The Literature Committee handbook states, "Personal stories are intended to help carry the message to the addict who still suffers. We should avoid presenting unnecessarily triggering or provocative content in *Sex Addicts Anonymous* (and other SAA literature). The stories should provide sobering details of unmanageability and offer the hope of recovery for the sex addict."

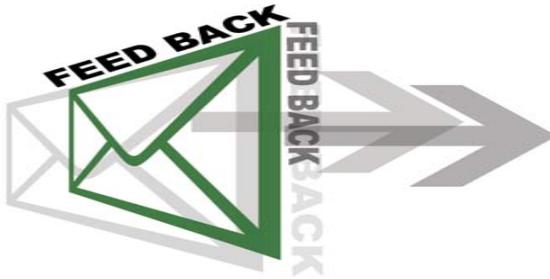
Stories may be sent to: [info@saa-recovery.org](mailto:info@saa-recovery.org) and addressed to the care of the ISO Literature Committee. The following is the ISO mailing address:

ISO of SAA  
PO Box 70949  
Houston, TX 77270 USA

**Please read the following carefully before submitting a story to the ISO of SAA:**

All story submissions are thoroughly considered by the ISO Literature Committee, which is deeply grateful to members for taking the time to submit personal stories for consideration for future editions of *Sex Addicts Anonymous*.

While every story is thoroughly considered for possible inclusion, the ISO Literature Committee does not guarantee that the story will appear in a future edition of the book. Once a member submits his or her story and signs the release form, the content of the story becomes the property of the ISO of SAA, Inc., and may be edited and/or changed as deemed appropriate by the ISO Literature Committee. Please also note that, while the ISO acknowledges the initial receipt of a story, the ISO may or may not further communicate with the individual about the story submission, regardless of whether or not the story is published in a future edition of *Sex Addicts Anonymous*.



## **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](mailto: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.

## 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

## 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

Since the creation of the Women's Outreach Committee, we have witnessed many miracles. Carrying the message to women sex addicts has demonstrated repeatedly that there are many more women sex addicts out there than are currently reflected in the SAA rooms, and it has been an honor and privilege to see this shifting as women find SAA in greater numbers.

Last year we witnessed and heard stories of many women working all 12 steps in SAA with sponsors and going on to sponsor other women, and this year the numbers are even higher. Moment to moment, call to call, women are responding to the outreach avenues found via the ISO Website <http://www.saa-women.org/>, emailing women for help via [grace@SAA-Women.org](mailto:grace@SAA-Women.org), and participating in daily or twice daily teleconferences. At a recent women's only telemeeting, there were over 65 women attending! With the support of Lit Com and the ISO office, the SAA women's website address is now printed on all SAA approved brochures, and we've already had a woman connect with help as a direct result of this printing.

Yet along with these successes, we have also witnessed challenges. One of these challenges, we believe, illuminates a barrier to women's participation in SAA that requires fellowship-wide contemplation. It is, in short, the sexual perpetration of women within SAA or as a result of service efforts in SAA.

This was called to the committee's attention recently when four women in SAA reported receiving telephone calls at around the same time from a private number. One member answered the call and heard the caller (who was male) state how he wanted to be sexual with her in a degrading manner. It was clear to the recipient that the caller was masturbating. When the recipient asked the caller how he got her number, she was told it was from the "Internet List." She promptly set a boundary and ended the call, informed the Women's Outreach committee of what had transpired, and sought and received support for her experience. After further discussion, it emerged that each woman who'd received calls were involved in service by being listed on the ISO website as contacts for meetings, with phone numbers published. It also emerged that other women who had in the past listed their contact information had received similar calls—over the years, by different callers.

Email has been another avenue where unwanted solicitation of sex or exhibitionistic writing has been received. For example, the SAA women's email at [grace@SAA-Women.org](mailto:grace@SAA-Women.org) which keeps the SAA Women's Network list and

sends this list out to women who request it in SAA, has received messages from men misrepresenting themselves as women in an attempt to get the list. Like the ISO office and other board committees, the email address receives large amounts of spam with sexually abusive content daily.

Our committee has developed a group conscience and policies about how to respond to these incidents with clear, yet non-shaming, limits. Upon reflection it may not be surprising, given the nature of our addiction, that such acting out occurs. But unprepared, recipients of abusive communication can be harmed. We know this is a factor in why women leave SAA. We as a committee are working on a pamphlet to address how meetings can retain women newcomers in our program. If you have any ideas, please email us at [women@SAA-Recovery.org](mailto:women@SAA-Recovery.org).

## 2008 Northeast (NE) Regional Caucus

Throughout 2007, the members of the Northeast (NE) region have quietly been making history.

Knowing that the next four SAA conventions would be held west of the Mississippi, NE Board representative Gary C. introduced a motion in the November Board teleconference to approve the first NE regional caucus to be held in late 2008. The Bylaws provide for such caucuses with Board approval. The Board passed the motion thus allowing NE members to caucus closer to home and to elect their own Board representative, Board alternate and Prisoner Outreach Coordinator a few months prior to the 2009 SAA international convention. Those elected at the NE regional caucus will begin their service in May 2009.

**The 2008 Northeast Regional Convention is scheduled for November 7-9, 2008 in Syracuse, NY at the Christ the King Retreat Center.**

Members of the NE region have been meeting regularly by teleconference throughout 2007, and plan to meet next on Sunday, January 20, 2008 at 12:00 p.m. Central (1:00 p.m. Eastern). Members living or regularly attending meetings in the NE region who would like to participate can contact Gary by email at [BoardNE@saa-recovery.org](mailto:BoardNE@saa-recovery.org).

Members of other regions are encouraged to meet with one another to discuss their own cooperative planning by contacting their regional Board representatives. The central email addresses of all Board representatives are listed in each issue of *The Outer Circle*.

*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.

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).

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

## A Near Year End Look At Donations

Even though meeting the deadline for this issue of *The Outer Circle* means only November's financial numbers are available, it is still possible to take a look back at 2007 in terms of fund raising and donations in general.

