

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.

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ISO News Articles

<p style="text-align: center;">ISO Board News</p> <p>Distribution of <i>Sex Addicts Anonymous</i> Page 2</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Literature Committee News</p> <p>SAA Basic Text News Page 3 Green Book Feedback Page 4 Med. Book Editor Page 5 Med. Book Submission Page 6 Stories Submissions Page 7</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ISO Store News</p> <p>Basic Text in Spanish Page 8</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Outreach News</p> <p>Women's Outreach Page 9 Men's Outreach Page 10 GLBT Outreach Page 10 Welcome New Countries Page 11 Prisoner Outreach Emails Page 12</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">ISO Regional News</p> <p>Local events Page 13 NE Regional Caucus Page 14</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Convention News</p> <p>Waves of Change Page 15</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ISO Financial News</p> <p>Fundraising Page 16 Financial Report Page 18</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Letters from the Editors</p> <p>Making Things Possible Page 20 Moving Forward Page 21</p> <p style="text-align: center;">General ISO Information</p> <p>Service Roles Page 38 ISO E-mail Addresses Page 39</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Submission Guidelines</p> <p>Submitting a Article Page 40</p>
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Literature Articles

What I Learned at a Rock Concert	Page 22
Fear	Page 24
Co-Ed Meetings, Advantages and Perils	Page 25
Dear Grace	Page 26
Then and Now	Page 27
Let's Do the Math	Page 28
Our Group's Local Traditions	Page 30
Traditions Relating to Gender Issues	Page 31
Scars	Page 32
A Shift in Perspective	Page 33
Letter to "M", an Acting-Out Partner	Page 34
Psalms 12 & 12	Page 35
Why Do We Take Chips?	Page 36

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Distribution of *Sex Addicts Anonymous*

By Tim E. Chair of the ISO Board of Trustees

The ISO Board of Trustees met by conference call on February 23rd and after much discussion agreed almost unanimously to approve a contract that will allow distribution of our basic text *Sex Addicts Anonymous* by HCI (Health Communications Inc.), a 30 year old publishing and distributing company specializing in books related to recovery, self-help, and spirituality. The contract, which was pored over extensively by the board, staff, and others (including an attorney with a career-long expertise in contracts), will cover a period of three years, at which time we will have an option to re-new.

We are excited by this event, and see it as an excellent opportunity to carry our message beyond the limits of our current capabilities. HCI is a distributor that places books in mainstream stores such as Barnes and Noble, Borders, and Amazon. These are places to which the ISO on its own does not have access for placing our book. We see HCI helping to make our book accessible to far more readers than may discover it through our website or at a meeting.

HCI will not be publishing our book; therefore the ISO will continue to retain complete rights to the book, its appearance, and its contents. HCI will be acting merely as a distributor. Final decisions on marketing and price will also belong to the ISO.



Much of the discussion over the past month about the contract centered on our 12 Traditions. The board looked very closely and carefully at issues related to attraction vs. promotion as well as those concerning relationships with outside entities. In the end we decided that using an outside company to help us carry our message was within proper boundaries of the Traditions.

The contract with HCI goes into effect this spring; we will be watching proceedings attentively to make sure that this arrange-

ment best serves the addict still suffering, and helps to carry the SAA message appropriately.

LitCom News about *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, Our Basic Text

We'd like to let you know about the current path forward for our book, *Sex Addicts Anonymous*. As you probably know, at last year's delegate meeting the Second Edition of the SAA basic text (a.k.a. "the Green Book") did not receive "Conference Approval" status. Both the First and Second Editions remain ISO Literature Committee approved. The Literature Committee's current plan is to wait for a later convention (yet to be determined) before putting forward another motion for conference approval. In the meantime, we'd like to make a "plug" and invite everyone to engage with the text, talk to our groups, and send the LitCom feedback on any part of the book. Submission details for feedback are described on the next page.

Extensive Book Review Process

We are also establishing an extensive book review process and inviting members to participate. The Book Subcommittee of the LitCom will be reviewing the book by sections through late next year. For each section, we will examine a set number of pages of text, such as a single chapter or parts of a chapter, along with two or more stories. Each section will be reviewed during specific dates. Members will be invited to submit feedback on each section under review. This process will give members an opportunity to focus their feedback on one part of the book at a time.

We will provide more details about this review process at an informational workshop at the **Waves of Change Convention**. We will explain the different sections of the book for providing feedback, the dates for review, and other details. We encourage everyone who is interested in the book review process to participate.

We hope this new review process will encourage as much participation and feedback as possible from members and groups. We also envision this process as helping us further hone the book's message of recovery and prepare the way for conference approval at a later convention.

With gratitude in service and recovery,

Jeffrey W.
ISO Literature Committee chair

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



Meditation Book Editor Job Description

The successful candidate for editor of the SAA meditation book will have demonstrated superior skills in writing, copy-editing, and project management. Experience as a published writer/editor is strongly preferred. The editor shall be responsible for editing the submissions received from members of the fellowship to conform to the prescribed format of the meditation book and the SAA style sheet, and writing additional material as necessary to complete the project. The writing style of the editor must be fluid, easy-to-read, consistent throughout the book, and written in a compelling style that promotes the experience and hope of recovery contained in the SAA message.

Specific tasks include:

- 1) Receiving and compiling submissions from members of SAA; editing the submissions into consistent, meaningful entries.
- 2) Writing original material as needed to complete the project.
- 3) Organizing the entries to assure continuity over a wide variety of topics, and adequate coverage of the fundamental principles of the SAA program.
- 4) Working with the Literature Committee and ISO staff to coordinate design and facilitate publication of a finished and polished product.
- 5) Reporting to the Literature Committee and responding to feedback from the Literature Committee.
- 6) Communicating with the authors of the submissions.

Additionally, the editor must have access to the Internet and Microsoft Word. Regular reports of time worked and work accomplished will be required. Paid travel may be required for the person in this position.

The editor is required to have a working knowledge and background with regards to the SAA message of recovery including the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and the concepts of service and the basic tools of recovery.

Compensation will be \$95 to \$110 (based on experience) per completed and approved page.

Applications should be submitted to meditation@saa-recovery.org no later than March 31, 2008, and should include a cover letter, personal résumé, description of experience in SAA recovery, and samples of written work.

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.

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 describes:

- What it was like before entering SAA,
- What happened after entering SAA and using the tools of the twelve-step program,
- What it is like now with the on-going 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 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*.

