

The Outer Circle

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

PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270

Volume 2, Issue 5

September - October 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.



ISO News Articles	
ISO Board News	GLBT Outreach Page 12
ISO Board Actions Page 2	Local Event News
ISO Financial News	DFW Intergroup 2008
Financial Report Page 4	Fall Retreat Page 13
LifeLine Partner Page 8	Northern Tier Intergroup
Literature Committee News	Fall Roundup Page 13
Open Forums Page 9	Delegate News
General News	NE Region Caucus Page 14
Job Opening Page 10	Letters from the Editor
Article Correction Page 10	By Mike L. Page 16
Convention News	General ISO Information
22nd Annual Convention Page 11	Service Roles Page 34
Outreach News	ISO E-mail Addresses Page 35
Intergroup Communications	Submission Guidelines
Committee Page 12	Submitting a Article Page 36
Literature Articles	
Stay in the Now	Page 18
Step Eleven	Page 19
Recovery in Prison	Page 20
The Gift of Addiction	Page 22
About Taking Chips	Page 24
The Chip System	Page 26
A Raft on the Open Sea	Page 27
On Step Twelve	Page 28
Dear Grace	Page 29
Forgiving Myself Did Not Come Easily	Page 29
A Meditation	Page 31
Terrible Fantasies Transformed the Heart	Page 32

© Copyright 2008

International Service Organization of SAA, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Except for the purpose of redistributing *The Outer Circle* as a whole, *The Outer Circle* may not be downloaded, copied, reproduced, duplicated, or conveyed in any other way without the express written permission of International Service Organization of SAA, Inc.

® Registered Trademark

Sex Addicts Anonymous and the SAA logo are registered trademarks of the International Service Organization of SAA, Inc.

ISO Board Actions

**The following are actions taken
by the Board of Trustees
since its pre-convention meeting in Seattle**

- Raised the reimbursement rate for travel by vehicle to 50.5 cents per mile.
- Approved a provision for the board chair to call for an electronic vote on items that s/he deems of an urgent nature (when waiting until the next regularly scheduled meeting would cause a true hardship), and also for items of a relatively routine nature such as approval of meeting minutes, in order to expedite disbursement of same.
- Decided to cease immediately sales of the newest edition of the book *Sexual Anorexia*. [NB: Objection to sales of the book was based on the cover of that particular edition, which was deemed inappropriate for offering by the ISO.]
- Increased the individual donation limit for contributions to the ISO from \$12,000 to \$15,000.
- Stopped all funding of the literature and translation reserve until the operating reserve is raised to four months.
- Voted that all delegate registration fees collected shall cover delegate meeting expenses.
- Discontinued the local registrant discount for the convention, effective immediately.
- Cancelled the December face-to-face meeting in Houston unless the operational reserve becomes again fully funded.
- Approved a rate of \$25 per hour up to a \$500 maximum for Elizabeth S. to edit the Intergroup Guide.
- Raised the membership of the OOC from six to seven.
- Added to the outgoing phone message of the ISO Office: "If you would like to learn about how we abide by Texas requirements for reporting abuse of minors that is disclosed to our staff, please press ____." [NB: the blank number was to be determined by the Office.]

- Increased the price of the Group Guide to cover costs.
- Changed the wording of item 3E in the travel reimbursement policy by eliminating the words “convention registration” from 3E3) and added a new item 3E5) reading “convention registration at the early bird price and delegate registration”.
- Authorized the creation of a tab on the ISO website labeled “Seventh Tradition” with the content to be determined by the OPCom and the LitCom.
- Directed the 2009 Convention Committee (or other appropriate body) to explore the possibility of presenting an “SAA Back-to-Basics” workshop in Spanish.
- Directed the 2009 Convention Committee (or other appropriate body) to explore the possibility of simultaneous translation of live events.
- Tasked the international development committee to come up with a plan and cost of translating ISO pamphlets and the book *Sex Addicts Anonymous* into French.
- Tasked the General Outreach Committee with reporting on costs and other details about placement of an ad in the *Advocate*.
- Directed the reimbursement of members of WOC who spent their own money on Women’s Outreach at the 2008 convention totaling \$150.
- Approved a consulting agreement with Jerry B. for services as Director of Fellowship Services through September 30, 2008.
- Added a statement at the bottom of the hotel information on the 2009 convention registration materials that “Childcare providers may be available at the hotel. Please contact the hotel for more information.”

ISO Income/Expense Summary As of July 31 , 2007

	July	Monthly Average	Year To Date
NET OPERATING INCOME			
Net Sales	6,309	7,788	54,518
Donations	15,196	17,807	124,652
General Donations	10,889	10,866	76,062
LifeLine Partners	3,545	5,693	39,852
Designated Donations	762	1,248	8,738
Delegate Registrations	0	765	5,355
2008 Convention	0	9,251	64,756
Miscellaneous Income	516	1,226	8,579
TOTAL NET OPERATING INCOME	22,021	36,837	257,860
OPERATING EXPENSES			
Wages/Benefits/Taxes	13,497	15,682	109,830
Program Related	7,410	10,158	71,104
Administration	973	1,933	13,541
Benefits	4,216	2,556	17,892
Payroll Taxes	898	1,043	7,292
Insurance	293	384	2,686
Depreciation	175	175	1,225
Postage	32	89	624
Phone	293	281	1,965
Website Related	286	81	570
Occupancy	1,531	1,492	10,443
Office Expenses	764	992	6,942
Professional Fees/Contract Services	2,711	1,614	11,295
Financial	1,602	1,092	7,644
<i>The Outer Circle</i>	2,349	1,305	9,132
Board & Committees	5,745	2,967	20,722
Translations/Major Literature Projects	400	144	1,008
Convention Related Travel	1,704	3,378	23,648
Delegate Meeting	0	1,248	8,738
2008 Convention	6	7,569	52,984
Miscellaneous	0	1,429	10,000
TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES	31,388	39,922	279,456
TOTAL NET OPERATING SURPLUS	-9,367	-3,085	-21,596

Note: As evidenced by the year-to-date loss of \$21,596, the ISO is struggling financially. Even before July, the ISO treasurer saw the need to submit the report on the next page to the Board of Trustees during its July 19 teleconference.

Current Condition of ISO Finances

A report by the ISO Treasurer in consultation with the acting DFS

The ISO has a very serious financial problem; in fact we are “maxed out.” Our operating loss year to date is \$19,100 as of June 30 and the next six months are forecast to have an additional loss of \$15,000. This is a swing of \$54,000 from last year’s \$20,000 surplus.

The forecast for the remaining six months includes the Bay Area annual Giving Thanks donation and the annual appeal. It does not include the following: recruiting costs for the DFS and DBS of \$5,000, relocation costs of \$6,000/8,000 if the new Directors are from other than Houston, face to face meeting of the Board of Directors (\$6,100), face to face meeting of the Literature Committee (\$6,100).

Our Estimated \$15,000 second half loss will bring our operating reserve down to \$42,000, just 1.5 months of operating expenses. Our Board authorized level is four months. If we were to spend the recruiting and relocation costs of \$13,000 our operating (prudent) reserve would be just 30 days. The face to face meetings would bring the reserve to 15 days.

What can we do now?

1. Raise the donation limit to \$15,000 from \$12,000. It could mean \$3,000 to \$5,000 this year. [The Board has now raised the donation limit to \$15,000.]
2. Stop funding the literature reserve when we don’t have a net surplus. Funding a restricted reserve when we are in a loss position causes us to use more of our operating reserve. This would add \$7,100 to our operating reserve retroactive to 1/1/08. [This measure has now been implemented.]
3. Eliminate all travel until our reserve is back to four-months other than convention. [Except for travel related to interviewing candidates for the vacant Director of Fellowship Services (DFS) position, this is being followed.]
4. Reduce mailing costs. Have the OOC study our mailing costs in the next 30 days and make recommendation to the Board. [This study is underway.]

5. We lost \$3,400 on the Delegate Meeting this year. Have the meeting break even. [The Board has passed a motion to make breaking even a policy, and the delegate fee will be adjusted accordingly for the 2009 Delegate Meeting.]