First, a look at fund raising. The past year saw no introduction of new fundraisers, but it did see new developments in two existing efforts.

In the past, the annual appeal has asked members and groups for only general operating funds. This year, the fellowship was asked to double last year's response of \$5,550, with half to be used for operating expenses and half to be set aside to help pay for publishing a pocket size version of Sex Addicts Anonymous. Within just one month of the appeal's mailing, \$7,513 was received, half of which was set aside for the pocket Green Book.

The San Francisco Bay Area's Giving Thanks V was a resounding success, exceeding all previous events with a total of \$22,366. Just as exciting as the Bay Area's generosity was the news that Bakersfield, CA, and Houston, TX, will be holding their events – Giving Thanks I for them – in January. Hopefully, other local fellowships will follow with their own Giving Thanks gatherings.

Just two years ago, the number of participants in the LifeLine Partners had dwindled to 77. A concerted push for new enrollments during and following the 2006 Convention increased the number to 100. That number has not only remained steady, it has grown to 110. Even so, in the coming year another effort will be made to enroll new partners. Over the years, this program has become not only a foundation for financial stability, many of its participants have found that being a LifeLine Partner has strengthened their spiritual bond with the fellowship.

With such good news about this year's fund raising successes, how is that at times the ISO's finances in terms of cash flow have been at such a low ebb? Could it be that for some reason general donations from the fellowship are dwindling? Could it be that through its power of the purse the membership is sending a message that it does not support the ISO? A check of general donations over the past four years says the answer to both these questions is no.

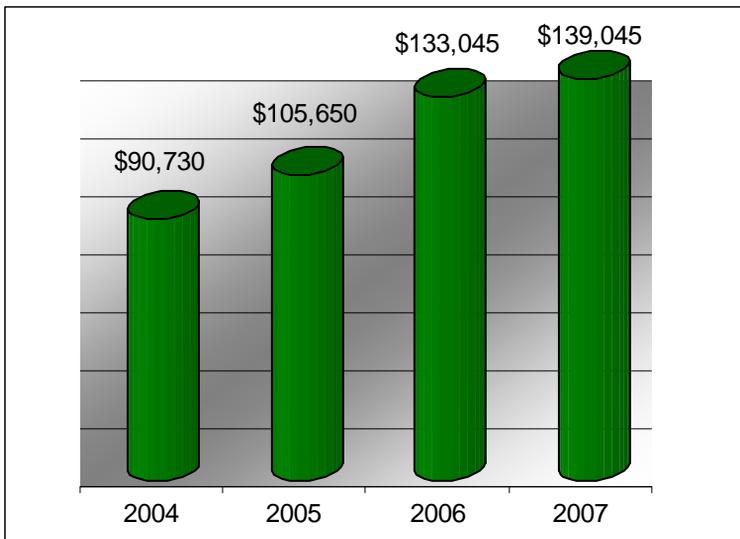
Excluding proceeds from the Giving Thanks events and also excluding the windfall of a \$12,000 donation by an anonymous member donor in both 2006 and 2007, here are the member donation totals through No-

member for the most recent four years: \$90,730 in 2004, \$105,650 in 2005, \$133,045 in 2006, and \$139,045 in 2007.

No, the periods of low cash flow – usually during the spring, summer, and early fall – are not the result of decreasing donations. They are the result of the ISO's increasing expenses. Among the figures presented in the previous paragraph, noteworthy is the significant jump in donations from 2005 to 2006 and continuing into 2007. This sharp upturn corresponds with the implementation of Phase III, when the ISO Board committed to spending the money necessary to increase the scope and influence of member participation in the further development of the organization's infrastructure and to increase its efforts to carry the message to the addict who still suffers. The membership responded with a corresponding commitment of its time, talent, and giving to the effort.

Despite a financial picture that has featured some lean months, fund raising efforts combined with general donations in 2007 have once again provided the ISO with enough income to cover its expenses as well as to set aside reserves that will be needed to carry out its plans and to be prepared for emergencies.

**Annual Donations**  
(January through November)



## ISO Income/Expense Summary

### As of November 30, 2007

	November	Monthly Average	Year To Date
<b><u>NET OPERATING INCOME</u></b>			
<b>Net Sales</b>	<b>7,061</b>	<b>7,207</b>	<b>79,280</b>
<b>Donations</b>	<b>53,597</b>	<b>16,876</b>	<b>185,633</b>
General Donations	48,479	12,787	140,651
LifeLine Partners	4,851	3,775	41,530
Designated Donations	267	314	3,452
<b>Miscellaneous Income</b>	<b>2,195</b>	<b>1,668</b>	<b>18,352</b>
<b>TOTAL NET OPERATING INCOME</b>	<b>62,853</b>	<b>25,751</b>	<b>283,265</b>
<b><u>OPERATING EXPENSES</u></b>			
<b>Wages/Benefits/Taxes</b>	<b>16,856</b>	<b>15,780</b>	<b>173,571</b>
Program Related	9,628	8,798	96,773
Wages - Other	3,573	3,463	38,094
Benefits	2,489	2,064	22,705
Payroll Taxes	1,166	1,454	15,999
<b>Insurance</b>	<b>316</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>2,893</b>
<b>Depreciation</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>1,775</b>
<b>Postage</b>	<b>341</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>1,443</b>
<b>Phone</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>2,371</b>
<b>Website Related</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>518</b>
<b>Occupancy</b>	<b>1,476</b>	<b>1,418</b>	<b>15,596</b>
<b>Office Related</b>	<b>491</b>	<b>715</b>	<b>7,861</b>
<b>Professional Fees</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>737</b>
<b>Financial</b>	<b>877</b>	<b>1,036</b>	<b>11,405</b>
<b><i>The Outer Circle</i></b>	<b>1,718</b>	<b>998</b>	<b>10,977</b>
<b>Board &amp; Committees</b>	<b>6,351</b>	<b>2,273</b>	<b>24,998</b>
<b>Translations/Major Literature Projects</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>265</b>	<b>2,916</b>
<b>TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES</b>	<b>28,880</b>	<b>23,369</b>	<b>257,061</b>
<b>TOTAL NET OPERATING SURPLUS</b>	<b>33,973</b>	<b>-453</b>	<b>26,204</b>
<b><u>NONOPERATIONAL INCOME</u></b>			
<b>2007 ISO Convention</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6,048</b>	<b>66,531</b>
<b>Delegate Fees</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>504</b>	<b>5,541</b>
<b>TOTAL NONOPERATIONAL INCOME</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6,552</b>	<b>72,072</b>
<b><u>NONOPERATIONAL EXPENSES</u></b>			
<b>2007 ISO Convention</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4,539</b>	<b>49,932</b>
<b>Delegate Meeting</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>562</b>	<b>6,183</b>
<b>Convention Related Travel</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,561</b>	<b>17,174</b>
<b>TOTAL NONOPERATIONAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6,663</b>	<b>73,289</b>
<b>TOTAL NONOPERATIONAL SURPLUS</b>	<b>-40</b>	<b>-111</b>	<b>-1,217</b>
<b>ISO SURPLUS – ALL INCOME/EXPENSES</b>	<b>33,933</b>	<b>22,715</b>	<b>24,987</b>