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, 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).

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.

Please Join Us For The First Annual Women's Welcome Reception at the 2008 Waves of Change Convention!!

Arrange your flights! Let's get the convention started out with fellowship and connection.

Place: Women's Outreach Room at the Waves of Change
Convention Hotel
Time: 7 pm – 9 pm Pacific
Who: All SAA women members

Snacks and beverages will be provided for your refreshment! Sponsored by the Women's Outreach Committee. Hope to see you there!

And calling all SAA Women Members...

Do you feel called to offer service at the 2008 Convention, but aren't sure how?

Here's an idea! Volunteer to help staff the 2008 Women's Outreach Table and/or Room at the Waves of Change Convention Hotel. We're looking for interested women to help serve as greeters to welcome women to the Women's Outreach table in the registration area, as well as in the Women's Outreach room. Two hour shifts will be available starting at 7pm Thursday evening through Monday afternoon (not including sleeping hours).

If you're interested, email your first name, day(s)/times you're available, and contact information to women@SAA-Recovery.org . To volunteer for the convention in other ways, contact convention2008.volunteer@SAA-Recovery.org . Or call the ISO at 800-477-8191 or 713-869-4902. We encourage all forms of service as a vital tool of sobriety!

Impact of Men's Outreach Network

Men's Outreach, a subcommittee of the ISO Board's General Outreach Committee, has only been active since late in the 2006-2007 service year. But in just nine short months, they have accomplished much together.

From May 1, 2007 to January 31, 2008, the trusted servant for Men's Outreach who answers the men4saa@saa-recovery.org email address has responded to a total of 577 emails. Men's Outreach email responses now constitute 19% of the total ISO office outreach email replies. In the same amount of time, the Men's Outreach Network has grown from zero to 180 participants. In August 2007, when network statistics were first reviewed, the percentage of those on the list willing to sponsor other men was 10%. At the end of January 2008, that percentage had risen to over 27%.

The Men's Outreach Subcommittee is a great example of how a small group of dedicated and truly trusted servants can work together to carry the message to many recovering sex addicts.

GLBT Outreach

At their regularly scheduled meeting on January 19, 2008, the ISO Board of Trustees voted unanimously to approve the proposal from the General Outreach Committee to establish a GLBT Outreach subcommittee. This will establish a platform within the SAA service structure for outreach activities to sex addicts within the GLBT (Gay Lesbian Bisexual Transgender) community.

SAA members with energy, creativity and time to contribute to this vital effort are welcomed to join in developing proposals to more effectively carry the SAA message to sex addicts in this segment of our population. Please email GLBT@SAA-Recovery.org with your comments and suggestions, and you will be notified of the upcoming teleconferences for this subcommittee.

Gratitude is an action verb! Let's demonstrate our gratitude for being entrusted with this mission, while ensuring our own sobriety! Let's put our resources to work in carrying our message of hope and recovery to sex addicts among our GLBT sisters and brothers!

Welcome New Countries

There are presently 919 Groups and Intergroups listed in the ISO database. Our fellowship is definitely growing! It is good to see each and every new meeting; it is even better to see new meetings in areas where no meeting has existed before. What is especially heartening is to see new meetings in countries where no meeting has existed before. This was the case for two new countries entered into the ISO database in February. The ISO warmly welcomes our new SAA meetings in Bangkok, Thailand and in Stockholm, Sweden.

There are presently:

- 794 meetings in USA
- 45 meetings in Canada
- 26 Electronic Meetings
- 20 meetings in the United Kingdom
- 8 meetings in Mexico
- 6 meetings in Australia
- 5 meetings in Argentina
- 4 meetings in Costa Rica
- 4 meetings in South Africa
- 1 meeting in Denmark
- 1 meeting in Germany
- 1 meeting in Japan
- 1 meeting in Latvia
- 1 meeting in Spain

And now:

- 1 meeting in Sweden
- 1 meeting in Thailand

The International Development Committee is committed to carry the SAA message to sex addicts still suffering across the globe. The committee strategizes ways the ISO can support these international groups such as by providing outreach, sending literature at no or less than normal cost, and requesting that those groups to communicate to the ISO about their current needs.

If you would like to volunteer to help with the International Development Committee or if you are a group outside of USA, Canada, or the United Kingdom that would like assistance from the International Development Committee, you may contact them directly at:

intdev@SAA-Recovery.org

Prisoner Outreach Email Addresses

For 478 of our members, the only access they have to sex addiction recovery is through our bi-monthly newsletter and communications from volunteers in our Prisoner Outreach Committee.

Of the 478 prisoners in the ISO Database there are:

- 52 prisoners in the Great Lakes Region
- 22 prisoners in the Inter Mountain Region
- 37 prisoners in the North Central Region
- 48 prisoners in the North East Region
- 21 prisoners in the Northern Pacific Region
- 244 prisoners in the South Central Region
- 48 prisoners in the South East Region
- 5 prisoners in the Southern Pacific Region
- 1 prisoner in No Region (Queensland, Australia)

The regional coordinators for the various ISO regions are in constant need of more volunteers to help with this vital outreach. The Prisoner Outreach Committee recently asked to have central email addresses so that volunteers can contact their regional coordinator. Members can also volunteer to write a prisoner in another region, such as the overloaded South Central Region. There is also a coordinator for woman prisoners. It is recommended that letters to female prisoners be written be other female members.

Here are the Prisoner Outreach central email addresses:

SE	prisoneroutreach.se@SAA-Recovery.org
IM	prisoneroutreach.im@SAA-Recovery.org
NP	prisoneroutreach.np@SAA-Recovery.org
SC	prisoneroutreach.sc@SAA-Recovery.org
GL	prisoneroutreach.gl@SAA-Recovery.org
NC	prisoneroutreach.nc@SAA-Recovery.org
NE	prisoneroutreach.np@SAA-Recovery.org
SP	prisoneroutreach.sp@SAA-Recovery.org
Women	prisoneroutreach.women@SAA-Recovery.org

Local events

“Out of the Fog and Into the Light 2008”

SAA members of the Bay Area SAA will hold their eighth annual retreat on Friday, March 14 at 4 pm until Sunday March 16 at 4 pm. The retreat will be held at the Happy Valley Conference Center in the Santa Cruz redwoods. The event will feature meetings, workshops, meditation, hikes, art activities, fellowship and fun.