6. Gain more control of the Convention to improve the quality of the sessions and the fund raising. [This is being done, with the cooperation of the 2009 ISO Convention Committee.]

7. The budget and job descriptions call for two added employees, one each for the business and fellowship services. Defer these hires until we are out of the woods financially. [No new staff positions will be added until finances allow.]

8. Defer any improvement in the quality of literature printing, materials and design until we are back to four-month operating reserve. [Plans for redesigning literature have been postponed.]

9. Tell the Fellowship about our condition and ask for help.

10. Increase our donations: each Board member and alternate take on the challenge to add five LifeLine Partners in the next two months. [This challenge to the Board has been issued.]

What we have is not an unusual problem for an organization like ours; we are growing and income is not keeping pace with the demands, we have no stable income, 63% [of income comes from] donations, a great many of our groups haven't caught up with the need to support the ISO (40% are donors*), we Trustees have been quick to spend but slow to take steps to increase income, e.g., donation limit, price of literature, fees at conventions and delegates' meeting. (*Adjusted for restricted meditation book donations of \$6,896.)

The question of improving the benefits for our employees is another question. To increase our medical program from a partial contribution to full individual coverage, the cost would add \$9,500/year. A retirement program would cost \$5,500/year based on a 2.5% contribution by the ISO. [Additional staff benefits have been postponed.]

The next twelve months are critical. If we make the tough decisions and are patient, we will be OK.

In Your Service,

Don K.

Note: Following up on this report, it should be noted that in July the ISO lost \$9,367, bringing its loss year-to-date to \$21,596. Although July is always a loss month, this year there were additional large expenditures that exacerbated the situation, specifically \$1,704 in late convention related travel reimbursement payments and \$3,100 spent for travel related to interviewing candidates for the DFS position.

It should also be reported that major factors in the ISO's financial decline stem from a lower than projected convention surplus, the cost of the delegate meeting, and the sharp increase in convention related travel. The 2008 Convention had been budgeted to net \$23,800, but it realized a surplus of only \$11,772. The 2008 Delegate Meeting cost \$3,383 more than the delegate fees that are supposed to pay for it. While convention related travel has cost no more than about \$17,000 in the past, this year the final total was \$23,648. These three factors, all of which occurred over a two-month span, made a bottom line difference of more than \$22,000.

To stay afloat, the ISO has had to dip into its Operational Reserve, which by the end of July, held only enough to cover operating expenses for two and a half months. The reserve is expected to deteriorate even further through October, unless income significantly exceeds projections.



On Being A LifeLine Partner Thoughts from a long time member

With about 45 years of addictive behavior and acting out as a part of my resume for membership to SAA, I have to believe I have wasted literally thousands of dollars along my journey. And that is just considering my expensive stashes, lost wages, and lost opportunity. I won't even go into the lost relationships.

Nevertheless, for the past several years I have been a member of Lifetime Partners. It is an opportunity to give to this fellowship some of what I have been given. The serenity of recovery, the friendships, the opportunity to turn my life around, and the opportunity to serve are all a part of my recovery experience.

The money I throw in the basket at meetings is only a small part of giving back. In addition, I have a small amount charged to my credit card the first of each month. All I have to do is just pay the bill when it comes in.

I invest in SAA so that the fellowship can carry the message to the addict who still suffers and so that the ISO can support this program as it grows. The satisfaction I get from being a part of Lifetime Partners is ample return on my investment. Is that a gift, or what?

Richard S.

LIFELINE PARTNERS ENROLLMENT FORM	
Member Name _____	
Address _____	
City _____ St/Prov _____ Code _____ Country _____	
Phone _____ E-Mail _____	
My pledge is: \$ _____ per month	
Enclosed is my initial gift of: \$ _____	
OR I CHOOSE GiftExpress with my... (check one option)	
<input type="checkbox"/> American Express <input type="checkbox"/> Discover <input type="checkbox"/> MasterCard <input type="checkbox"/> Visa	
_____ <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> Account Number Expiration Date </div>	
Please charge my account automatically each month on the _____ (date of each month, e.g., 15th, you wish your account to be charged)	
Customer authorization: I authorize the ISO of SAA, Inc. to initiate charges to my account. I have indicated the account and understand I will need to call the ISO (800-477-8191) to make changes in my payment arrangements.	
_____ <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> Signature (REQUIRED) Date </div>	
All donations to the ISO of SAA, Inc., are tax deductible Mail to ISO, P.O. Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270	

ISO Literature Committee

Open Forums on the SAA Basic Text, *Sex Addicts Anonymous*

The Book Work Group (formerly Book Subcommittee) is hosting a series of open forums to give the entire Fellowship an opportunity to offer verbal comments and suggestions to be considered in the review of our basic text, *Sex Addicts Anonymous*. The first forum will be held via teleconference on October 19, 2008 at 3:00 pm Central Time. You are invited and encouraged to attend.

For call-in details, contact the ISO office at:

info@saa-recovery.org
or call 800-477-8191

Our long-term goal is to have a conference-approved basic text, and we believe that broad input from the Fellowship will help us best achieve group conscience in this endeavor. We would greatly appreciate your participation. Feedback on any portion of the book is welcome, but the forum in October will concentrate on the Introduction, Chapter 1, and Chapter 2 (pages 1 - 19).

If you are unable to join an open teleconference forum, you may still offer written feedback on the basic text.

Please send written comments to the ISO office by email:

info@saa-recovery.org

Or postal mail:

ISO of SAA
Attn. Literature Committee
PO Box 70949
Houston, TX 77270
USA

With gratitude in service,
Book Work Group

Job Opening at the ISO (An announcement from the Board of Trustees)

Dear fellow members and member groups:

We need your help in getting the word out to as many people as possible about the two open positions for directors of the ISO. We are currently focusing our search on the next Director of Fellowship Services. We have an opening for this position in our Houston office. This is a full time position with a good salary and benefits. We are seeking someone who has strong leadership and administrative qualities, who has been in the program for at least three years and with at least two years of ongoing sobriety, and who has a firm grasp of the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions. This person will need to be able to supervise a small staff and be skilled in interpersonal relations.

If you are qualified for and interested in this position (or someone you know is), please go to the ISO website www.saa-recovery.org and go to the Directors Search page. There you will find the job description as well as a way to apply for the position. Please note: although we are aiming to fill the DFS position in the near future, we are also accepting applications for the Director of Business Services (DBS) position, which will open up later in the year.

We urge you to carry this news to your meetings, letting people know that this position is available. Although we prefer that applicants be SAA members, we may be open to considering someone with an excellent record from another twelve step fellowship.

Thank you for helping us to carry out this piece of service.

Sincerely, the ISO Board of Trustees



Article Correction

In the March-April article on fund raising, it was incorrectly reported that, until Bakersfield and Houston held hosted Giving Thanks fund raisers last December and January, no other fellowship had followed The Bay Area's lead in holding such an event. In fact, the 2007 Convention Committee held a Giving Thanks fund raiser in November of 2006, bringing in \$288 for the 2007 convention held in Minneapolis the following year.

22nd Annual ISO Convention Stepping Out of the Fog and Into the Light

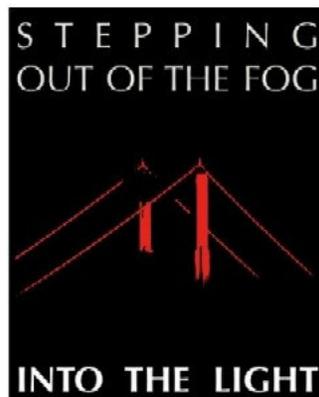
Mark your calendar now for the 22nd annual ISO Convention.

Planning for the convention, which already is well underway, includes making arrangements for a fabulous Sunday off site event. For those who may not want to participate in the off site event, an alternative activity will be made available.

The concept of the Planning Committee is to link the presentations of the convention program to our day-to-day recovery tools, and especially the steps. This idea gave rise to the theme – Stepping Out of the Fog and Into the Light. The Program Subcommittee of the local fellowship is actively seeking ideas for meeting topics that reflect the connection between the seminar theme and one or more of the specific Twelve Steps. Please send your ideas and interests to the Program Subcommittee chair at chriss@victron.com.