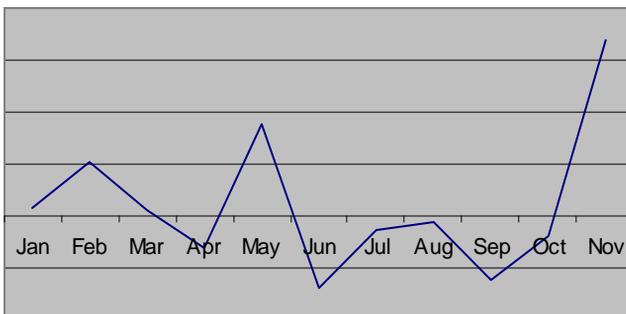
The financial report that appeared in the last issue of *The Outer Circle* began with the question, "How could the ISO have lost \$12,431 during the month of September?" This report might just as well begin with the question, "How could the ISO have had a surplus of \$33,933 during the month of November? The answer is not a) A huge mistake was made in September's accounting or b) A big pile of unprocessed checks were found in the back of a file cabinet. What happened was the same thing that has happened for the last five years: The Bay Area fellowship held hits annual Giving Thanks event in November. (See the Fund Raising article on page 16 for details).

The month also recorded a new high in individual LifeLine Partner gifts, with donations reaching \$4,766. The first month's response to the annual appeal set a record as well. The one month total of \$7,513 was almost \$2,000 more than the final total received from any previous appeal.

In addition, like last year, an anonymous member donor made a contribution of \$12,000. The only difference was that last year, the gift came in October.

November's outpouring of generosity turned what had been a year-to-date net deficit of \$8,946 into a year-to-date net surplus of \$24,987 and assured that the ISO would once again finish the fiscal year in the black.

While it is good that the year will end showing a net surplus, it is a must to start the new year with the positive cash flow such a surplus brings. As has been written in these reports before , at this point in its development, the ISO depends on a number of large income infusions spread over a twelve month period, namely, earnings from the Outreach Endowment Fund, a convention surplus, the Giving Thanks event, the annual appeal, and large end-of-year donations. These events tide the organization over during the slow months.



**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.

## A Story about Risk

by Jim C.

I was reading today in my book of morning meditation about the profound risks that we took as practicing addicts. As I began to think about the reading I was reminded how I risked everything in my acting out. At the time I had no understanding of what the real consequences might be. Quite frankly, most times, I just did not care. I mostly justified the actions, or minimized or denied what might take place as a result. Even acting out alone, I said to myself, I was not hurting anyone else, and anyway it is the only way I really feel good. Why shouldn't I do it? The fact was, at the time, I was taking this avenue to "feel good" three or four times a day.

My marriage had been breaking down over the previous two years and it was at the point of being unrecoverable. Work was stressful beyond belief and I thought I was a failure at it. I had a four-year-old daughter who was incessantly demanding, as four-year-olds can be. I was the victim of sexual and deep emotional abuse as a child, although at the time I did not recognize it or understand how profoundly it had affected my life. I played the consummate victim, and I was unbelievably angry at God and the world.

I remember one evening during the time when my wife was a nurse, and working a swing shift. After work, when I brought my daughter home from day care, all I could think about was how I was going to get some time to myself so that I could act out. I was consumed with the thought. I just had to have some time to decompress in my addiction or I was going to explode.

It was too early to put my daughter to bed and anyway she had not had dinner. I ran in and threw some peanut butter on a piece of bread and poured a glass of milk for her. As soon as she was done, I said that it was time to take a bath.

I took her up stairs to the bathroom and put her in the tub, washed her, rinsed her, gave her a doll and some tub toys, and thought that while she was playing I would have a few minutes to get away. When I reached over to turn the water off, she said, "No Daddy, I want to play waterfall with my doll." Whatever, I thought. I did not care; I just needed to be done with her so that I could have some space to act out.

I went down and locked myself in the downstairs bathroom. If she wandered out of the tub, I thought, I did not want her to find me acting out and, more important, I did not want her to interrupt me. When I was done, I was disappointed; it was not enough. I still felt tense. Let down, I thought that maybe there was time to act out again. I knew that my daughter only had an attention span of about four minutes, and when I looked at my watch I realized that a half an hour had gone by. I was torn, but I decided I should go check on her and maybe then I could come back.

When I came out of the bathroom and walked down the hall to the stairs I felt a drop of water fall on my face. What was going on? It couldn't be raining; I was indoors. I looked at the ceiling and large droplets were falling from it. Then I noticed that water was pouring down the walls. I felt wetness seep into my shoes. I looked down and the carpet was sodden. Oh my God, I thought as I exploded up the stairs.

When I reached the bathroom door there was a good two inches of water on the floor and it was cascading over the side of the tub. The doll was floating face down in the tidal flow. My daughter was sitting with her head tilted back and the water level had peaked at the top of her upper lip.