What to Bring: Flashlight, sleeping bag or bedding, towel, and comfortable clothing for cool weather. Rooms are shared and arranged upon arrival. Campsites are available if you want to bring a tent.

The registration fee is \$175. To receive a registration form or for more details, call Chris R at (510) 390-1845 or write to Retreat Committee, c/o Mark C., 120 McKinney Ave., Pacifica CA 94044.

“Embracing Our Recovery: Using the Steps and Traditions”

SAA members of the Ohio-West Virginia (OHVW) SAA Intergroup will hold a one day retreat from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Saturday, April 12, 2008. The retreat will be held at Riverside Health Center, Riverside Annex (Basement, Room G), 500 Thomas Lane at Olentangy River Rd., Columbus, OH.

Registration will be from 9 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. There is a \$15 suggested donation. Breakfast and lunch are included in the registration.

For more information write to OHVW-SAA Intergroup, PO Box 2614, Zanesville, OH 43702.

“5th Annual Tulsa Spring Retreat”

SAA members of Serenity Group of Tulsa, OK will hold their 5th Annual Spring Retreat on Saturday, April 19, 2008. The event, will feature First Step readings by old timers, and a workshop on the “Tools of Recovery” pamphlet. The retreat will be held at Hope Unitarian “Cabin in the Woods”, 8300 S Sheridan Rd, Tulsa, OK.

Registration will begin at 8:30 AM. There is a \$9 suggested donation. Included in the registration is a meal, coffee and donuts, and snacks throughout the day.

For more information call Ed W. at 918-638-9748.

Board Approves Caucus for 2008 Northeast (NE) Regional Convention

In anticipation of the next four SAA conventions being held in cities 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 at the time of the 2009 international convention.

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, March 9, 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.

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*.

Correction

In the January/February issue of *The Outer Circle*, it was incorrectly reported that the ISO Board of Trustees approved a motion on November 11, 2007 "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."

Although this motion was moved and seconded, a subsequent motion to postpone the question until after the December Board Face-to-Face meeting was introduced, seconded and passed.

The ISO News editor regrets this error and any inconvenience it might have caused.

21st Annual
SAA International Convention



2008

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

Fundraising

A simple how-to for Giving Thanks

Anyone who reads about finances in *The Outer Circle* probably knows about the San Francisco Bay Area's annual Giving Thanks fundraising event. Begun in 2003, each year it has grown ever more successful in terms of proceeds, raising in excess of \$7,000 the first year, \$11,000 in 2004, \$17,000 in 2005, \$21,000 in 2006, and \$23,000 last year.

Though its organizers hoped that other SAA fellowships would follow their lead, none had—until now. On January 17, the Bakersfield, CA fellowship held its first ever Giving Thanks event, and then on January 27, Houston area SAA members hosted their own Giving Thanks I.

Even by Bay Area standards, both were grand slams. Bakersfield raised \$720. Houston's event was held on Sunday between the end of the NFL playoffs and the Super Bowl, and at the end of the day those in attendance had donated more than \$8,602. After receiving even more contributions from members who were not able to attend in person, the total had climbed to \$13,642 with a few more pledges yet to arrive.

Now that the Bay Area's example has been duplicated, no longer can it be considered a fluke or an aberration, especially when the event can be organized so easily. Here is the simple formula in (who could have guessed?) twelve steps.

Step One: One member gets enthused about doing what has been done in the Bay Area and in Houston, namely, setting aside an afternoon to hold a fundraiser to express gratitude for the work done by the ISO, which is SAA's international service organization.

Step Two: The enthused member makes an announcement at all the meetings he or she attends and asks for those interested in helping to see him or her after the meeting.

Step Three: Two or three other enthused members join enthused member number one and settle on a date and time for a planning meeting.

Step Four: The small informal committee meets and decides on a day about two months off, making sure it does not conflict with dates that might discourage participation, e.g., Super Bowl Sunday, April 15, July 4, or Thanksgiving Day weekend.

Step Five: Members of the committee announce the upcoming event at the meetings they attend. They also invite others to join the committee or to offer time and talent.

Step Six: The committee finds a place that will accommodate 50 or more people. In the Bay Area, different members have hosted the event in their homes. In Houston, the community room of the condominium in which a member lives was the venue.

Step Seven: Once the committee has found a place, one of its members designs and prints flyers, which the committee members make available at meetings and, if there is one, at the monthly intergroup meeting. (The ISO office can provide a sample flyer.)

Step Eight: This step is a big key to success: About a month to three weeks before the event, committee members begin making personal contact with other members by phone, by e-mail, and in person. These personal contacts are essential. Without them, success will be greatly diminished.

Step Nine: The committee arranges for food and beverages: deli trays of sandwiches, vegetables, fruits, cheese, chips, and dips and bottled water and canned soda. One or a group of members usually donates these. Somebody provides coffee and cups, condiments, paper plates, toothpicks, plastic flatware, etc. (The ISO office can provide a letter for tax deduction purposes to those making these donations.)

Step Ten: The committee or the event host makes sure there is a table for the food and some chairs. As people come and go throughout the afternoon, many simply stand and talk. While it is a fundraiser, Giving Thanks is also about fellowship and friendship. If there is to be entertainment, keep it simple. In Houston, a member volunteered to play the guitar, often mingling with other members as he did so. One member added a little color to the occasion by bringing two vases of flowers. Be spontaneous. It's a party!

Step Eleven: Provide a big bowl in which to deposit cash, checks, and credit card slips. Yes, credit card slips. These are important. (The ISO office can supply samples.) On the flyer and when making announcements, it is important to say that all donations to the ISO are tax deductible and that a donation in any amount is welcome. Gifts will range from five dollars to the thousands. The important thing is to give something.

Step Twelve: Follow up at meetings with announcements about the success of the event (every event will be a success), expressing gratitude and inviting all to Giving Thanks II.

