

The Outer Circle

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

PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270

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

MEMBER DONATIONS ARE GRATEFULLY ACCEPTED.

ISO Board Actions

**The following are actions taken
by the Board of Trustees
via email between the September 20, 2008
and November 15, 2008 teleconferences.**

- **Unattributed 12 Questions for Use by Indianapolis Intergroup**
Ken S. moved and Wharton S. seconded that the Indiana Intergroup be allowed to use the 12 Questions without citation as they have proposed.

NB: The proposal referred to using the 12 Questions from the pamphlet Sex Addicts Anonymous® for local outreach purposes.

Actions by the Board of Trustees taken at the November 15, 2008 Teleconference

- **Delphi all New Business at Conference** Gary C. moved and Ken S. seconded that the Board adopts the delegate recommendation passed at the 2008 convention regarding the Delphi process for new business.
- **“Writing to Prisoners” Pamphlet Mailing to Registered Groups**
Ken S. moved and Michele F. seconded that the office mail out five copies of the Writing to Prisoners pamphlet to each US registered group and intergroup, expenses to be paid by the literature translation/reserve fund, with the office conducting the mailing under the most economical conditions.
- **North Pacific Board and LitCom Alternate Funding** Tim E. moved and Mark S. seconded that the office create a budget line item for a “North Pacific Board Alternate and LitCom Alternate fund”.

**Actions by the Board of Trustees
taken at the December 7, 2008 Teleconference**

- **Hiring of Candidate for DBS** Ken S. moved and Mark S. seconded that the Board offer the position of Director of Business Services to Joe H. of Houston, Texas.

NB: The Board's offer was subsequently accepted by Joe H., who is now Director of Business Services.

- **Hiring of Candidate for DFS** Ken S. moved and Mark S. seconded that the Board offer the position of Director of Fellowship Services to Morris W. of Indianapolis, Indiana.

NB: The Board's offer was subsequently accepted by Morris W., who is now Director of Fellowship Services, pending completion of his official move to Houston, TX.

**Actions by the Board of Trustees taken
via email between the November 15, 2008
and January 17, 2009 teleconferences.**

- **Approval of North Central Region Alternate Election** Eric M. (IM) moved and Wharton S. (NC) seconded a motion that the Board authorize an election to fill the vacant North Central Region's Alternate position on the Board of Trustees for the term ending 2010. Such election shall be held in a manner consistent with the Bylaws and its results reported prior to the March 2009 Board teleconference. The details of the election process are to be determined by a Special Election Committee which will submit its recommendation prior to December 31, 2008 to the Board for its review and approval. Members of this special Committee shall include but not be limited to the current North Central Region's Trustee, the ISO Secretary, and one member of the Office staff to be appointed by the Board Chair. Other Committee members shall be appointed at the Chair's discretion.
- **North Central Region Alternate Election Procedure** Eric M. (IM) moved and Wharton S. (NC) seconded a motion that the Procedure for Electing an Alternate, as presented, be approved for the purpose of electing an Alternate Trustee for the North Central Region.

NB: The election procedure appears on the following page.

Procedure for electing an Alternate:

A teleconference will be held on January 31, 2009, for the purposes of (a) receiving nominations for the position of Board Alternate for the North Central Region for the term ending with the national convention in 2010; (b) asking the nominees to exit the call for a period of time, so that the delegates (who are the only authorized voters) can discuss the nominees and their merits; and (c) voting by roll call to make the selection, the results of which will be transmitted to the office and the Board.

Notice of this teleconference shall be issued as soon as possible after the Board approves the procedure. The notice shall be sent by the Office to all registered delegates at the 2008 Convention from the North Central Region; and to the Trusted Servants of the three Inter-groups in the Region (Twin Cities, Northern Tier, and Mankato). The notice shall contain at least the following:

1. A call for nominations, noting that the alternate must be a member of SAA, but not necessarily a delegate, which nominations are to be submitted at the teleconference; while it would be helpful for all nominees to be present at the teleconference, allowance will be made for scheduling difficulties. The nominees must consent to their nomination, and should be prepared to indicate their interest and suitability for the office for a period of time not to exceed five minutes.
2. A description of the job of Alternate; and that the term runs concurrently with that of the Board Representative's position, which expires with the Convention in 2010.
3. A notice that only delegates to the 2008 Convention can vote on the position.
4. That a teleconference for purposes of this election is not a way of obtaining a vote by 'electronic means,' which is currently prohibited by the by-laws; that the teleconference will be chaired by the North Central Regional Representative, or in his absence, by the regional Representative to the Literature Committee, or in her absence, by the alternate representative to the Literature Committee; after the nominations are heard, the nominees will exit the conference (having left their contact numbers so that they can be asked to rejoin the conference by separate phone calls after the voting is done), and the vote will be taken by roll call. A quorum shall be all 2008 Convention Delegates who show up at the teleconference; the winning

person shall have a plurality of the votes. A secret ballot will not work in this situation. Since the office is constrained by a prior action of the Board from disclosing the names and contact information of delegates from the North Central Region to the 2008 Convention, the delegates will be asked (see #5 below) to identify themselves to the North Central Board representative prior to the teleconference, so that a vote by roll call can be done. The result will be transmitted by the meeting's chair to the ISO Office, the Board Chair, and the Board Secretary.

5. Delegates will be requested to signal their availability to participate in this teleconference as soon as possible by notifying the North Central Representative by any of the following: **(personal information redacted: to contact Wharton, get in touch with the ISO office.)**
6. Questions and comments before the teleconference may be addressed to the Regional Representative or other leaders in the Region.
7. The teleconference call-in number and access code.



North Central Region

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.



Meditation Book Release Form

I hereby give the ISO of SAA, Inc., as the publisher of the SAA meditation book, permission to copyright and publish my submission. I understand additions may be made to my written material and that it may be edited or changed. I further understand that every effort will be made to ensure my anonymity. I possess the full legal right to exercise this authorization and hereby release the ISO of SAA from any claim by myself or my successors.

Signed _____ Date _____

Witness _____ Date _____

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

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



General Outreach Committee

This umbrella committee was formed by the Board of Trustees in 2006, and consists of five subcommittees, which are designed to address specific areas of outreach for the SAA fellowship.

- Teen Outreach Subcommittee
- Public Information Subcommittee
- Men's Outreach Subcommittee
- Young Adult Outreach Subcommittee
- GLBT Outreach Subcommittee

General Outreach Committee welcomes all SAA members who desire to be of service in these areas. Monthly teleconference information for the General Outreach and any of its subcommittees can be obtained from the ISO.

For information, questions or suggestions, email:

genoutreach@SAA-Recovery.org

Teen Outreach Subcommittee

This subcommittee seeks to address issues confronting underage sex addicts, including attending meetings, relating to adult sex addicts, safety and liability issues for groups and members. Additionally, inquiries to ISO concerning underage sex addicts are reviewed. Protocols are being developed for the use of group meetings within SAA.

For information, questions or suggestions, email:

genoutreach.teen@SAA-Recovery.org

Public Information Subcommittee

This subcommittee develops documents and procedures to support the sharing of the SAA message outside of the fellowship. Current projects under development include:

- Speakers Training Manual—to establish standards, policies and procedures for the SAA Speaker's Bureau to accurately present the SAA message to outside organizations and media.
- Public Information Workbook—to assist members and groups with local PI work
- SAA Fact File—for media and professional communities

- Exhibitor's Manual—for presentations at outside professional conventions or conferences.

For information, questions or suggestions, email:

genoutreach.pi@SAA-Recovery.org

Men's Outreach Subcommittee

This subcommittee has focused on serving under-represented segments of the population, including male members in isolated communities, communities with new or foundering fellowships, or male members in under-represented groups including ethnic, sexual identity, etc. Women and transgender members are most welcome to participate.

This subcommittee is currently dormant, and is seeking members to actively participate in service. Current activities include maintenance of Men's Outreach Contact List for long-distance sponsorship and support.

For information, questions or suggestions, email:

men4saa@saa-recovery.org

Young Adult Outreach Subcommittee

This subcommittee's focus is on carrying the SAA message to young adults aged 18 to 39, with a current emphasis on college students. Recent activities included sending an informational letter about SAA to approximately 200 college counselors.