By the grace of God she did not drown that night.

I had left the washcloth that I had used earlier draped on the tub faucet. It had fallen off and plugged the drain. The overflow hole that was partially clogged had been overwhelmed, causing the tub to fill and overflow.

Those were just the events, though; the cause was my selfish indifference, my compulsive need to disappear, my insanity, my willingness to risk everything just to medicate myself. I was so self-absorbed in my ego-driven self that I did not think through, understand, or care about the possible profound consequences of my actions: the possible death of my own child.

I was filled with guilt and shame. How could I let something like this happen to the one person I loved so deeply, my own daughter who was left in my care? What kind of father was I? The problem was that within a week I was locking myself in the bathroom to act out again, filled with shame and self-hatred.

Today I have fifteen years of hard-sought sobriety, and I realize that my addiction is filled with risks that I cannot even fathom. I realize that when I am in the throes of acting out, I cannot think. I cannot conceive of the smallest consequence and, quite frankly, when I am in it, I no longer care; that in my insanity, I will risk everything, my family, even my own soul.

## Saved by the Tools of the Program

by Jack C.

God knows how bad it could have been had I not used the tools of the program in order to stop myself from acting out. I could have used drugs. I could have acquired certain STDs. I could have been overwhelmed with shame, guilt, and remorse. In the end, I could have killed myself if I had acted out, and that was certainly a possibility. But, because I used the tools of the program, I now feel free, serene, and quite content. And today, I can move on with my life with more confidence in my Higher Power, the program, and the fellowship of SAA.

For a long, long time, I doubted the power of the program and that of my Higher Power. How could I expect others to help me, even God, if I could not even help myself? How would calling somebody in SAA help me stop acting out, when in the past nobody could? How could I stop the power of my addict from making me act out? Wasn't there an easier, softer way? True enough!

These questions have stopped me cold from reaching out in the past, and it was heart-wrenching to see myself fail again and again. But, how could I give up hope now that I had tasted the benefits of staying sober? What else was there when everything I had tried before did not work? What if I just tried something new? What did I have to lose?

Like a newcomer, I am only beginning to use the tools of the program extensively to stay sober. Before, when I was tempted to act out, I would immediately switch to auto-drive where my addict took control and directed



my thoughts, feelings, and actions, and where I was desperately powerless to stop acting out. Before, I did not even pay attention to the inevitable consequences that followed acting out.

But this time, I actually noticed how my temptation to act out developed from the simple beginning of a middle circle behavior: cruising. A member once shared a similar experience. He described it like going out in a small boat in the open water; in the beginning he noticed how calm the water was. As soon as he began to think of doing a middle circle behavior, he noticed how the tide began to swell. Then as he started thinking of acting out, he noticed how he was immediately placed in grave danger in the open sea where the giant waves threatened to sink his boat in the deep ocean. From simply testing the waters to certain death, it sounds very familiar to me! Especially true yesterday when I was tempted to act out.

My first reaction when I noticed that I was in danger of acting out was, "Oh my God, I must get out of here or I am going to die!" Psychologists say that fight or flight is a usual response to danger, but the spiritual book on which I relied was clear as to how to react to acting out: "Flee from sexual immorality!" Knowing how demoralizing acting out could be, I fled. Fortunately, I ran into a program friend and he showed me the way out of the storm. I continued to act on intuition, known here as HALT. I was hungry, so I had a good hearty dinner. Then I called my sponsor, then another friend in the program. I told on my addict. Knowing that "honesty is the best policy," I admitted that I made the mistake of cruising a washroom in the park and found a potential acting out partner. Having no reservations or expectations, I was relieved by their gentleness, compassion, and presence. After getting some counseling from them, I committed to calling two more program friends. Then, I meditated for an hour and it was during this meditation that I experienced a sudden calmness come over me. It was like being in the eye of the storm, where a small still voice said, "Be still and know that I am God!" I realized how safe I am in the hands of my Higher Power. I ended my meditation with a suggestion that in the moment "I can love and forgive myself." Then finally, after feeling strong enough to face the world again, I decided to go to a meeting after checking in with a couple of friends. Sounds like a lot of work? Oh yes, but it was all worth it for me!

At the end of the day, I remained sober, grateful, knowing that the temptation to act out passed without damaging my personal integrity. I did not act out. It is important to note here that however strong the temptation is, it does pass. I just call it for what it is, a temptation; it will not kill me. It is not a sin to be tempted. It is comforting to know that I was not alone through it all; I had all the help I needed when I reached out. And I am not the only one who gets tempted, it happens to everyone. I for one am not exempt or "entitled," as my sponsor said to me. So, no matter how strong the temptation is, it is important to remember my commitment to sobriety and that God is looking after me.

However, even now, I struggle to stay sober as I am writing this article. It feels like acting out is the easy way out. Truthfully, it is not easy to struggle, but it is simpler to surrender to the program. Without a doubt in my mind, I am capable of acting out anytime, but by abstaining from my bottom line behaviors, I am saving myself a lot of grief and trauma. So, by checking in with my sponsor again today, I am admitting my powerlessness, which is the first step in answering that overwhelming question, "Maybe there is an easier, softer way?" Today, using the tools of the program is the only possible way to save myself from acting out. Finally, let me emphasize here that using the tools continues to save me from my addiction and leads me to further spiritual recovery.

So, what should I do when I am struggling to stay sober every hour of every day? Well, first of all, it helps me to realize that all I am committed to doing is asking my Higher Power for the willingness to stay sober today. Once I get the willingness, then it is a matter of applying every tool I can access in order to stay sober. I find that my willingness increases each time I apply the tools successfully and I see the positive results of my efforts. Using the tools takes practice, and our sincere efforts are not in vain. Furthermore, it is guaranteed that when we work the program, our Higher Power will honor our commitments and reward us with the benefits of staying sober.