ISO Income/Expense Summary

As of November 30, 2007

	January	Monthly Average	Year To Date
NET OPERATING INCOME			
Net Sales	8,516	88,516	8,516
Donations	31,175	31,175	31,175
General Donations	25,525	25,525	25,525
LifeLine Partners	4,574	4,574	4,574
Designated Donations	1,076	1,076	1,076
Miscellaneous Income	31	31	31
TOTAL NET OPERATING INCOME	39,722	39,722	39,722
OPERATING EXPENSES			
Wages/Benefits/Taxes	14,011	14,011	14,011
Program Related	7,895	7,895	7,895
Administration	2,564	2,564	2,564
Benefits	2,191	2,191	2,191
Payroll Taxes	1,361	1,361	1,361
Insurance	317	317	317
Depreciation	175	175	175
Postage	17	17	17
Phone	227	227	227
Website Related	34	34	34
Occupancy	2,189	2,189	2,189
Office Expenses	860	860	860
Professional Fees	1,431	1,431	1,431
Financial	771	771	771
<i>The Outer Circle</i>	1,808	1,808	1,808
Board & Committees	1,774	1,774	1,774
Translations/Major Literature Projects	0	0	0
TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES	23,614	23,614	23,614
TOTAL NET OPERATING SURPLUS	16,108	16,108	16,108

January launched the year spectacularly, with donations accounting for a big end-of-month surplus.

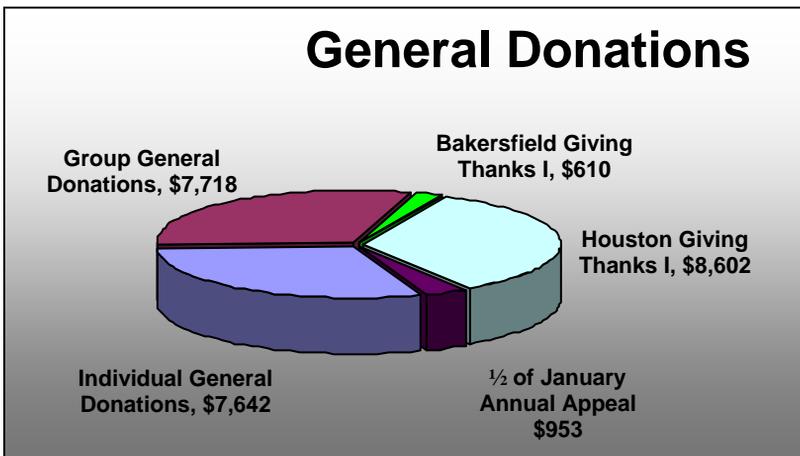
First there were two Giving Thanks events. Bakersfield, CA held their first ever Giving Thanks event on January 17, raising \$610 which was in addition to \$110 that was given in December. Then there was Houston Giving Thanks I. The event was held on January 27, and, at the end of the day, gifts totaled \$8,602.

Next, responses to the 2007 Annual Appeal continued to arrive, with \$1,907 more received in January. This brought the total received over the last four months to \$13,248, with half of this money being set aside to cover production costs of the pocket size edition of the Green Book.

Finally Lifeline Partner gifts, at \$4,574, were \$944 more than projected; individual general donations at, \$7,642, were \$2,362 more than projected; and group general donations, at \$8,328, were \$2,223 more than projected. (Note: In the chart above, half of the annual appeal and Houston Giving Thanks I proceeds are included under "general donations.")

Fiscal year 2007 ended with a surplus of \$20,071. The beginning of the new fiscal year holds promise of a match. Certainly, the fellowship's generosity in January will go a long way toward bridging the historically slow months just ahead. It also enabled the ISO to begin the year with its four-month prudent reserve fully funded at \$100,588 and money set aside for major literature projects, such as translations, the pocket Green Book, audio editions, and the next printing of *Sex Addicts Anonymous*.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.



Making Things Possible

By Carol Ann R.

At the start of this service year, I adopted a personal service commitment to “make things possible.” As the last six months have unfolded, the process of implementing that commitment has revealed some interesting subsequent truths. The first among these is that, try as I might, “I do not have the power to make impossible things possible.” Others include: “Good leaders must first be good followers;” “Trust is a decision;” and “People-pleasing tends to displease a lot of people.” These truths and others like them now form the spiritual basis for the way in which I lead the ISO office – which is the only portion of this service structure I am given to lead.

In practical terms, I have translated my personal truths into the following personal decisions:

- I commit to be a more trusting servant - I trust the Board to lead the ISO;
- I commit to follow and defend the decisions of the Board – even if they differ from my own preferences; and
- I place the care and safety of myself and the members of my staff as a high priority so that the office can carry out the duties the Board assigns to us.

Trusting the Board has become immeasurably easier over time because I find their group conscience work together so trustworthy. As a result of observing them, I have committed myself to three essential boundaries to help me become a more trustworthy servant in return.

The first boundary is “No ancient history.” Not only am I challenging myself to let go of more of my own ancient fears and resentments, I am also letting go of trying to manage those of others as well. The second is “No third party communications.” I offer my willingness to listen respectfully to whatever is authentically in people’s hearts, but I also respectfully decline to respond to concerns expressed by or for another. The third boundary is “No rumors, speculation or innuendo.” As near as I can, I will root my decisions on verifiable fact rather than vague or unsubstantiated communications.

Finally, until there is a Perfect Pill, I am forced to rely entirely on my Higher Power through Step Seven for relief from my shortcomings. And when I turn to that particular section of our basic text, I am reassured to find these words:

“We recognize that our shortcomings are not unique, and that we are not better or worse than anyone else.”

What is so beautifully ironic to me is that the more I surrender, the more things become possible without my having to do anything.

Moving Forward (Just a Bit, Anyway)

by Mike L.

It has been a very interesting last couple of weeks for me. While I can't say that it has all been good, I have certainly gained some insights and gotten at least one gift from it.

A few weeks ago I went through a major disappointment in my life. Well, I call it "major"; it seemed major at the time anyway. I spent a few days licking my wounds about it, and then it was time to ask myself "What was my part?" Well, I already knew the answer; it was an area of my life that I have managed to remain in denial about for some time, despite the fact that I have gotten several hints recently that I was eventually going to have to take some action around this area. So, having now hit a bottom in this area, I have started taking the actions. I found myself in the same position as I did back in 1992 when I hit a bottom with my sex addiction and, as a result, had somebody to thank who had initially created some genuine unpleasantness in my life.

There was an immediate gift also, although it took me a few days to realize it. One of my character defects is my tendency to take negative events in my life out on those around me, and this time I didn't. I think this was the first big upset in my life where I didn't have to deal afterwards with the additional baggage of an emotional hangover and didn't have to make amends to anyone. So that was a gift in itself.

I hope you enjoy the articles in this issue of *The Outer Circle*. I'd like to hear more from you about what you think of the articles. Please consider writing a Letter to the Editor or even a responsive article if you run across something that you agree or disagree with, or want to comment on in some other way.