For information, questions or suggestions, email:

genoutreach.ya@SAA-Recovery.org

GLBT Outreach Subcommittee

This subcommittee is tasked with developing and providing more effective methods for outreach to sex addicts in the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender communities, as well as current SAA members who are GLBT. Current projects include placement of Public Information announcement in national GLBT publications, and development of Draft pamphlets to sex addicts who are GLBT.

For information, questions or suggestions, email:

GLBT@SAA-Recovery.org

Women's Outreach

Please Join Us for the 2nd Annual Women's Welcome Reception at the 2009 Convention

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

Day: Thursday

Place: Women's Outreach Room at the hotel

Time: 7pm - 9pm

Who: All SAA women members

And calling all SAA women members....

Do you feel called to offer service at the 2009 Convention, but aren't sure how? Do you have at least 2 years continuous sobriety from your inner circle behaviors?

Here's an idea! Volunteer to help staff the 2009 Women's Outreach Table and/or Room at the hotel. We're looking for interested women to serve as greeters to welcome women to the Women's Outreach table in the registration area, as well 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 are interested, email your first name, day(s), time(s) you are available, and contact information to women@SAA-Recovery.org . To volunteer for the convention in other ways, contact the ISO at 800-477-8191. We encourage all forms of service as a vital tool of sobriety!

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

ISO Income/Expense Summary As of December 31, 2008

	December	Monthly Average	Year To Date
NET OPERATING INCOME			
Net Sales	7,585	8,071	96,851
Donations	20,365	19,712	236,526
General Donations	16,411	13,555	162,641
LifeLine Partners	3,879	5,180	62,156
Designated Donations	75	977	11,727
Delegate Registrations	0	446	5,355
2008 Convention	0	5,397	64,768
Miscellaneous Income	2	852	10,228
TOTAL NET OPERATING INCOME	27,952	34,478	413,728
OPERATING EXPENSES			
Wages/Benefits/Taxes	16,654	14,729	176,762
Program Related	8,736	9,608	115,304
Administration	1,001	1,597	19,169
Benefits	5,807	2,552	30,627
Payroll Taxes	1,110	972	11,662
Insurance	297	383	4,596
Depreciation	175	175	2,100
Postage	100	82	981
Phone	292	294	3,529
Website Related	54	83	994
Occupancy	1,247	1,432	17,179
Office Expenses	711	766	9,186
Professional Fees/Contract Services	1,431	1,715	20,576
Financial	623	1,063	12,755
<i>The Outer Circle</i>	2,220	1,167	14,004
Board & Committees	3,442	2,492	29,907
Translations/Major Literature Projects	0	84	1,008
Convention Related Travel	0	1,970	23,642
Delegate Meeting	0	728	8,738
2008 Convention	0	4,415	52,984
Miscellaneous	0	833	10,000
TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES	27,246	32,411	388,941
TOTAL NET OPERATING SURPLUS	706	2,067	24,787

The year closed with a net surplus of \$24,786. The closing Operating Reserve, at \$100,588, met its four-month target for 2008 but will have to be increased by \$8,485 to cover four months of expenses in 2009. Considering where the fund was just four months ago, finishing the year with the Operating Reserve fully funded was a real improvement.

The net surplus was \$22,713 more than budgeted and about the same as 2007. This was quite a feat in light of a \$6,642 increase in travel expenses, the \$3,300 delegate meeting loss, a convention surplus that was \$11,000 below budget, and a one-time \$10,000 miscellaneous expenditure.

Exceeding budget by \$47,000 (25%), donations were the prime contributor to finishing in the black. The increase in donations came mainly from LifeLine Partners (\$9,000 over 2007), Giving Thanks events (\$13,000 over 2007), Group General Donations (\$7,900 over 2007), and a special Meditation Book fundraiser (\$7,000). Compared to last year, donations went up 15% and sales 4.3%.

The New Year will open on a positive note with Houston's second annual Giving Thanks event scheduled for January 25.



Thank
You

[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 S.A.A. fellowship as a whole.]