The Program Subcommittee is also interested in hearing from you, as soon as possible, if you would like to be a presenter at the convention. A formal solicitation will be sent out shortly. It isn't too early to think about enhancing your own recovery by sharing your experience, strength and hope with the fellowship in attendance. We welcome, as well, any other thoughts or ideas you have for making this what we hope to be remembered as the best convention yet. Please use the address above to submit your suggestions and contact information.

Early planning should help you economize on air fares and other arrangements. Watch The Outer Circle in the months ahead for further information about the convention, registration, activities, fund-raising, etc.



Intergroup Communications

The Intergroup Communications Committee (ICC), an ISO Board committee, conducts bi-monthly teleconferences on the second Saturday of odd numbered months from 7:00am-9:00am Pacific. All SAA members are welcome to join the call. Please contact the ISO at info@saa-recovery.org in advance to receive the call-in details.

ICC Statement of Purpose

The Intergroup Communications Committee has a two-fold purpose:

- To create an Intergroup Guide which will provide a set of principles and procedures for SAA fellowships that are interested in starting or growing a local SAA intergroup.
- To identify and implement strategies for improving communications and sharing of best practices across the local intergroups which make up the worldwide SAA fellowship.

GLBT Outreach

The GLBT Outreach Subcommittee of General Outreach is tasked with developing more effective ways to carry the SAA message of recovery to sex addicts in the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender communities. We are currently developing outreach efforts in the following areas:

- Public Information announcements in print and electronic media targeting these communities
- Literature development
- Response to newcomer inquiries
- Long-distance contact/support list
- Internal SAA informational venues
- Cooperating with the professional community
- Coordination with others in the SAA service structure

ALL SAA members are invited to participate or forward suggestions to GLBT@saa-recovery.org on how we can best fulfill our primary purpose, to carry the message of SAA recovery to sex addicts who still suffer.

DFW Intergroup 2008 Fall Retreat

The DFW Intergroup will hold its Fall Retreat Friday through Sunday, October 10-12, 2008, at the Riverbend Retreat Center in Glen Rose, TX.

The retreat will feature presentations and discussion on healthy sexuality, relapse prevention, spirituality, and more. Early registration until September 10 is \$99 per person. After September 10, the registration fee will be \$110 per person. The fee includes all program costs, two nights' lodging, and four meals. A limited number of scholarships may be available.

For more information send an e-mail to:

dfwsaaretreat2008@gmail.com

or call:

Clyde S. at 972-768-0951.

Northern Tier Intergroup Fall Roundup

The North Central Region Northern Tier Intergroup will hold its Fall Roundup from 1:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. on Saturday, November 15, 2008. It is open to SAA members, their spouses and significant others and will be held in the community room of the Fargo Cash Wise grocery store, 1401 33rd Street SW, Fargo, ND.

A business meeting is scheduled for 10:00 a.m. to noon, followed by two workshops, an open meeting, a social, a catered meal, and speaker. Registration for these events will be held from 1:30 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. A registration fee of \$15 covers the meal as well as drinks and snacks throughout the day.

For more information, call:

Dave S. at 701-793-5726
or Ted J. at 701-793-5984

or write:

N.T.
c/o FM Recovery
P.O. Box 9682
Fargo, ND 58106

Northeast Region Caucus

Last year, the Northeast Region asked for and received permission from the Board to hold its annual caucus prior to the 2009 Delegate Meeting. The caucus will be held on November 8 in Syracuse, NY. This will mark the first time a region will meet apart from the convention site. Other regions interested in exploring this option are encouraged to contact the ISO office for further information.

Registered groups in the Northeast Region are urged to elect a delegate to the regional caucus. This delegate will also be eligible to participate in the 2009 ISO Delegate Meeting next spring. To register, please use the Delegate Certification Form on the opposite page.

Important Notes

1. Only groups currently registered with the ISO of SAA, Inc. can send a delegate to the Northeast Regional Caucus. A list of SAA meetings currently registered in the Northeast Region can be obtained from the ISO office or the ISO website, www.saa-recovery.org. If your group is not listed, you must accompany your Delegate Certification Form with a completed Group Registration Form. This form can also be obtained from the ISO office or on the ISO website.
2. Suggested guidelines for selecting your delegate to the Northeast Region Caucus and to the 2009 Delegate Meeting can be found in the 2008 Call to Convention on page 27 (http://www.saa-recovery.org/Call_to_Convention_2008_web.pdf).
3. There is a \$5 caucus registration fee to help pay for the meeting. Board members and alternates and Literature Committee members and alternates must also pay. This fee is in addition to the fee for the 2009 ISO Delegate Meeting to be held in the spring. Those who register for the NE Region Caucus will be pre-registered for the Delegate Meeting but will have to pay the additional delegate fee at the time of the Delegate Meeting.
4. **Before October 31**, the form certifying your delegate should be mailed to ISO, P.O. Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270. **After October 31**, your delegate may hand carry this form to the caucus.

GROUP IDENTIFICATION		
Group Name	Region	Group Code
Mailing Address		
DELEGATE		
Name	Phone	
	E-Mail	
Mailing Address		
ALTERNATE DELEGATE		
Name	Phone	
	E-Mail	
Mailing Address		
DELEGATE CERTIFICATION		
<p>This certifies that the above individual(s) has been elected to represent our group at the North-east Region Caucus to be held on November 8, 2008, in Syracuse, NY, and at the 2009 Delegate Meeting to be in Oakland CA, May 22-23, 2009.</p>		
Trusted Servant's Signature	Trusted Servant's Printed Name	Date

From the Editor

By Mike L., Literature Editor, *The Outer Circle*

"I cannot restore myself to sanity, so my recovery and my life depend upon a combination of surrender, footwork, and grace." *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, p. 176.

While formal meditation books are wonderful things, I don't always need to have a formal text to meditate on. This phrase in our basic text recently attracted my attention, especially the three words at the end of it. I think I understand what "surrender" is, and I'll probably never fully understand the idea of "grace," despite having been the grateful recipient of it over and over again, so I was especially led to meditate on the idea of "footwork." What exactly is "footwork," and how do I know if and when I am doing it?

For some reason my mind leapt over to Step Five: "Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs." Another trio of terms. I was cautioned many years ago in recovery as to the importance of the "another human being" in this combination. I was told that it was pretty easy to lie to myself about things, and really not that much harder to lie to God. It was in admitting the nature of my wrongs to another human being where it would be easiest for me to tell whether I was working a truly honest program.

So it is with "surrender, footwork, and grace," even if the words are not in the same order as their related terms in Step Five. "Surrender" has to do with me: "sure, I've surrendered." "Grace" relates to my Higher Power: "of course; I've received loads of grace." Two areas where, once again, it would be fairly easy for me to deceive myself.