I'm always looking for articles for the next issue, and this issue is no exception. I often get asked for more specific guidelines around articles. The LitCom is in the process of establishing some general guidelines, which should help make it easier to answer this question. In the meantime, keep in mind: the articles should support SAA's primary purpose, "to carry [the SAA] message to the sex addict who still suffers" (Tradition Five). Accordingly, the focus of the articles should be on recovery through SAA as opposed to other sources and, as always, the emphasis should be on the solution rather than the disease. Concerning length, a ballpark figure is 500-750 words, although we certainly publish them both longer and shorter. A personal preference of mine is to see more articles springboarding off of something in our SAA Book or other SAA literature. In other words, choose a sentence or two and expound upon it or say what it means to you or how you have experienced what those sentences express. Articles on the steps and traditions are also more than welcome.

Well, that's it for now. I hope you enjoy the articles in this issue, and remember to keep (or rather start) those cards and letters coming...

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.

What I Learned at a Rock Concert

by Dee S.

About three months into sobriety, I went to see one of my favorite rock stars. I used the tools of the program to stay sober: Bookending, phone calls and prayer.

To prepare for the concert, I contacted my sponsor and other women in the program beforehand and made plans to contact them during and after the show. This held me accountable and helped me to dress appropriately and adjust any addictive thinking. As such, I changed out of a peacock-like outfit to one that was merely attractive. I also realized that I was going to hear the music and not to act out. This was a revelation that would come in handy later. So, with my cell phone charged and programmed with phone numbers of women in the program, I left for the show with a non-triggering female friend.

When we got there, my friend and I found a quiet spot in the back of the huge floor area. We had floor tickets, which meant we had to stand the whole time. This turned out to be not such a good thing. Half way through the show I had had enough.

There was so much visual stimulation in the room—the fifteen-piece band, the two video screens on the wall surrounding the stage, the people who were drinking and starting to dance, the people in the stands, the sound people in the back of the room, the security personnel and more. The room was moving and I felt sick. I was literally getting drunk with my eyes and moving into the bubble, though I didn't know that then. I wanted to sit down.

I retreated to the bathroom to make a phone call. I prayed. Now I had a choice: to stay outside the concert hall for the rest of the concert or return and find a place to sit down. I went back in and found a place to sit down. As I sat and listened to the music, I was overcome by emotions as I realized what was happening... God was doing for me what I could not do alone. I was actually sitting still at a concert listening to the music. Doing so, I became present to how I used to spend my time at concerts.

In my addiction, I would make my way to the front of the crowd and get lost in fantasy. I actually thought that the band knew me and I knew them. Once in the bubble—that seemingly safe place where sex addicts are compelled to act out—I would begin to relate to those around me and feel a part of the crowd. Soon, I would forget the person I came with and look for someone more exciting. The rest of the story is the reason I'm in SAA.

But the beauty of this concert is that I was not acting out. As such, I got to see things for the first time. I saw a young woman walk down from the nosebleed section and head straight to the front of the crowd. That would have been me. I saw women dancing and drinking in ways that spoke volumes about their true purpose for being there. That would have been me too. I got to see myself for the first time and for that I thank God.

After the concert, I called my sponsor and my program friends and quickly got home. I was triggered, but I knew that if I got home I'd be okay.

I learned a lot from the concert.

First, I learned that I wasn't ready to enter an arena like that.

Second, I learned that my disease is progressive. On the way home we stopped for coffee and I noticed myself having thoughts about the other people there—something I had never done before. This scared me.

Third, as I continue my program, I need to leave room open in my program for the sex addict that still suffers. I likely saw future members of SAA at this concert. I must have compassion for the still struggling sex addict. I look forward to serving them in the program.

Who knew I'd learn so much at a rock concert.

Dee S. now has one year and eight months of abstinence.

Fear

by Santi L.

We all live with fear every day. Sometimes it's just a little hesitation before doing something new or unusual. Other times, it can take real effort to overcome what is scaring us. The worst and most debilitating fear is one that stops us in our tracks and keeps us from functioning.

The best way for me to confront any fear is to do something, anything. I stand up, walk around. If necessary, I put some time and space between myself and the problem. I do something totally unrelated to my fear. The physical act of movement releases the tension in my muscles so I can get control of my emotions. I use the adrenaline of fear for action, not paralysis, and I keep moving. Then I'm ready to begin the process of examination, acceptance and resolution of the fear. It is not by accident that when I began to work the program in Step Four, I was made to look at my resentments and fears. Resentments, because they are the chief cause of relapses (unresolved anger is a luxury I cannot afford), and fears, because for most addicts, including myself, it is the single most important obstacle to a life of purpose, peace and joy. I have programmed myself to default to fear-based decisions and, if examined, those decisions will typically flow from the fear of losing what I have or not getting what I want.

Fear is a natural and valuable part of life. It alerts us to potential problems and increases our awareness of opportunities. However, if unchecked it can be devastating to anyone, especially to sex addicts trying to recover from their addiction. So I encourage you not to worry about Step Five when you are working on the second half of Step One.

I live for this day. It's the only way for me.

An English preacher once said, "It is said that our anxiety does not empty tomorrow of its sorrows, but only empties today of its strength."

It's true that being anxious about tomorrow, or some possible event that "might" happen in the future, only serves one purpose...to distract us from that which we could and should be doing now, today. Much time is lost in worrying and fretting about things that never even come to pass. When I ponder that, I realize what a tremendous and useless waste of time it is. I live for today, one day at a time, not in fear of what tomorrow may hold!

A famous cyclist once said, "If you're worried about falling off the bike, you'll never get on."

It is not the "things" of this world that imprison us, but our own estimation of them. We can only be truly set free when our perspective changes, to see beyond circumstance...beyond the veil of physical limitation...beyond the constraints that we impose upon ourselves in our own mind. I remove these shackles, and the world becomes a place of beauty and infinite possibility, without

limitation.

It can be quite a fearful thing to step out into the unknown, and try something new or different. I don't allow that fear to immobilize me, and keep me from that which I know in my heart I have been called to. As I begin to walk into the unknown, I rest assured that the help and assurance that I need will be there as I go forward. I know the beginning is always the most difficult. I have faith and hope in my vision, I take the plunge, and I see firsthand how divine providence takes over to fulfill my destiny.

Well, I must be going. My sponsor is waiting for my call.