Our SAA basic text says, "In addition to the Twelve Steps, there are many suggested tools that we have found beneficial to our recovery from sex addiction. A tool is a concrete action that supports recovery and that has been used successfully by other sex addicts. We practice honesty, openness, and willingness when we adopt a new tool, and we trust in the experience, strength, and hope of the fellowship that we will benefit as others have before us" [p.63]. A bit earlier on, the book says, "Sex Addicts Anonymous offers a spiritual solution to the disease of sexual addiction. Every aspect of our program is founded on the experience of a Power greater than ourselves helping us live healthy and productive lives, free of addictive sexual behavior" [p. 62]. Thus, we do not have to fear going through temptations or trying times, because the tools of the program guarantee us that they will work, if we work them with the help of our Higher Power and our friends in the program.

In conclusion, I am a grateful recovering sex addict. Without the tools of the program, I would be hopeless. It is great to experience freedom from sexual addiction and it is my privilege to share it with others. My experience of using the tools of the program is like that of many who have come before us and have paved the way for recovery and hope. So, while my struggle continues, my recovery progresses. I may still have trying times ahead, and maybe a fall along the way. However, by working the Twelve-Step program, it is my hope that God will continue to unfold the Promises, in spite of my shortcomings, mistakes, and faults. May God bless you!



## This Bird

by Anonymous

One note in a thunder of calls  
 Heard well the song of the sober fast girl –  
 Not this and no right to expect that.  
 Left to herself, discontent  
 To sit evenly spaced along a line  
 Or perched on backyard lawn furniture.

But in God's season,  
 Whatever stirs seeds  
 Moves in her gut as well.  
 North is there somewhere  
 No longer the bogus place  
 Of sniffs and  
 Spitting at sour grapes.  
 It is the authentic place  
 That there may be too little in reserve to reach.  
 North the place where she was born  
 And urged again –  
 Even if it means a pluck from the sky.

North is the sky beyond sky  
 And this bird,  
 No matter how lost in the flock,  
 Grackles toward it as surely  
 As the kingfisher catches fire.

## From Despair to Hope

By Ed G.

Regrettably, there are those that do not want recovering sex offenders to have a life. Instead, they prefer to make them out to be a constant worry and burden on society. During a local TV newscast, a police chief in a good-sized capital district community said, in responding to a citizen's concerns regarding sex offenders living in the community, "We know where they [Level 3 offenders] live, but watch out for your neighbor." I was one of those "neighbors"; a law-abiding, church-going community volunteer. Despite the media hype to the contrary, it is not the known sex offenders one should be overly concerned about. It is the unknown ones—those who have not been caught or have yet to offend, because their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors have not yet met with opportunity.

I had a sexual problem but did not think of it as a problem. I sought sexual relief wherever I could. I found it to be my stress reliever. Unfortunately, I found that relief by abusing two young girls who trusted me. I became a Level 3 sex offender. I negatively impacted two young lives, as well as those of their families and friends and my family and friends. I am truly sorry, both remorseful and penitent, for what I did, but I cannot turn back the clock.

I was assigned to a prison-run sex offender program and began to see how I went so wrong. There was also a library of books on the subject of sexual offending. I began to read those and felt the authors were writing about me, for I saw myself clearly in their description of a sexual abuser/addict. The program and books made me see myself as never before. I did not like what I saw.

I also became acquainted with SAA while incarcerated. I found the SAA pamphlet "Sex Addicts Anonymous" while in the sex offender program and, after reading it, recognized myself in ten of the twelve questions of self-assessment. Needless to say, I saw I had a real problem. I wrote to SAA and they provided me with a sponsor with whom I corresponded for over two years working the steps with him. It was very enlightening.

Depressed and morally and spiritually bankrupt was how I saw myself while in prison and in early 2005 when I was paroled after four years of incarceration for my sexual crimes. As a newly designated Level 3 sex offender, I found myself at the bottom of my life after many years of various successes. I had only two things going for me in my view: one, I was retired so did not have to search for employment and face almost certain rejection because of my crime; and two, I was blessed with the love and support of my wife even though I had hurt her deeply by my actions. It was hard on her for she had had to handle many important things in my absence, nota-

bly, the death of my daughter, her step-daughter. Her handling of these situations is a testimony to the depth of her understanding, compassion, forgiveness, and love. It was a love I had not understood prior to my sexual offending and incarceration.

Certainly I knew what depression was but felt that was not something that concerned me; I was outgoing and active. How could I be depressed? Knowing what depression is and understanding the various ways it can affect someone are two entirely different things. I could not understand and accept that I suffered a form of depression until well into my therapy in prison.

Moral and spiritual bankruptcy was another story. I violated every moral code I swore to uphold during my involvement in many fine community organizations and my church. I made a conscious choice to sexually offend. The reasons for that choice are a story in itself. Spiritually I was lost. My wife tried to convince me that I was a good person who did a bad thing. All I could see was the bad. Unlike my wife and others who can meet their spiritual needs from their inward faith and be comforted; I needed outside affirmation that I was still a child of God and entitled to his love. That became difficult.

I stopped attending chapel in prison for I felt uncomfortable there. Though each day I used a couple of religious meditation books to feed my hungry soul, it was not enough. I reached out to three pastor friends and they, too, attempted to reassure me that I was indeed still a child of God. But the church that I had served in many capacities over many years rejected me. The pastor and associate pastor ignored my letters looking for spiritual support. Neither did the headquarters of my denomination respond. I pledged that I could no longer be a part of such a church that could not reach out to comfort a errant congregant such as me. That all changed in July 2005.

I left my psychological counselor at about 10:00 a.m. on a Friday. On my way home via the route I normally took, I passed a number of churches and I kept telling myself to stop and talk with the pastor at one of those churches in particular, but I never did. Instead, on that particular day, as I had done a few times before, I drove by a small community church belonging to the same denomination as the church that I felt had turned its back on me in my time of need. This time it appeared that the pastor was in, so I stopped. He was there so I asked him if he could spare a few minutes.

At first he said he had an appointment but apparently my expression and demeanor must have indicated to him that I was hurting, and he immediately ushered me into his study where I proceeded to tell him my story. Instead of rejection, I found a man of God who was willing to work with me despite my crime and offered me his hand, and heart, in Christian love.