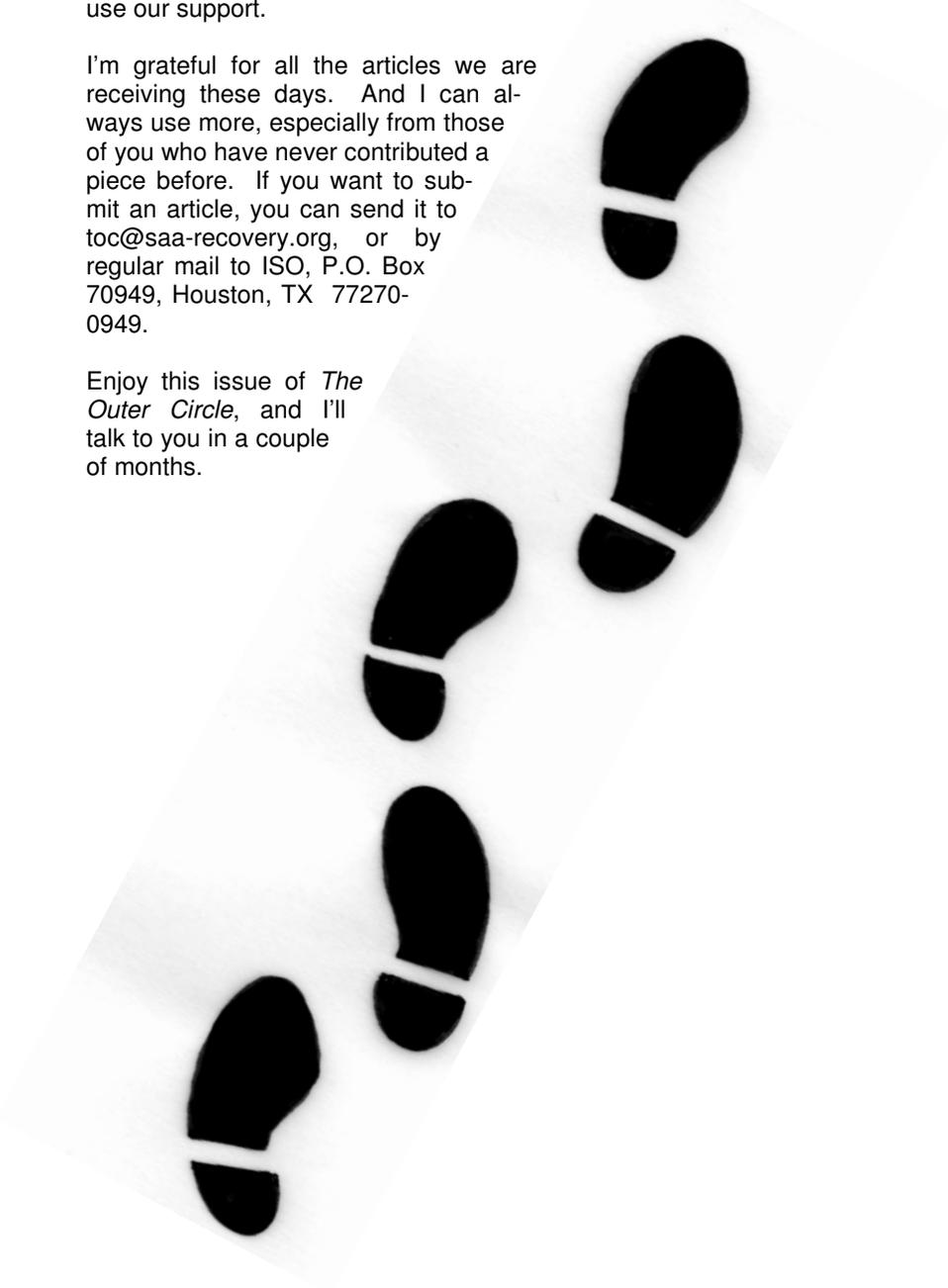
So it is in the "footwork" where it will be more difficult for me to hide. One respected dictionary defines "footwork" as "the activity of moving from place to place in the fulfillment of a task or purpose." And while that movement can be physical, I don't think it always has to be. Do I keep my meeting attendance up? Do I work with others? Do I engage in outer circle behaviors? Do I pray and meditate? And this is to name just four areas of my life where I can effectively do footwork.

And both of these other-directed concepts are important to our literature articles in this issue of *The Outer Circle*. "Admitting to others" where we have erred comes into play in our discussion of the chips. While both of our authors have different opinions on the role that chips should play in our program, I think they both are very much in favor of being honest with the others in the group as to how our program is working.

Concerning footwork, Gene D. speaks of going to meetings, Cindy tells us of her not-always-successful attempts to work with a sponsor and of speaking at treatment centers, and B— mentions attending a retreat. We are even encouraged to do some footwork by Timothy H., a prisoner who is looking for a sponsor, a reminder that there are many prisoners who could use our support.

I'm grateful for all the articles we are receiving these days. And I can always use more, especially from those of you who have never contributed a piece before. If you want to submit an article, you can send it to toc@saa-recovery.org, or by regular mail to ISO, P.O. Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270-0949.

Enjoy this issue of *The Outer Circle*, and I'll talk to you in a couple of 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.

Stay in the Now

by Santi L.

"One of the most tragic things I know about human nature is that all of us tend to put off living. We are all dreaming of some magical rose garden over the horizon—instead of enjoying the roses that are blooming outside our windows today." Dale Carnegie

How true it is; as an addict I often expend so much of my time, energy and thought life focused on some future ideal or event, that I fail to recognize the many wonderful experiences and blessings available to me each and every day. Life becomes rich and full when I learn to live for this day, walking in awareness of what each encounter and each moment hold for me, remaining open to all the beauty, joy and opportunity that always surround me. With my busy and fast-paced lifestyle, it is easy to become so lost in the worries and concerns of the day that I lose sight of the power that comes in taking rest and allowing those worries to pass from my thoughts. Making time for adequate rest and quiet reflection on the truths which have been given me is what truly provides the strength to face each new day and each new set of challenges.

I would do well not to let my growth in life depend upon surrounding circumstances, for there cannot exist any conditions for doing right in my recovery. I would do better to constrain those circumstances to minister to my growth. I should beware of looking onward, or out of the present in any way, for the sanctification of my life.

I do well by staying in the Now as the only thing I can really control is the present—the actual moment that is passing by right NOW. If I sanctify that from hour to hour, I will sanctify my whole life; but if I brood over the past, or project myself into the future, I will lose all. In much simpler language; if I have one foot in the future and one foot in the past, I know what I am doing on the present! At this very moment the little acts of obedience, love, self-restraint, meekness, patience, and devotion offered to me are all mine for the taking and use, and if I neglect those things to fret about something else at a distance, I lose my real opportunity of serving God. A moment's silence, when some irritating words are said by another, may seem a very small thing; yet at that very mo-

ment it is my one duty, my one way of serving and pleasing God, and if I break it, I have lost my opportunity.

“The really happy person is the one who can enjoy the scenery while on a detour.” Author Unknown

Seldom do things turn out exactly as I have planned or would necessarily like for them to turn out. There are always unforeseen obstacles along the way and detours on the path to my final destination. The funny thing is, when I look back I often find that it was in those very “right now” moments that I gained my greatest insights, strength and maturity. Learning to enjoy the journey, come what may, is not only the key to true happiness and contentment, but it will also serve to make the detours and setbacks appear fewer and farther between.

Step Eleven

by Anonymous

Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.

When we get to this step, it may seem like we have been doing what the step asks—seeking God through prayer and meditation—for quite some time. But this step, in my view, is the fulcrum or pivot point to the whole recovery process. It is no accident that this step immediately precedes the final step of us as recovering addicts helping others. We would be entirely incapable of doing so without the foundation of a relationship with God. I have recognized and reflected many times since my recovery began that I would not have been able to break the cycle of addictive behavior unless I developed a relationship with God. The first Ten Steps are truly a foundation to get us to Step Eleven where we now have a relationship with God. They are necessary steps for us to get rid of our “stinkin’ thinkin’” and to realize we are children of God and can be forgiven for the sins we have committed.

Part of my ongoing relationship with God is the two practices to which the Steps refer—prayer and meditation. I have found both to be extremely helpful, and personally, I need both to be effective in my recovery and to continue to build my relationship with God.

For prayer, I find that I do it all day long. I thank God and praise Him when I see situations in which I might have taken the chance or opportunity to act out and recognize and reject those circumstances. I also need to have a more formal prayer with God the first thing in the morn-

ing and the last thing at night. I make sure I include thanks and praise in both prayers and to let Him know I know I am a blessed person to come out of the depths of this horrible disease and to know I have gained release from it. I also include my petitions to God and ask for His blessings for my life as well as for my family members. I recognize what I regret not knowing long ago, that I am the head of the household, not only physically and emotionally, but spiritually as well.

For meditation, I listen to readings from the Bible every day to and from work, read scripture at night and talk over what I learned with my wife. I also take time in the morning to read some devotionals and meditate on their meaning and how to apply them to my life. It is amazing how these times allow God to speak to me, and I receive guidance on things that I might be facing. It is wonderful to have clarity of thought, to keep unhealthy thoughts out of my life, and to interact with my family in a more loving way. That is only possible if I have a relationship with God and keep my thoughts and mind clear of unhealthy old thought patterns. Meditation is simply taking time to open myself to God's grace and wisdom. He wants the best for me.