Co-Ed Meetings Advantages and Perils

by Ed. W.

The Twelve Traditions provide us with valuable guidelines that keep us on the right course within the Twelve Step fellowship. The traditions reflect the wisdom that was gained through experiences with group organization and group dynamics early in the life of the fellowship. If the addicts working the program are to recover, the fellowship itself must be intact. Just as we use the Twelve Steps to guide our recovery as individuals, we use the Twelve Traditions to guide our groups in ways that are consistent with the principles of the Twelve Step fellowship.

The steps are suggestions, while the traditions are specific organizational and procedural guidelines that pertain to individual groups, as well as to the fellowship as a whole.

The Twelve Traditions help to insure that the fellowship will be intact for us as well as for those who will follow us. Observing and maintaining boundaries prevents us from becoming distracted or faltering in our progress toward recovery.

Each and every member can help foster a climate of understanding and welcome for all addicts. Accordingly, all newcomers and members will more likely be comfortable in attending our meetings and participating in the program of SAA. Both men and women have found that we can learn a great deal and thus progress in our own recovery by learning from those of another gender. We can also develop better boundaries in the safety of our meetings, which can prepare us for temptations in the world. We can help others to watch out for their own "triggering" conduct, dress, habits, and interactions.

Who can afford to wallow in the addiction? We must always strive for an atmosphere of understanding, acceptance, and compassion. Thus, each of us bears the responsibility to conduct ourselves in a respectful manner at meetings, dress appropriately, use proper language in discussing our activities, and keep our opinions and judgments to ourselves.

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

My SAA group collects money from me and others in my group; where does it go? Signed, Prudence

Dear Prudence:

The money collected at meetings is called the Seventh Tradition. This tradition states that we are self supporting through our own contributions, declining outside contributions. This means that we are all responsible for SAA and cannot accept money from people outside of SAA or contributions from outside SAA. So when we put money in the basket each week at our home group it is collected by the group treasurer to go towards paying for rent, literature, coffee and medallions. Each group is responsible for the fellowship of SAA as well.

Most groups use the SAA Group Guide for instructions; it is also available for download through the SAA website. The guide talks about the treasurer and his or her responsibilities. The treasurer will report to the group on a regular basis about the group finances. We are responsible first to our home group so it can keep the doors open, pay the rent and supply literature at our meetings. Some groups have extra money beyond a prudent reserve and can send that to the intergroup to help it pay its rent and its literature bill. These same groups send money to the ISO of SAA to keep the fellowship alive and well. All of us use our contributions to be fully self-supporting. I suggest that you try being the treasurer, as service work it can be very rewarding.

The SAA Basic Text also has a great section about Tradition Seven as well. See page 87.

Grace

Then and Now

by Martin B.

Then

The addict takes over.
My wife and kids are asleep.
I am sitting at the computer and the high starts.
My “stash” is encrypted–hidden–secret.
For me the thrill is in the pursuit.
It’s a lie but it gives me what (I think) I need.
I don’t have to invest any emotion.
It’s not real...but I can control it.
I feel physical rage at disconnection or interruption.
I think: “You won’t stop till you’re caught.”
A logical person would’ve seen the signs.
Addicts aren’t logical.

Twenty-four year career–lost.
Wife and kids–gone.
Friends–estranged.

Now

I found SAA.
I started building my library.
I read–pray–meditate–journal every day.
Once the “white-knuckling” stopped, the serenity and sobriety started.
I thought the “gift of addiction” was a preposterous concept.
I was wrong.
I paid a high price for recovery but the dividends are priceless.
I now have new boundaries.
I now have recovery.
I now know I am a person who is an addict
...not an addict who is a person.
I am grateful to my HP and SAA.

I wish you all Serenity and Sobriety.

Let's Do the Math

by Anonymous

What is the cost of addiction? Virtually incalculable, I imagine. Scientists may estimate the billions of dollars lost in productivity and increased health costs, but who can quantify the pain and suffering caused by broken relationships, damaged children, shattered emotions, and so many other negative consequences that surround sex addicts?

In the two years I've been involved in my local meetings, I have made a mental tabulation of some of the "costs of addiction," just about people I've known in my own small SAA group:

- Start with one group member murdered in Manhattan from picking up the "wrong" sex partner on the street.
- Add another group member spending five years in prison for under-age pornography.
- Add a member in court litigation for inappropriate sexual behavior in a sauna.
- Add another member relapsed into drug abuse after relapsing repeatedly in his sexual sobriety, endangering his health, sanity and job.
- Add another member separated from wife and children after disclosure of his extra-marital affairs, fearing permanent estrangement from his family.
- Add other members who have attended meetings on and off for years, struggling to put together some periods of sobriety, relapsing, and coming back.
- Add former members of our meetings who pass us in the street with a guilty "hi," avert their glance and hurry away, not wanting to discuss why they don't come to meetings anymore. We can identify with them, too.
- Then add my own case: years ago, I attained many months of sexual sobriety, only to go out on "one little slip" which lasted fifteen years. Two years ago, I was graced with sobriety again.

The sum total of all this suffering and destruction is a massive dose of addiction staring me right in the face. One would think that would be enough to stop anyone from acting out again. Yet that's not the nature of sex addiction as I have experienced it: If I don't keep spiritually fit, I can experience that "strange mental blank spot" during which I cannot recall even my

own humiliations of a few weeks or months ago—let alone be deterred by the consequences of addictive sexual behavior that befall other people. My pride, self-centeredness and defiance tell me, “that won’t happen to me,” or “I can get away with it just one more time.” All those negative consequences add up to a big fat zero when it comes to stopping my addictive thinking.

Hope enters with recovery: On the positive side of the equation, let me calculate the advantages we have in my hometown SAA groups:

- Over four years ago, a single member started SAA meetings here, and sat alone for many weeks, creating a safe and open space for other sex addicts who needed and wanted recovery.
- Now, just a few years later, our groups have recently expanded their meeting roster to cover every night of the week—we’re grateful to have an SAA meeting at the “same time, same place” every day . . . plus a few extra meetings starting up at different hours!
- Our SAA groups are lucky to have members who have celebrated two, three, four and five years’ sobriety in SAA. The “spiritual solution” is a frequent topic at our meetings.
- Our SAA meeting formats cover a broad range of recovery topics: the Twelve Steps, articles from *The Outer Circle*, stories from our SAA Basic Text, meditation book readings, beginner’s meetings, First Step and speaker meetings.
- Our trusted servants keep the meetings well-stocked with SAA literature, local meeting lists, and telephone meeting lists.
- Our monthly Intergroup meetings are lively and well attended with members willing to undertake service commitments.
- Our members are involved in the SAA service structure, including the Women’s and Men’s Outreach, and frequent participation in SAA telemeetings.
- Half a dozen of us enjoyed each other’s company with hundreds of other recovering sex addicts at the SAA convention in Minneapolis this past May.
- One member created and maintains a web site for our local area, listing meeting information as well as links to the SAA Spanish web page, SAA Women’s pages, and SAA telemeetings.
- Newcomers find our meetings every week, referred by therapists, local or ISO websites, word of mouth, or media announcements.