From the Editor

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

Hello. I hope you had a great holiday season. I'm personally looking forward to another year of recovery. I have seen some doors close during 2008 and each time I know another door will open; in some cases, it already has.

As always, I am grateful for the many articles we are getting submitted to *The Outer Circle*. I have been known to write an article or two myself under a pseudonym when we have been short; thanks to all of you, that is less of a necessity these days.

I do recall that when writing articles, I kept in mind that there would be folks out there reading them (or at least I hoped there would). So I wanted to be certain to say, or rather not say, certain things in my articles. My guiding question was, "Would I accept this article for publication if it were not from me?"

One thing I wanted to avoid was preaching, preferring instead to speak from my own experience, strength and hope. If I focused on using "I" statements, the chances that I would appear to be preaching were greatly reduced. I have seen literature from other twelve-step programs sometimes alternate between "I" and "we," and it has been my experience that even "we" statements can come across as preachy if not used carefully. I like the solution sometimes adopted in our basic text of using the phrase "some of us."

Along those same lines, I try to remember that my concept of a higher power may not be the same as someone else's; in fact, it almost definitely will not be in most cases. So I try to stay away from inflicting my concept of higher power on another, even though I may have a book that tells me that my conception is correct. Someone reading my words may well have a different concept and may even have a book to which to back up that concept as well.

I try to remember that I am working my program of recovery, and I am at the place on that path where I need to be at this moment. One way I am almost guaranteed to cause resentments is by speaking as though certain aspects of my program, including the way I express myself sexually, are the best, or possibly even the only, way. I have heard numerous folks in our program say that a message they received repeatedly while growing up was that they were not good enough. I don't want to contribute to that belief system by writing things from which that same sentiment can be inferred.

Finally, I try to keep my sharing to program-related matters. A principal way for me to take an opposite tack would be to spend too much time in sharing from

non-program literature. I have found that this is a very good way to lose people.

I have found an easy way to avoid all or most of these traps and that is to base my articles (and sharing in meetings) on readings from the program. I identify with so much of what is in *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, our basic text, that I can normally pick out a topic for an article by using the very unscientific method of closing my eyes, opening the book to a page, and pointing.

Having said all of that, I want to conclude by saying that I really want to hear from you. You can submit articles by e-mailing them to toc@saa-recovery.org or sending them to me c/o the SAA office at P.O. Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270-0949.

Letter to the Editor

Dear Mike L.:

My name is Michael B. I am looking for an SAA sponsor from Phoenix or Tucson, AZ, who would be willing to come to the Florence, AZ, Department of Corrections to hold weekly meetings at the Eymann Complex.

The individual will have to be approved by the Arizona Department of Corrections through the chaplain service and by a counselor who will handle the arrangements for weekly meetings. Being a volunteer, you will have to pay for your transportation to come to the prison system. I am willing to help with getting the paperwork sent to the individual who is willing to find time to come each week.

If SAA can send books and materials for the meeting, I will take care of those materials so they will be at each meeting. I will also help orchestrate the meeting place and other items needed to make sure the volunteer will be ready to start the meeting on time for one hour each week.

If you are interested, please contact Mike L. through the ISO office and he will give you more information in order to get the arrangements made through the Department of Corrections.

I cannot express how much these meetings would mean to the incarcerated inmates here on this sex offender unit. I have been sponsoring other prisoners privately and the need for an outside sponsor would heighten the recovery of these individuals. Your time and effort to help recovering sex offenders would be priceless to us all. Thank you, *Outer Circle*, for helping us locate a sponsor who would be willing to come to the facilities in Florence.

Michael B.

Intimacy

by Chris B.

Intimacy presents itself as a topic time and again at the SAA meetings in our city, perhaps because it is a topic that we, as sex addicts, often knew little of before setting foot in the rooms. Perhaps, in our addiction, we felt we knew what intimacy was. Some of us believed, however errantly, that intimacy was that warm feeling in our abdomen as we completed our latest conquest or tryst, even those of fantasies lived out on a computer screen and in our minds. Some of us delighted in the self-deception that such behavior was not in fact technically “cheating” on those with whom we share commitments. The lie, of course, was betrayed by our own self-loathing and emotional devastation.