I constantly ask God to continue to help me be a better Christian, a better husband and a better father. I ask Him to keep helping me learn more of the Word and to grow each day. I ask Him to lead me and let me know what His plan is for me. I am ready and willing—even in my infancy in my relationship with Him—to follow His will for me. I am a blessed man.

Recovery in Prison

by Doug S.

"Mr. S., I don't want you do die in prison. But you might."

When I heard that statement from the judge, I felt like my heart had stopped. I could no longer lie to myself. I was about to pay a severe penalty for my sex addiction.

"I sentence you to eight years in federal prison and lifetime probation." Today, I'm writing this article from a federal correctional institution.

For eight years I had been trading pornography by e-mail with other interested men. An increasing percentage of that pornography was child pornography. I would come home from work and, ignoring my wife and children, head straight for the computer. Many nights I stayed on the computer very late, stopping only to eat and some-

times to say good-night to my wife. I knew I was a sex addict, but I did nothing to stop the behavior that was destroying relationships and would eventually land me in prison.

At 7:25 in the morning of February 22, 2005, a team of Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials pounded on my front door. I told my wife why they were there. I knew at that moment that my reputation and my career were destroyed. Relationships with family and friends were in tatters. My recovery began at that moment.

It would be weeks before the arrest I knew was coming finally took place, and months more before sentencing and incarceration. My attorney suggested I go to a private residential treatment center, and it was there that I was introduced for the first time to SAA. I was no longer alone. I had a disease, and others had the same disease. Recovery was possible.

I went to a meeting every day, sometimes at the treatment center, often in the community. I stayed at the treatment center for four and a half months and completed the first Three Steps. I had a sponsor I found at a community SAA group. He helped me to stay sober. In the month between my release from the treatment center and my sentencing I attended a meeting every day, a practice I continued during the five weeks between sentencing and reporting to prison. I attended two hundred meetings in two hundred days, and I was in recovery.

Being in prison is no picnic. Being a known sex offender in prison is even more difficult. The Twelve Steps and the help I've received from SAA have helped pull me through. Although there is no SAA group in prison, I attend meetings of two other Twelve-Step programs every week. I have a sponsor through the SAA prison outreach program, and I have been through the Twelve Steps. I distribute SAA literature to other inmates, and helped found a Bible study group for sex offenders. My spiritual life is improving. I'm rebuilding relationships with my wife and children. The SAA prisoner outreach program provides critical help for me and many other inmates.

I have now been sexually sober for three years. I spent years with my mind imprisoned by the walls of sex addiction. The walls of this prison are sixteen feet high, have electric current running through them, and are wrapped in concertina wire. But today my mind is free. When the walls in the mind are torn down, the physical walls mean very little.

The Gift of Addiction

By Gene D.

When I am in meetings, I speak of my sex addiction as a gift. In response, I often get looks as though this notion were yet another manifestation of my version of the insanity implicit in the Second Step. Perhaps it is, but do believe me when I say that I am truly grateful that God put my sex addiction in my life. Without this gift I would still be wandering in the wilderness, with no idea that there is a God in this universe who cares for me with an infinite and unchanging love.

I was—and still am, for those who are curious—a profoundly stubborn person, afflicted with a pride and an overweening sense of self that borders perilously closely upon pure arrogance. I do things my way. (Thanks to the author of those lyrics for providing me with a theme song.) Bill W. hit this particular nail on the head with his trenchant phrase “self-will run riot.” Unfortunately, I was blessed with some not-inconsiderable intellectual abilities that allowed me a certain success in my endeavors—I say “unfortunately” because that apparent success continued to reinforce the deluded idea that, whenever I ran into difficulties of any sort, I could work them out on my own. I did not seem to notice that my success came at a price: firings from jobs, alienation from those closest to me, a complete lack of satisfaction from any of the things I did in my life.

To hide my misery, I found sex addiction: a quick path to an obliterating high. I have heard some people in the program say that they never wanted to be sex addicts. That wasn't the case with me. I grew up in the fifties, and a new magazine that came onto the newsstands was a revelation. Here was this guy running the magazine's empire, and, to use a phrase common in twelve-step recovery, “he had what I wanted.”

And I got what he had, but I didn't notice that it was never as glossy as the life photographed in his magazine. I couldn't air-brush away the imperfections in my life, try as I might. I was doing dangerous things with dangerous people in dangerous places. It reached the point where even my own finely honed powers of denial could no longer blind me to the insanity of my behavior. But I could not stop. My promises to myself that this would be the last time were utterly unavailing, as were prayer, confession, repentance, deals with God, miscellaneous penances, and my many other ploys; whatever route my attempt to reform took, it always led to a dead end.

I had finally run into a brick wall that all my individual efforts could not dent. I couldn't do it. I had no place to turn. At the midpoint of my life, I was utterly and completely lost in a dark and perilous wood. That was twenty years ago, and the term “sex addict” was virtually unknown; the talk shows on the scene at the time had not yet reached the point of raising our na-

tional consciousness in this regard. But a syndicated columnist published a letter from a man who said that he had a “secret sex life.” Whoa, I said; this man is talking my language: that’s what I have, a sex life that I have tried mightily to make sure no one knows about. The columnist called the man a “sex addict” and a light went on in my head. I had never heard the term before, but I knew instantly what I was. It gave me enormous relief just to be able to give it a name.

The columnist also said there was an organization called Sex Addicts Anonymous that helped people like me. At that time, I had never heard of the Twelve Steps, had never heard of anything called recovery. But I had heard of another anonymous program and I did know one thing about it—it worked. And I knew with an absolute and utterly irrational certainty, without any evidence other than the sudden hope I felt in my heart, that this SAA program would work for me. She gave a mailing address in Minneapolis—there was no ISO at the time, and the mailing address was that of the Minneapolis intergroup. That post office received over time more than four thousand letters, all of which were answered within four months by two or three SAA members. They may have been overwhelmed by the volume of the response but they were unrelenting in their commitment to carry the message to the addict who still suffered.

It is said that in order to get the attention of the jackass, one must strike him crisply between the eyes with a two-by-four. Sex addiction was the two-by-four for this jackass. God had brought me to my knees with this sex addiction, as no other misfortune in my life had been able to do. This was one problem that I couldn’t evade or blame on someone else. This was clearly and inescapably my problem, one of my own choosing, one of my own self-indulgence. It was a Pandora’s Box that I was delighted to open but which, on my own, I could not close.

And very quickly, once I started working the steps, I discovered that stopping the crazy sex was merely a collateral—and relatively unimportant—product of recovery. Time and again, I found God doing for me what I could not do for myself, letting me know intuitively how to handle things that used to baffle me. I came to understand that my sex addiction was the ruse that the God of my understanding used to bring me closer to Him.

My life today is wonderful in ways that I never could even have imagined. I have found that when I surrender to His will, He then has room in my life to bless me with gifts that I never would have thought to ask for. When I open the door just a crack to Him, He bursts through in all His glory, not only ready to overwhelm me with His unyielding love, but also loaded with simple, practical solutions for the most unmanageable problems of my daily life.

More Thoughts on the Chip System

[Editor's Note: Our recent article on the chip system has provoked more commentary than any article in the newsletter in recent memory. Following are two responses, coming, interestingly enough, from opposite points of view.]

About Taking Chips

by Richard P.

The chips article was very interesting and thought provoking. I have also thought about the utilitarian concepts behind the chip award system. The system is encouraging for those who have managed to make a daily commitment for sobriety and very encouraging for those who have actually accomplished long-term sobriety. It takes a lot of day-by-day commitment and perseverance to get a long-term sobriety chip, and the fear of losing it encourages us not to slip.

But there is a discouraging (very negative) factor involved in a slip that is compounded when the slip happens after long-term sobriety. As the article notes, this can lead to a "possible shaming ritual" that could discourage some members from coming back to SAA at all. This would not be good. If possible, a remedy to this problem should be found. We do not want to discourage any members, especially veteran members who have built a rapport within their groups.