Though it was not yet appropriate for me to become an active part of the

congregation—I understood that that would take time—he took me into his heart, prayed with and for me and offered me communion. Here was a man who, over several months, has begun to rebuild my soul, strengthen my spirituality and give me hope. He reaffirmed in me that I am a good person and yes, I did a terrible thing. All was not lost; I was a life worth saving for a purpose only God could know.

I have also continued my association with SAA since being released, in both on-line meetings and, recently, face-to-face meetings. They have both been very helpful.

I am a new work in progress. I have a story to tell. With my new friend's help, and God's guidance, perhaps that story can be told. And, in its telling, help reduce the stigma upon others such as me and hopefully stop someone else from taking the same path that I did. That, indeed, would give my life meaning once again and perhaps serve in some small way as atonement for my wrongful ways. Nothing can take away the harm I caused my victims and their families, my family, and the many people who trusted me. I can only hope that in time they, too, may be able to see me as a soul worth saving. All I want, as do most recovering sex offenders, is to live a life of quiet anonymity with a means to support myself and family.

## **One View of “Higher Power”**

by Thea D.

I once heard a definition of “Higher Power” as “that to which we look for our highest good.” Our Higher Power is the power to which we look to for help, comfort, to get us out of troubles, or to get us through. By this definition, for us addicts, our “Higher Power” before recovery had been our addiction; we turned to it whenever we were troubled or needed comfort.

Using this definition, another possible “higher power” is intellect. We may try to reason out everything; before we change, we may argue, we need to understand the problem. If we are smart enough, we can argue almost anything convincingly. We may become caught up in ongoing, unresolved internal debates, which paralyze us from actually doing much of anything. One brother I know used to answer each piece of feedback he was offered, with the phrase, “But I don't understand...” After we caught on, we would respond with the old saying, “Understanding is the booby prize!” It was not until he gave up his false higher power of understanding, that he was able to achieve sobriety and serenity.

To what do you look for your “highest good?”

## 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\*

What do I do if my sponsor does not always answer the phone?

Signed, Endlessly Dialing

Hi, Endlessly Dialing:

I sometimes forget my sponsor is not a professional. She is a sex addict who has found a way to stay sober and who wants to help others. You may not understand or like all the suggestions she makes, so I encourage you to ask questions. Try to stay open; she has traveled the road you are on and speaks from experience. Sponsors do have lives; do not be surprised if she is not always available. This is the time to reach out to others in the fellowship.

One of the most direct and profound ways we can serve other members is by sponsoring them. We walk through the Twelve Steps with those we sponsor, passing on what we have learned from those who sponsored us. Ultimately, we carry the message through example. When we practice new ways of acting and thinking, we show that the program works, and we offer hope to others who are seeking a new life.

Carrying a list of phone numbers with us is beneficial because we never know when we will face a challenging situation. Sometimes we need to call people to help start our day. At other times, we may need to check in about current thoughts and behaviors. Some suggest calling three people every day in order to build and maintain a support system. The practice of making phone calls, even when you do not have a particular reason, will make it easier when you need support. If you are having a difficult day, consider using the phone to do service. Reach out to others who are newer in SAA or who are having a hard time; it can do wonders for your mood and your sobriety. Your sponsor has more practice doing outer circle behaviors and may be doing good things for herself.

Grace

## The Heart

by Barry M.

Pray tell, of what help is the heart? Some of the groups in my area use the particular meditation reader directed toward sex addicts, and it thankfully has several readings referring to the heart itself. There is Pascal's oft-used reference that the heart has its reasons which the head does not know. Meditation and contemplative prayer practitioners are prone to evoke the heart for the search for the self, for our sure recovery. Some recovering SAA'ers place their hand over their heart in moments of anguish, hope and/or empathy.

Is the heart always a trustworthy place and resource to which we can go, into which we can lean, and from which we can draw? What happens when the heart is hardened, or when it is deceived and becomes jaded, or when it is confused and needs the head, or at least that of others, to consult with?

To be sure, the heart is crucial; thus there is a time and place for accessing our heart by way of sharing feelings. This occurs every Thursday evening, often reluctantly, for our SAA group who takes its name from this same meditation book. The heart animates, breaking the stuck place of weighing choices, and yet not sure or clear as to



what to do, or not do. “Heartfelt” consultation, even on one’s own, perhaps via journaling or praying, is crucial. Opening myself to “warm thermal currents” may mellow a hardness and a one-track route to acting out or isolation, the prelude to such. The heart may well call upon my head for clarification and for “remembering when” as a brake to impulsively surrendering to the addiction. Ah yes, the heart is a soul friend.

But the heart may become afraid. Consider the dialogue in Paulo Coelho’s novel *The Alchemist*, where the boy tells the alchemist that his heart is afraid of having to suffer and the alchemist responds that the fear of suffering is worse than the actual suffering. The boy answers by asking why people’s hearts do not tell them to follow their dreams, and the alchemist replies that that is what makes a heart suffer most, and that hearts do not like to suffer.

Instead, when it is afraid the heart retreats and yields to short-cut mood altering rituals. If it is hurt, and maybe entrenched further into the hurt, hardened in the self-fulfilling addictive belief that the heart will never find intimacy, it is simply too late. The heart longs for genuine intimacy, and wonders how to achieve it. I would like to see more readers of *The Outer Circle* share their stories about how they did.

I want to close with a couple of paraphrases from the meditation book I mentioned earlier. It says that while we were in our addiction we became so accustomed to stimulating ourselves artificially that we lost sight of any sort of genuine emotion. Pornography takes the human being in its entirety and turns him or her into a mere image, dead and fragmented. It goes on to say that we can restore the heart into our lives by being open to relating honestly and fearlessly with others in our program, by trusting our heart and not being afraid of its feelings and messages. Finally, another meditation in the same book says that we stopped listening to our heart while in our addiction. In fact, our hearts themselves came close to stopping. Recovery, on the other hand, starts the heart beating again in hope and love.

## Transformation vs. Distractions

by Santi L.