- Our SAA groups perform outreach by mailings to therapists, and placing public service announcements in local print and electronic media.
- Sponsorship is active in our groups, supported by step meetings and frequent meetings between members.
- Fellowship after meetings is a frequent and well supported activity, with dinner and coffee made available to newcomers and long-timers alike.

Sum Total: Hope, Recovery, Gratitude and Growth! “From Shame to Grace” means to me that the only thing stronger than my sex addiction is the Grace of God, or as our Basic Text (pg. 20-21) states: “The Twelve Steps of SAA will lead to an awakening that allows us to live a new way of life according to spiritual principles. Taking these steps allows fundamental change to occur and be sustained in our lives. They are the foundation of our recovery. As we work them, we experience a spiritual transformation . . . The program offers a spiritual solution to our addiction.”

Our Group’s Local Traditions

Local Tradition Six: Profanity: As profanity or violent language may be triggering or offensive, it is prohibited in meetings.

Local Tradition Seven: Behavior: We will refrain from any addictive behavior at our meetings or around our meeting locations. This specifically includes any behaviors, which may reflect negatively on the Group as a whole.

Local Tradition Nine: Spirituality: The Twelve Step program of SAA is a spiritual program, but not “religious.” This is very important in maintaining an environment of welcome and safety. Some members may have had bad experiences with the church or may not be religious. Sobriety is too important to have any barriers against participation. Thus, please refrain from recruiting or witnessing for any specific religion, creed, doctrine, or deity. We use the term “Higher Power” or God, while realizing in our own hearts and minds as to what we are referring. This does not preclude telling a story during “Week-in-Recovery” related to your journey in the program.

Traditions Relating to Gender Issues

The following traditions provide us specific rules for conduct, behavior, boundaries and respect among members of the Fellowship, whether they are male, female, gay, lesbian, or transgender.

Tradition One: Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon S.A.A. unity.

Tradition Three: The only requirement for S.A.A. membership is a desire to stop addictive sexual behavior.

Tradition Five: Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the sex addict who still suffers.

Local traditions were adopted by our local group as a direct result of our experience, strength, and hope. We found that creating and maintaining a safe, constructive climate and culture for sobriety was beneficial. We didn't want anyone to be uncomfortable or feel ostracized from a meeting. They might not come back!



Scars

by Chris H.

Sometimes, when my past speaks to me in riddles I cannot solve...
I fall just a little.
Where my will battles with fate,
Where I struggle to make my dreams reality...
I fall...but just a little.

I may be damaged now (temporarily defined by my disaster)
But I'll be stronger in the end
 (from the wisdom I've gained from my mistakes).
And if it means I have to leave shame behind,
 to survive this land mine we call life...I will.
I'll speak honestly in our closed circles,
 but I won't stop to worry if someone is criticizing my tracks.
I'm headed in a positive direction;
 if that's away from pain, then I'll never look back.

And my scars only serve to remind me,
Of what I've learned and who stood beside me.
My failures make me stronger,
 because when I fall I learn how to get back up again.
I know that when anger dances on the edge with ignorance,
 only knowledge will win the fight.

My past speaks in riddles; my future is a decoder ring of symbols.
Through the trial and error of everyday life,
 we learn the magic to make our dreams take flight.
Our scars are what bind us,
To the painful memories that otherwise blind us.
Our scars are what help us to remember,
We can survive this.

A Shift in Perspective

by Thea D.

I'm still at home, already feeling challenged this morning, when I hear a tremendous racket on the street. I look out the window and see that the city crew has arrived to cut down the tree next door. The city has had signs posted all week, warning this would happen today.

As I watch a worker with a huge chain saw approach the tree, my first reaction is to project myself into the situation as the tree. Oh, how awful! I've been growing for years, standing firm, then someone comes along and just chops me down.

But wait. What if I'm actually the worker? A shift in perspective changes everything. Thank goodness someone has the courage to cut down that diseased tree. The tree was, indeed, growing for years, doing just fine, tall and strong. But it caught a disease and it's rotten inside. I'm not the tree; the tree is my addiction, and I'm the worker taking a chain saw to it. That addiction served me well for many years. Protected me. Sheltered me. But now that I have the courage to really look, I can see that it's rotten inside and the rot is spreading. I have to chop it down. Rotor out the roots. I may never get them all, but I'll get the main ones, and that tree will never grow up that big and overwhelming again.

I'm chagrined to realize that, when presented with a situation, my first impulse was/is to project myself into a passive victim role. How like an addict to want to see myself as the victim of circumstances, rather than the active instigator of positive change.

By the way, last year they came out and planted a replacement tree, a little way down the street. It's already growing up wonderfully straight, tall and healthy. I guess they knew that it would be needed.

As I watch, I see that there's one guy with a chain saw that approaches the tree, and does the main cutting. He's the only one I could see at first, but there are more workers in trucks nearby. When he finishes the main cut, and the tree falls into the street, four other workers hop out of the trucks, rev up their own chain saws and help him chop off the branches. They work as a team to steer the bigger branches away from gardens and other trees. It looked at first like one guy with a chain saw was going to tackle this enormous tree (a real David/Goliath scenario) but it's truly a community effort.

Letter to “M”, an Acting-Out Partner by Ron M.

As part of my Ninth Step, I needed to make amends for the harm I did to previous acting out partners. Since contacting any acting out partner is in my inner circle, my sponsor suggested I write her a letter and read it, either to my sponsor or at a meeting. I wanted to share this letter with you.

Dear “M”:

It seems like only yesterday that I answered your personal ad on the website. I would be traveling to your town for work. I had gotten the routine for setting up affairs similar to mine with you down to a science. I had even started using various subterfuges to help hide my identity. I guess this was just another road of my secret life.