Now picture this analogy: Imagine a man who stands on the edge of the Grand Canyon who decides he must walk across to the other side. From just looking at the canyon, it appears to be an impossible or terribly difficult task. But if the man decides to go for it one step at a time, in time the prospect of success looks better. The further he gets into the canyon, the better he feels and the higher his hopes are for success. But then he slips and breaks a leg. His chances are shattered. He has to be carried out by medevac and healed before he can make a fresh attempt. In this attempt, he must again start from the beginning, at the edge of the canyon. It could look like an even more difficult task than the first attempt. If his sojourn in the canyon fails again, a third attempt would even seem more difficult. What would others think about his failed attempts? The simple solution would be to give up.

This is what happens with the chip system. When a member slips, he or she is forced to start over again from day one. It can be a very discouraging experience. But it does not have to be that way. Just because we have been doing something a certain way in the past does not mean we are doing it the best way possible. Just because the world was once believed to be flat did not make it true. Modern thinkers have to remain open to evolutionary thought.

Back to the canyon walker analogy: Suppose he begins walking across and

makes it halfway before he falls. He made ten thousand successful steps before he made a bad one. Stepwise, his success ratio is extremely high. Instead of breaking a leg, however, he has only sprained an ankle. Instead of starting over, he bandages his leg and continues his journey of success. By doing this, the walker is able to salvage all the good steps he made in the past. His steps may be more painful and slow-footed, but he does not have to start over. If after some three thousand more steps he falls again, again he re-bandages his leg and continues going. Further missteps could eventually make the journey impossible, so the walker must become even more vigilant and careful. This is good.

So, how does this relate to the chip system? The chip system is too oversimplified to be effective in all situations. Every slip, big or small, is handled like a big slip and members who admit to slips are automatically made to start over from the beginning. The veteran SAA member is made equal with the first time beginner. But what if the group handles a slip like a sprained ankle, instead of like a broken leg? The veteran is allowed to continue counting his successful days of sobriety, but he must also acknowledge any slip days. Maybe a red chip could be awarded for this purpose. A member with ten years sobriety, for example, could continue to claim ten years of sobriety, but would also have to mention any red chips. This is the real truth. To make a member start over again from day one is not reality. It is no wonder that members who get into such situations are highly reluctant to share their failed experiences with others.

A new chip system may make it possible not to lose members to hypocrisy or despair. All members who make mistakes, not just the beginners, could then be encouraged to share their bad experiences as well as their good ones. We need to learn from our mistakes as well as from our successes. By knowing where others have slipped, members who follow can be warned to watch their step.

So let's work out a chip system that is truthful and encourages all members to keep on stepping, one step at a time. The system we have used in the past served its purpose in giving us something that worked, but it is outdated and needs improvement. An engineer who designs a product that works does not stop there; he develops his design through trial and error. A modern automobile does not look like a Model T. To keep doing the same thing hoping for improved results is insanity. The old chip system has a problem; let's fix it.



The Chip System: My Experience, Strength and Hope

by Karl V.

“My name is Karl; I am a grateful recovering sex addict. My sobriety date is November 11, 2004, and I am working Steps 10-12.”

I begin this essay in this manner because that is what our group conscience now recommends for introductions, based on what we learned at a retreat led by a long-time member of SAA and another Twelve-Step fellowship. We do this in the interest of being rigorously honest and staying out of denial. Our leader noted that long-term sobriety is cause for celebration and hope; sharing a recent relapse date is a call for help.

When I share my story with newcomers, I further state that I had thirty days of sobriety three times, sixty days three times, ninety days three times, and two hundred twenty-four days once, before I achieved with God’s grace my present twelve hundred seventy-two days in a row. I understand that I did not lose everything I had learned up to my points of relapse. However, there are two major considerations for me in asking for a new desire chip each time and in encouraging my sponsees to do the same.

“How It Works,” the selection from the AA Big Book that is so familiar to so many of us, indicates that I need to: “completely give [myself] to this simple program”; grasp and develop “a manner of living which demands rigorous honesty”; “have the capacity to be honest”; be “willing to go to any length to get” what sober members have; “be fearless and thorough from the very start”; give up trying “to hold onto [my] old ideas”; “let go absolutely”; avoid “half measures”; ask God’s “protection and care with complete abandon.” This list reminded me to stop trying to find “an easier, softer way.”

The chip system focuses on sobriety and the solution. That was brought home to me at a meeting of another Twelve-Step program that celebrated one member’s seventh sobriety birthday. Folks recalled her early struggles in the program, how she kept slipping day after day, week after week. She always came right back and asked for a new chip, in spite of the shame she felt, and she was always welcomed back. That was the model I needed. I wanted what she had, so I did what she did.

My shame and my secrets want to kill me. Each time I asked for a chip was an indication of my willingness to grow along spiritual lines, to trust that “God could and would if God were sought.”

My faith in the opening statement of “How It Works”—“rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path”—is based on observing successes (and failures) of others in a variety of Twelve-Step programs. Why would I consider being less rigorous in the battle to overcome my sex addiction, an addiction that many say is more challenging—more cunning, baffling, and powerful—than any other addiction?

A Raft on the Open Sea

by Larry E.

I am surprised that the raft still floats, that the mast still stands.
I am in the open sea, the crests and troughs of the waves are all that I see;
White spittle topping each wave, the foam lifted on the chilly breeze;
The latter gray and black and blue ripples and ribbons of confusion.

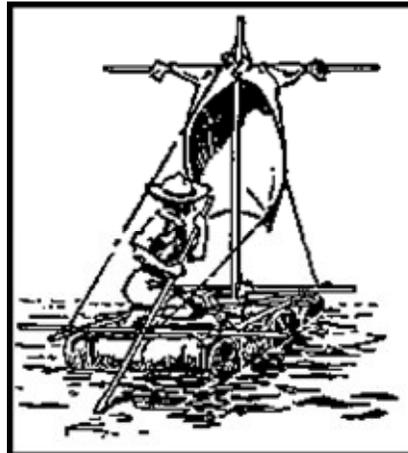
I am not afraid of dying out here. It is being alone that frightens me,
For the sea is vast and alone. I have only myself on whom to rely, I think.
And I do not believe in myself, not enough anyway, not right now,
To sense in what direction the winds blow me and where lies a safe harbor.

But I digress. Today I challenged myself. I thought kindly about the little boy
Who struggled so much with the disarray of his youth, neglected and sad,
Behind a façade of full-on confusion and lies, Who was afraid to feel and hid
In a desk drawer behind pencils and erasers and rubber bands.
He never had a chance.

The little boy who was alone even when in a crowd, his feelings tucked in a pocket.
Like those feelings, the fish swim just beneath my raft heaving to and fro
on the open sea.
Funny. They give me assurance that I am not alone.
Even if they threaten, they are Beautiful.
As am I. And that little boy was beautiful, too. And so fragile.

But to complain about the neglect of his youth is akin to complaining
about the sea,
Bouncing and rising and falling in a pitch of confusion and constant change,
Supported by hydraulic tension on the surface of the water like on the
surface of family.
It is better to make amends to that little boy and, maybe, some day,
to forgive all.

To forgive him for what? For seeking
what gave him solace; for holding to-
gether
Like a raft in the open sea, logs lashed
together, not conscious of why,
Only that it keeps them afloat. Relying
on what cannot be seen or felt or heard
To guide them to safety on a shore not
yet visible beyond the cold evening fog.



On Step Twelve

by Timothy H.

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

I joined SAA during a time in my life when I was in desperate need of help. For three weeks straight I attended every meeting available in order to find sanity, help, health, healing, and comfort. Then I was arrested, jailed, tried, sentenced, and imprisoned. The help and assistance that had brought me great joy and happiness were removed from me. I no longer had access to meetings, books, literature, advice, and assistance. All hope was lost.

I wrote to the ISO of SAA and asked for a copy of *Sex Addicts Anonymous* so that I could once again start my recovery. With the book in hand I thought I could do it. I was mistaken. Without the advice, encouragement, acceptance, and support of another addict, I fell prey to my addiction. I wrote to ask for a sponsor. I am looking forward to hearing from someone soon.