In many ways I have found the need to work the steps to be just as daunting as the call to be internally transformed. My Higher Power wants me to aspire to and work toward that transformation and so do the steps. The Sixth Step exhorts me to grow by having enough willingness and honesty to repeatedly acknowledge my character defects and maintain my desire to be rid of them and grow spiritually.

The demands to change go on and on as I work the steps to the point where sometimes I feel like throwing up my hands in exasperation.

I had to face that fact that it is impossible to follow the work instructions and principles of the steps on my own. I don't have the strength or maturity to fulfill all the teachings in the steps. And yet, Higher Power makes the difference. It is his grace that gives me the power to live out the plan laid out for me in the steps, if only I keep my eyes on him and acknowledge my powerlessness and lack of control in all aspects of my life.

I want to take a look at how I can resist the temptations and distractions that keep me from focusing on my recovery. I had to resist the idea that God is not necessary in my life. I had to discard the notion that if only people behaved better or if I did not have so many issues or if I had this or did that, life would be okay. The only thing that type of negative thinking/feeling brings me is an everlasting excuse to continue my downward spiral into addiction.

My Higher Power is on my side. He wants me to know his love, to accept his grace and walk in his light. He has given me a spirit that helps me to stay close to him if I will just be still and listen. By contrast, while my higher power is for me, my addict is against me. He is the master of deception who steals, kills and destroys. He will misrepresent the truth and water down the realities of my life. After having done his damage he will urge me, through those voices within me, to blame God or others for my poor decision-making and terrible consequences.

But the truth is that neither God nor my fellows caused my misery. My predisposition to blame is the kind of twisted thinking that disregards the realities of the world I live in. The only solution is to work on the solution, to become internally transformed.

The truth is that my choice is behind my every acting-out experience. The battle is for my mind. The clearer I am about God's goodness and about my addict's intentions, the more I will be able to resist the distractions that block my spiritual growth. Since God is good it is logical to assume he pours an abundance of good thoughts into my mind every day: thoughts of love, goodness, kindness, courage and blessings. On the other hand my

addict barrages me with negative, divisive, lustful, selfish, and self-centered thoughts each day. I am tempted to become angry, impatient, resentful, cynical, disillusioned and downtrodden. There are times when I feel my mind is held captive by negative thoughts and that positive ones do not stand a chance.

Now if God is all-powerful and if he is behind positive thoughts, how is it possible for my addict to get the upper hand? The answer lies in the way the cares of this world distract me from keeping watch over my spiritual growth. These distractions appear again and again and build strongholds of deceptions within me.

This is why it is so vital that I learn to discern the thoughts that come to me throughout the day. If I learn how to judge my thoughts and discern their influence I would be far less distracted and much more focused on recovery. So what can I do?

1. Every morning when I wake up I commit to spiritual growth and invite God to dwell in me.
2. During the day, whenever I am faced with a situation that calls for a response or whenever new thoughts appear, I ask myself, "Are these thoughts up-building or divisive? Will they leave me in a positive state of mind or fill me with sadness, anger or selfishness?"
3. As soon as I sense the source of these thoughts I take immediate action by discarding the bad and keeping only the good ones. I rid myself of thoughts that drag me down and distract me.

I cannot do it alone. Just as with all other aspects of recovery, this process of discernment and spot inventory is only possible with God's help.

My human weakness points up the fact that holiness is a gift of God, not a human creation; it is given to ordinary men and women with weaknesses. It is God who gradually transforms the weaknesses.

I continue to resolve that I will endeavor with every bit of physical, emotional and spiritual strength to become all that I can be for God. With that as an ideal I will in fact be working on the solution and not the problem. And after all, is there anything wrong with having this sort of internal transformation as an ideal?

## Feelings Management

by John R., Miami, FL

Feelings management was a huge excuse for my sex addiction. I used addictive behaviors to cover up my feelings, to escape from them, control them, change them, manage them, medicate them.

Nowadays my feelings are like physical pains: they are messengers from my body or mind, trying to tell me to pay attention to something. If the feelings are unpleasant or painful, the message that the feelings are trying to make me notice is that there may be a problem or painful area in my life that needs to be corrected or improved. Something may be broken that needs fixing, and there is a lesson to be learned from each feeling that surfaces. The sooner I learn the required lesson, and correct or adjust to the external circumstances or internal beliefs that create the negative feelings, the faster my feelings will change. On the other hand, painful feelings may also be appropriate to the situation, such as sadness for a friend who is sick or in relapse, and I may just need to accept that I cannot change the situation.

Which brings me exactly to Step One: If I am powerless, what do I need? Power. If my life is unmanageable, what do I need? A manager. Well, that is exactly what I get in SAA recovery.

Once I admit that I cannot manage my own situations or feelings, I can either try to cover up my bad feelings by sexual-acting-out or eating or some other compulsive behavior, try to manage them myself (and I know how that turns out), or seek a more healthy way by asking for help in getting my life manageable. Obviously, the "spirit" within me has been seeking a more healthy way for some time now because now I am looking for answers and seeking help in SAA.

Feelings are not the determinants of my behavior. Feelings are not in control of my behaviors unless I allow them to be. I do not have to act on the feelings I experience. I felt many times like shooting my boss, like crashing into the car that was blocking me, like pushing in front of the people ahead of me in line, like calling someone in a meeting a stupid jerk. When I do not take action on those feelings, I do not have to live with the consequences of those behaviors: the external consequences of jail, lawsuits, fist fights, and car wrecks, and the internal consequences of anger, rage, depression, hopelessness, and compulsion. The main question is: how do these feelings get changed?

I notice there is a lag time between my sober behavior and my thinking and feelings about sober behavior. It seems to take several months of abstaining consistently from addictive behaviors before my thinking comes around to enjoyment of and alignment with the sober behavior, and then I finally

start to feel and enjoy sobriety.

How is the obsession removed? Ultimately, I have to want to stay sober more than I want to act out. But since I cannot do that on my own power, I have to ask for help and use the tools of recovery which can help keep me from self-destructive behaviors. Asking for help is one way to get away from my self-centeredness, which blocks me from the source of power. Helping others is another way to get away from my self-centeredness.