You had agreed to meet me in that southern city one summer afternoon as I was headed there for work. Various details I had learned about you through our e-mail and telephone contacts helped to feed the sick thrill I was hoping for. Because of these things, I believed I had found the perfect acting-out partner, especially since you lived a long way away.

I remember our eyes meeting when you got out of the airport. I knew what was going on in my mind and knew my intentions, but you didn't really know anything about me. Any initial misgivings I may have had about our meeting this way were quickly replaced by lust, the strong drive to have sex with you.

This started an affair that would last a couple of years. I knew you were falling in love with me. However, I couldn't deal with that. I knew each time we got together, you were filled with hope. I also knew how hard it was for you to leave me at the end of each visit. You know, I didn't even care. I surely never loved you or cared for you other than as a friend. I had to totally insulate my heart from you, building a wall. I would never leave my wife for you. I would never give up my life for you. All I wanted from you was sex and some companionship.

My addiction took a deep dip into insanity when I flew you to my home for a visit after my son was born and the next day we were almost caught by our nanny. Damn, that was so stupid. I never really thought about the consequences. I risked great consequences if my wife ever found out about us. A break-up because of our affair would have been devastating. However, I didn't care; I was out for that thrill.

“M,” I have come to realize the other devastation my addiction has caused is the harm it has done to your life. You loved me and I never loved you back. Sex for you was a bonding with the man you loved. Sex for me was medication for the lousy life and marriage I suffered through at home. You looked forward to spending time with me, filling your life with some excitement. I looked forward to spending time with you for sex. I used you, “M.” I never could love you nor did I really want to love you. While I look back and hope I brought you some joy, some happiness,

some pleasure in life, I know it was one of the many lies I led in my life. You cried when I hurt you. I didn't care. You talked about suicide; I thought that was your problem. You talked about the loneliness in your life; I told you to find a boyfriend who lived closer. You turned to me for advice; I gave you the counsel of an addict. All you wanted was to be loved. I was never that man for you.

I am going to say a prayer for you, "M". I hope that you have found or will find the love that you so deserve. I know how much love you had for me although I was never able to return it. I hope God will watch over you and guide you through life and will protect you from men like the man I once was.

Psalm 12 & 12

by Phil P

I praise you God, for you were with me,
Even when I did not know it.
Even though I did not seek you,
You were there.

When I thought I was reaching the heights,
And was not, You were there.
When I sought to numb the pain,
And could not, You were there.
And when I reached bottom, You were there.

You guided me to others for help,
And then to Yourself.

And so when I share my shame, You are there.
When I make amends, You are there.
When I phone one person,
And reach out to another,
You are there.

You are there when I awake and when I retire.

I thank you for my healing,
And for the addiction
Which has brought me to You.
May Your name be blessed forever. Alleluia

Why Do We Take Chips?

by Jim H.

I asked a guy I sponsor a question the other day that got me wondering. I asked him if he was going to take his thirty-day chip which was past due him. He said he'd wait and just take the sixty-day. He'd just had a slip (or relapse as my sponsor likes to emphasize) after almost nine months of continuous abstinence and felt ashamed to have to go back and get another thirty-day chip.

The other guy I sponsor wanted to make a revolutionary change in the way we (i.e., our local SAA meeting) conduct our chip-taking ceremony. He suggested that we not be forced to start over in our "chip sobriety" after acting out in our inner circle. For example, if a person had eight months of sobriety and relapsed, then they wouldn't go back to zero sobriety. Rather, they would go back to six months, the last chip taken, and continue on from there. This way, he suggested, a slipper wouldn't have to suffer a double dose of toxic shame: one for the act itself (i.e. acting out) and the other from the act of taking the thirty-day chip after having already had that amount of sobriety.

In fact, I've seen some members who cannot bring themselves to come back to face this possibly shaming ritual. Perhaps the role of the chips should be less acknowledgment of "success" (I thought God deserved the credit) and more a way to show the newcomer that it is possible to remain abstinent for various lengths of time. The problem with the existing system, perhaps, is that it compounds shame and tends to disregard the value of the time "lost."

I guess the fundamental issue revolves around the meaning of a relapse. Is it complete and utter failure and so dangerous that it is better to face the shame and "bust" the denial so that we can begin anew? Or is it possible to lose sobriety and still move forward without going back to "square one" in terms of our spiritual, mental, and physical sobriety?

I can only draw on my seventeen years of experience in SAA to attempt to answer these questions. I have had over two years of abstinence twice in that time, over one year perhaps four times, and over six months several more times when I relapsed. I admit here publicly that I do not have a stellar record and am experiencing some shame as I write these words, but all I have is my experience and my truth.

In all that time, the one thing I've done almost perfectly is to "keep coming back." However, I will admit that the greater the emphasis in my meetings on length of abstinence, the more difficult it has been to return to the meeting. I also want to acknowledge, however, that regardless of chips and public sobriety recognition, it is still extremely difficult to "keep coming back" after a slip, especially when the slip was after a fairly extended period of

abstinence. So it's not just the chips; it's also the nature of feeling like a failure to oneself and feeling baffled and hopeless about why the slip occurred and whether future sobriety is even possible. I've never known a greater letdown than relapsing after an "extended" period of abstinence. Is that caused or enhanced by the public recognition inherent in the chip system or just the nature of a relapse?

The other issue involves accountability. If we stopped acknowledging sobriety altogether would that turn our program into some sort of sex addicts men's club where sobriety was second to socializing and just showing up? Would there be a risk of minimizing and denying the serious nature of our addiction if we let up on the chip system? Again, I don't have the answers but have enjoyed raising the questions. I hope other members who have thought about these questions might also write to *The Outer Circle* and share their ESH.

The one thing I am sure about is that we have a large percentage of our membership that experience relapse and face the challenge of "picking up the pieces" and moving forward. I hope we can all love each other enough to acknowledge this profound challenge and find new ways to carry the SAA message of recovery.



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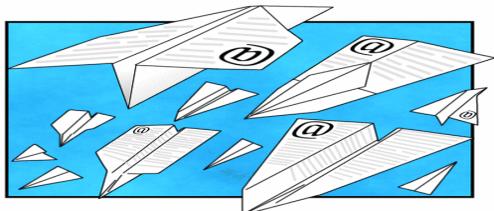
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First: Write from your experience, strength, and hope. Others may need to hear exactly what you have to say.

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

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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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