Somebody once wrote, “A wise person learns from the experience of others, ordinary people learn from their own experience, but a fool learns from nobody’s experience.” I am not a fool; I am an ordinary man. By my own experiences, I have become wise enough to know that I need the help and support of others. I have yet to complete my Twelve-Step journey. Without the guidance and support of a sponsor, I am a fool, learning from nobody’s experience. Until I complete my Twelfth Step, I cannot fully give service to others around me. I cannot give what I have yet to attain. I encourage others on the outside not to feel hindered or afraid to sponsor a member who is imprisoned. All that changes is the mode in which one gives away the gift he or she has so wonderfully received.

Page 60 of the SAA Book, in discussing Step Twelve, says, “However we do service, we receive much more than we give.” This section of the book discusses the various ways in which we can serve others and talk about why serving others is important. These pages talk of the various means there are of serving others, including sponsorship.

I close with a reminder that a wise man once wrote to others suggesting that they remember those in prison as if they were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if they themselves were suffering. Another wise man once said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

[Editor’s Note: If you wish to get involved in this very important prisoner outreach work—and more help is always needed—contact the ISO office at 800/477-8191 or info@saa-recovery.org.]

Dear Grace

Submitted by SAA Women's Outreach

Statement of Purpose for Dear Grace:

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

Names have been changed to protect anonymity

Dear Grace:

I'm a professional in my community, and I can't attend a meeting because I am too afraid, embarrassed, and ashamed. Do you have any suggestions for me?

Signed,
Well-Known in Washington

Dear Well-Known:

Many current members recall feeling scared, embarrassed, ashamed, and guilty before our first meeting. What I have come to realize today is that facing my fears and taking action towards my recovery has been the best decision I have ever made. SAA has many boundary meetings for professionals. Please contact the ISO for more information. You can also attend telephone meetings and use any name you like. We also have online meetings available. That information is available on our website under electronic meetings. I can also add you to a list of women in SAA who choose to use email as a form of communication. Remember that nothing is more important than your recovery!

Grace

Forgiving Myself Did Not Come Easily

by Cindy

Growing up not integrated and connected with my feelings, or, for that matter, any memories before my early teens, I was always searching for someone or something to complete and validate me. I found there was a deep hole inside that was vacant of a sense of self. Who was I?

Growing up with an angry father (I don't know if he was alcoholic, as I really knew nothing of my family—we were like five separate entities under one roof) and a people-pleasing, co-dependent mother, I learned early on to be shy, introverted and studious, hiding from everyone so nobody would see how hurt I

was. Then, at the age of thirteen, I was violated by a relative, and my soul and spirit vanished. I learned to have a mask and a very good personality disorder. I would go to my “happy place” with a good book in hand, my sports, my cat, and the knowledge that I was teacher’s pet. Since we moved around every three years while I was growing up, I knew not to bond with anyone. There would always be losses and good-byes, so I stayed distant.

When I reached my twenties, I came to believe that using alcohol and working in a bar would cause a man to pay attention to me. And when one did, it really felt that I was someone—the attention I never had was finally given to me!

But during my occasional efforts at sobering up, I realized that what I thought were relationships really were not. What I had thought were relationships were just one-night stands that were part and parcel of my being a party girl. I wanted something of a settled relationship but had no insight into how that might work. After relapsing when I’d been sober five and a half years, my alcohol addiction switched to sex addiction.

For a period of nearly sixteen years, chat lines, anonymous encounters, the adult-entertainment business, and phone sex were my main avenues of acting out. (Finding myself was still on my list of things to do.) As a result, my life was very empty and I was spiritually bankrupt. It did not help that I would not quit working at the bar; only now I was starting to use drugs. In my next attempt at sobering up, I realized the insanity of how I searched outside of myself to be fulfilled. Yet I could not stop. It was sickening to my soul, but here I was nearly five years or so sober again, and I was doing things sober that I wouldn’t even do drunk. I was disgusted with myself, but what did it matter? Maybe I was too messed up to recover. I would keep my sobriety from drinking or doing drugs, and just live this hopeless, helpless life.

That is, until I nearly threw away my sobriety on my last prostitution deal. Here I was on the verge of drinking and driving again, and I had already had had three DWIs. Despite the amount of sobriety I had put together, there was still the very real possibility of my drinking myself into a blackout and killing someone else or myself. I had a daughter whom my parents had raised because of my alcoholism, and with whom I would never gain a relationship. She already didn’t want anything to do with me after my last relapse. On top of everything else, I couldn’t get any stability where I lived.

So I found the meetings and rooms of SAA again after having been introduced to them some six years previously. I forgot the shame; well, I worked through it with the First Step. I came to my first convention because my initial sponsor had decided to stop working with me, so she could stand in her own integrity. While at the convention, I was referred to another long-distance sponsor and attempted to work a program; however, my making a relationship with someone else into my Higher Power greatly interfered with my program. Finally, after one year, two months and two weeks, I relapsed.

I called my old sponsor and she took me back. Still, I did not call when I said I would and she finally told me that I was not ready. I played with my circles and I ran my own program; eventually I acted out. This most recent acting-out experience scared me enough to knock me back into reality. It was serious enough that I knew I would end up being an empty spirit and soul, back in the place from whence I had come so very far.

Partly through the fellowship and mainly through the sustainable relief I got from working the steps, doing an inventory, and having a God of my understanding, today I can look the world in the face. I work with others, as my Higher Power sees fit to bring them into my life. I speak at treatment centers. I have true friends today.

I have forgiven that person who is no longer me. May you also find the freedom that I have found. God bless you on trudging the "Road of Happy Destiny." It is your choice; yes, you have a choice today. It is laid out how to do it. I found a wonderful sponsor who showed me the way.

A Meditation

by Barry M.

Theme: paradox of controlling one's recovery; engaging the addict when slipping:

Opening quotation: "In the Serenity Prayer, we're not asking for control...we need to put aside our fear, which is usually behind our need to control... realizing that serenity, courage, and wisdom are gifts from God." *Answers in the Heart*, 12/30.

Meditation: Control controls our lives: virtually from birth and even, for some, until death. If we are not in control; someone else is. Conflict resolution arises from wrestling for the controls and temporarily gaining them. If not in control, we want to be. If in seeming control, we make strides to maintain it. Yet addiction recovery literature, based on bodies of experience—mounds of trials and error struggling—bear witness to letting go of control. The opening quotation is a caution on control not having a creative place in our recovery. Rather, serenity along with courage and wisdom are gifts to be cherished, honored and shared.

Initially baffling, control is a failure set-up. It baffles us, for how else may we get sobriety and keep it? It sets up for failure, for sooner or later, determination to get and keep control gets in the way of the most basic step: to surrender and thus quit fighting. Pray tell, what happens in this surrendering act? May it provide space for something gracious to occur, to enter now, for some healing presence; may surrendering open us to now being willing to receive love, rather than contest it. The Psalmist attests: "You have given my feet space and to

spare” (31:8). We are invited to confess our powerlessness and yet work, without being helpless. We are cautioned to note the differences between ordinary willfulness, rooted in pride, and willingness as the openness to ask for, receive, and slowly, patiently work with the help we are offered.

The beginner to recovery and the tested addict wrestle with entering into or returning to the program. We struggle for controlling the outcome, even as we know the futility of such; for where has it really gotten us! For if we could truly control outcomes in our behaviors, we surely would have made it, apart from the awesome challenges in shared recovery, apart from the humbling admission of needing help. Out of our suffering trial-and-error experiences, however, we slowly learn to face the fear and the promise in surrendering. It is fearful, for we are heavily conditioned to want to fight our own battles so we can take credit. Yet, we risk losing face, eventually to confess that we did not do it on our own, because we could not! Surrendering is participating in the shared outcome of being part of a fellowship that creates and renews reality. We quit fighting for sobriety on our own, so as to gain community with others, akin to that to which martyrs have long borne witness: that “they are not fools who give what they cannot keep, to gain what they cannot lose.”

In the daily face of common-sense control to meet obligations—minimizing tendencies to irresponsibility and protecting our places in the real world—the program calls forth risk to prepare for the promise in even entering recovery via the gentle but sure steps of surrendering, letting go of fiercely held pride and efforts to control which resist the gentleness of grace. Oft, this is beyond common sense. Let such freedom be so—the freedom of service, contrary to the self-serving illusory freedom of indulgence.