My experience is that feelings come from beliefs. Action shows me what I believe. It is quite evident that a man will always act according to what he believes most deeply inside, regardless of what words he speaks with his mouth, or even what he may tell himself in his mind. The Fourth Step shows me what my actions are, all throughout my life. This provides a foundation for examination and changing my actions, via Steps Six and Seven, which will ultimately change my thinking and feelings. See the SAA Basic Text, pp. 58-59: "Every step of the program contributes to a fundamental change in our outlook, from self-obsession and control to surrender and acceptance. Our sexual sobriety goes hand in hand with our spiritual growth."

Even though prayers, self-will and "one-day-at-a-time" abstinence from sexual-acting-out are bandages, a temporary fix, and not a cure, it is useful to use these things to get through a hard minute or a hard day. Ultimately, the cure for addiction is a spiritual awakening as the result of working the Twelve Steps. Other organizations have suggested other cures: therapeutic, medical, religious, or involving more self-control. Many addicts have tried many of these other methods, and many have not had long-term success with them. Therefore, the Twelve-Step programs are for many of us a last resort, the last stop, the final house on the block. From this sense of hopelessness stems an ability to surrender the tremendous amount of self-will that kept me propelled through the years of addiction. By process of elimination, I have tried everything else to fix myself and it did not work. We get to SAA and hear the people say that the Twelve-Step program does work to cure addiction. My faith is in their testimony about their experiences and the written testimony of Sex Addicts Anonymous. Eventually, this faith becomes directed also toward a Higher Power.

It is good to get different ideas on recovery and have many people to share with. But it is not a substitute for doing the work of the Twelve Steps, which is a program designed to produce recovery from addictive behaviors, thinking and feelings. Hello to all SAA members; let us know what your methods are for keeping yourself spiritually fit.

## From the Editor

by Mike L.

Well, we are once again in the middle of another busy holiday season. I'm certain it is less busy for me than it is for others because I don't get involved in all the traditional activities of the season. I try to take some time during December of each year for a vacation for myself and in fact this year's vacation is coming up in a few days. Still, I manage to stay busy enough. Also, this is the time of year when I try to do an annual inventory, and look back over "what it was like, what happened and what it is like now."

What was it like? I could write a book. Still, the holiday season is the time when I remember how bad things could get for me. I will always remember when I reacted to my overwhelming lack of self-esteem by going into a period of isolation from which I only emerged on weekends to act out; the rest of the time I allowed the characters in the daytime soap operas (now *that* was an addiction, at least for me) to become my "best friends." In particular, I will never forget the year I deliberately spent the big end-of-year holidays by myself just to prove that I could do it. Quite an ambitious goal, huh?

What happened? In my case, things finally got bad enough that I had to face the fact that my way was no longer working, if indeed it ever did. When they got that bad, I finally started facing the notion that maybe I had more, a lot more, to offer others than my sexual repertoire, certainly a "back door" approach to achieving some self-esteem if there ever was one.

What is it like now? I don't want to sugar-coat it too much. On the other hand, because of the recovery work I started doing on myself back in 1991, I've been blessed with the opportunity to get involved on a part-time basis in the field in which I've always wanted to work, only moderately compensated on the occasions when I am at all. And it is as fulfilling as I always dreamed it would be. When people ask me if engaging in this field of endeavor has helped to increase my self-esteem I tell them that one the one hand it has; I also tell them that if I hadn't done the work on myself to begin developing my self-esteem, I could never have taken that first big step toward doing what I wanted most in life to do.

On top of that, this year I have reconnected with some old friends from the period immediately before my addiction really took hold. We were in school together and just talking to them again and discussing the things related to school that were important to me back in those days reminded me of how grateful I am to have been exposed to such things in a period when I may have been too young to really appreciate it.

I have not been much of a television-watcher since those days back in the mid-80s when I became hooked on the daytime soap operas. However,

while relaxing in my room in the evenings during the last SAA convention, I discovered a program about a detective who suffers from some very dysfunctional behaviors triggered in part by a major loss in his life. I'm one who can appreciate a truly well written movie or television program just as much as I can appreciate a great work of literature, recovery-based or not. And I have been inspired by watching this detective still live life on life's terms despite his difficulties and losses. Better yet, I have learned to discern qualities of the character's life that I find truly admirable and worth incorporating into my own. A television program as an opportunity to look at some of my sixth- and seventh-step issues. What a concept...

I have been fortunate lately to be receiving some truly fine articles for *The Outer Circle* to share with all of you. Our articles reflect a wide variety of backgrounds and viewpoints. I would be curious to hear from you as to your opinions about the articles. Please consider writing a Letter to the Editor or even a counterpoint piece about any article about which you may feel strongly. And of course I can always use articles from you. Please send your articles to me at [toc@saa-recovery.org](mailto:toc@saa-recovery.org) or by regular mail at Editor, *The Outer Circle*, ISO of SAA, P.O. Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270-0949.

Also, as we continue our outreach toward the Spanish-speaking community, we are going to begin publishing one of the articles from each issue of *The Outer Circle* in a Spanish translation on the Spanish version of our website. We are hoping to continue to see an increasing response from the Spanish-speaking community.

Anyway, I hope you enjoy this issue of *The Outer Circle*. And if you should ever look around and see someone counting fence posts as he walks along, check again. It could be me.



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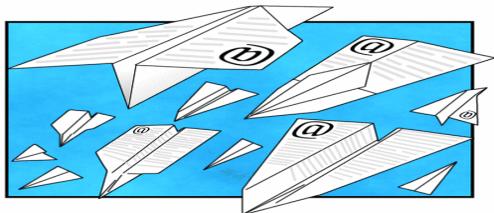
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[OOCchair@SAA-Recovery.org](mailto:OOCchair@SAA-Recovery.org)



## 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](mailto:toc@saa-recovery.org)

or mail to: ISO  
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**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 Twelve

### Submission deadlines:

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