Affirmation: Today, I will risk change and welcome the surprising delights in surrendering to the promises of recovery, wherein the gift of discernment prepares ways to freedom, beyond stubbornly held control.

Terrible Fantasies Transformed the Heart by B— , West Coast

I really identified with something I read in a meditation book that reminded me of my obsession with fantasies. For years, dark, exploitive fantasies tore at me, making me feel more a monster than a human. Over the last year in the program, I have at last found a measure of respite from these powerful images.

In brief, a male relative sexually abused me until my late teen years. Then, at seventeen, my sexual attraction gravitated to include young children. One night, I began acting out in this manner. Somehow, I kept it hidden for more than a decade, until I was finally caught.

After being jailed for a year, and working in a treatment program for my offense, I began to find it easier to stay away from children, to learn to relate better with adults, and to start some kind of social life, but I still could not let go of my fantasies involving young children. I felt doomed to carry them with me forever. During the course of five years of Internet pornography addiction, the movies in my head descended from light and romantic scenes to ever more addictive and dark imagery, more abusive and frightening with each passing month. Even though I felt a measure of “public control” and was not afraid that I would act on my fantasies, inside I felt like a repulsive beast.

I began to abhor having these images, and to feel ashamed and dishonest for harboring them when interacting with others. Chats over lattes often turned to the latest celebrity on trial for molestation, and friends would ask my opinion. I felt a fraud to say it was disgusting, knowing I actually could relate to his motives. Or a date would wonder aloud, “You know, what child molesters do is horrible... but I can’t help wondering what makes them think the way they do, you know?” “Yeah, I wonder...,” I would reply, while my chest was pounding. Later she would ask me my “dirtiest, most secret” sexual fantasy. I felt caught off-guard, scared. I responded with fluff from an old erotic magazine I had read. I began to wish my inner life had some integrity, so I could be honest and spontaneous, without guarding every thought.

I tried to block out dark fantasy using techniques learned in therapy, such as snapping a rubber band against my wrist or visualizing the consequences of the fantasy (prison), but felt even more ashamed and afraid.

Finally, during a retreat, I learned a path of meditation whereby I would pay attention to my thoughts, inner experiences of sensations in the body, and the emotions and experiences that arose with them. I found it easier to pay attention to my inner needs—the classic “HALT.” A sponsor also suggested having the “child” in my fantasy ask me, non-judgmentally, why I was acting out on her. I began to notice that the younger or more vulnerable the female, or the more control was involved, the more I was likely to be feeling weak, powerless, or upset myself. At times I would experience more loving or romantic scenes with a grown woman if I felt at ease or content. Such fantasies became a “gauge” of how healthy I felt. At the same time, when I began to notice fantasies of young children, at times I would experience what felt like a lightning bolt running through me with a warning: “You will not touch her!” I was becoming more naturally repulsed by fantasies involving kids.

Tonight, driving home from a dance, I still had to pray and meditate to sidestep my “plan” to rent porn for tomorrow, but still find that a growing abhorrence of fantasies involving the innocent has given me a sense of being in touch with my Higher Power and the grace of better relationships.

ISO Office Location

3890-D North Freeway
Houston, TX 77022

ISO Office Mailing Address

PO Box 70949
Houston, TX 77270

Phone: (713) 869-4902

Toll Free: (800) 477-8191

Website: <http://www.saa-recovery.org>

Office e-mail: info@saa-recovery.org

The Outer Circle e-mail: toc@saa-recovery.org

Office Staff

Business Services Administrator — Joe H.
Outreach Specialist — Klaus P.
Information Technician — Jonathan C.
Administrative Assistant — Tim D.
Business Services Assistant — Chris F.

The Outer Circle Staff

Literature Editor — Mike L.
ISO News Editor — Jerry B.
Design & Layout — Jonathan C.

<u>Region</u>	<u>Board Members</u>	<u>Board Alternate</u>	<u>Literature Committee</u>	<u>Lit. Com. Alternate</u>
Great Lakes	Ken S.	Ted M.	Morris B.	Cecilia P.
Intermountain	Eric M. Secretary	Rick I.	Mark A.	Michael H.
North Central	Wharton S.	Vacant	Thea D. 2nd Chair	Jeff B.
Northeast	Gary C.	Shawn L.	Chris J.	Bill R.
North Pacific	Tim E. Chair	Staci S.	Jeff W.	Lawrence S.
South Central	Don K. Treasurer	Joanne S.	Ken C.	Sita S.
Southeast	Mark S.	Francie E.	Jim L. Chair	John R. Secretary
Southern Pacific	Michele F.	Doug C.	Dejon M.	Kapiko R.
At Large	Roy T.		Jim M.	
At Large			Shira K.	
Newsletter Editor			Mike L.	

E-mail Addresses

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

The Chair of the Board of Trustees also receives a copy of email to the service addresses of regional Board representatives.

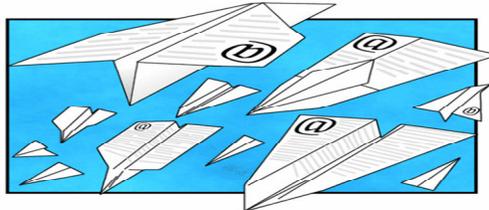
Great Lakes Board Member and Alternate: BoardGL@SAA-Recovery.org
Intermountain Board Member and Alternate: BoardIM@SAA-Recovery.org
North Central Board Member and Alternate: BoardNC@SAA-Recovery.org
Northeast Board Member and Alternate: BoardNE@saa-recovery.org
North Pacific Board Member and Alternate: BoardNP@SAA-Recovery.org
South Central Board Member and Alternate: BoardSC@SAA-Recovery.org
Southeast Board Member and Alternate: BoardSE@SAA-Recovery.org
Southern Pacific Board Member and Alternate: BoardSP@SAA-Recovery.org

Great Lakes LitCom Member and Alternate: LitComGL@SAA-Litcom.org
Intermountain LitCom Member and Alternate: LitComIM@SAA-Litcom.org
North Central LitCom Member and Alternate: LitComNC@SAA-Litcom.org
Northeast LitCom Member and Alternate: LitComNE@SAA-Litcom.org
North Pacific LitCom Member and Alternate: LitComNP@SAA-Litcom.org
South Central LitCom Member and Alternate: LitComSC@SAA-Litcom.org
Southeast LitCom Member and Alternate: LitComSE@SAA-Litcom.org
Southern Pacific LitCom Member and Alternate: LitComSP@SAA-Litcom.org
At Large LitCom Member: LitComAL@SAA-Litcom.org
The Outer Circle Editor: toc@saa-recovery.org

Director of Fellowship Services: dfs@saa-recovery.org
Business Services Administrator: business@saa-recovery.org
Administrative Assistant: info@saa-recovery.org
Outreach Specialist: outreach@SAA-Recovery.org
Information Technician: webmaster@saa-recovery.org

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

OOCchair@SAA-Recovery.org



How to Submit an Article to *The Outer Circle*

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

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

or mail to: ISO
P. O. Box 70949
Houston, TX 77270

Third: Send the **Article Release Form** below. Download an extra from the SAA website if needed or feel free to make copies.

“Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to other sex addicts...” Step Twelve

Submission deadlines:

Jan/Feb:	Nov 12 th	Jul/Aug:	May 12 th
Mar/Apr:	Jan 7 th	Sept/Oct:	Jul 7 th
May/Jun:	Mar 10 th	Nov/Dec:	Sept 8 th

Release Form: I hereby give this newsletter, its successors, assignees, and those acting on its authority permission to copyright and/or publish any articles, poems, other written material, or art work pertaining to my personal story of recovery from addiction and my personal experience with or opinions about the SAA fellowship or program. I understand that additions may be made to my written material and that it may be changed or edited. I further understand that every effort will be made to assure my anonymity. I possess full legal capacity to exercise this authorization and hereby release the ISO newsletter from any claim by myself or my successors.

SIGNED: _____ **DATE:** _____

WITNESS: _____ **DATE:** _____

Mail to: ISO, P.O. Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270