Real intimacy, of course, is something far more frightening. True intimacy is the antithesis of the unreal, the chemistry, the idol, the lust, or the connection that had the magic. Real intimacy mirrors who we really are right back at us, challenges us to be even more than we are. True intimacy is, in short, a confrontation with reality as it really is, rather than how we might wish it to be. Intimacy is the rejection of fantasy.

Intimacy, of course, precedes, rather than being a product of, the physical union. That is not to say that healthy sexuality between one’s partner and one’s self doesn’t create even greater, even more fulfilling intimacy. Rather, the starting point of intimacy isn’t the sexual act itself, but the honesty, fidelity, and shared commitment that precedes the act.

We live in a society that lies to us, telling us that “love” just happens. The reality, of course, is that love is a choice. Love is a commitment. Similarly, intimacy is the product of that shared commitment, an experience that lovers have when they willingly choose to work towards that end.

In my own religious tradition it is firmly believed that human beings are made in the image and likeness of God. What we each hold within us is the indelible mark of the Divine. One medieval Jewish mystic refers to us as the shattered shards of the mirror of the Divine Essence. Each of us, no matter how wounded or self-absorbed, holds within something beautiful, something holy, something marvelous. We are even called to become part-takers of the Divine Essence itself.

The relevance of this great mystery to human sexuality is obvious. If sexuality were evil, dirty, shameful, etc. as some folks seem to suggest, it would mean that God was in fact tainted by assuming human nature. Just as lovemaking has the potential to bring unbelievable joy into my life, I had to readily admit that it also has the potential to create unfathomable suffering in my life and the lives of others. When we “become one” we exchange great energy, great power, an essential part of our being. When we make

love we give part of ourselves to another. We make ourselves, our whole being, vulnerable to another person.

Indeed, healthy sexuality contains within it the power to change the world. For if everyone submitted to the vulnerability and self-revelation that true intimacy entails, how many wars could be avoided, how many less children die of starvation, how much less suffering would we allow the world to endure?

Good-Bye, Addiction by Cynthia T.

I scream out “Good-Bye.” I will my addict gone, but it doesn’t work that way. Of myself I am hopeless and helpless. Yet if, when, and how I attempt to bring a God into the picture, I start to feel a possibility of freedom from the captivity and bondage.

Not so over two years ago: lost, empty, flailing, disgusted, and confused and just beginning to define how I felt. Although this addiction was ready to reload the “old tapes” at any time as day by day I attempted to make a conscious choice to make recovery a priority, my heart opened to a life I would have never imagined.

Still, at times, you rear your ugly head—teasing, tempting, taunting and tantalizing.

“No!” I scream. “God, help me!”

The good-bye I proclaimed was from deep in my soul, deep in my heart. I lost a lot because of you. You stole every ounce of dignity that I so told myself didn’t matter. I already hated myself. Who cared? You did. You had me in your grasp.

Recovery changed all of that, slowly but surely. “God, help me!” I don’t want that life any more. Addiction, you no longer hold the key that locked my soul, spirit, mind and body within a living hell. May I never lose sight of the fact that it is not me that keeps me sober but it is the God within me and the new choices that I sometimes struggle to make that come more and more easily in time.

Good-bye, addiction! I sold my soul to you for far too long!!!

Moving Toward the Spiritual Solution

by Chris S.

I am Chris S., a sex addict who has been blessed with nearly twenty months of sobriety from inner-circle behaviors. While this is true, it has been a day-by-day journey of beginning the Twelve Steps in earnest, and then deciding instead to formulate my own program of semi-Twelve-Step adherence. By this I mean attending one face-to-face SAA meeting, one or two telephone meetings a week (unless work got busy), and sporadic contact with my sponsor.

In the beginning of my step work, I came to know the extent of my powerless over my addiction. I grew in my understanding that my Higher Power, my God, had the power to guide me toward healing the inner pain of shame and emptiness that was fueling my addictive behaviors. It was astounding to know that I could make other choices besides fantasizing over men inappropriately, using gay pornography, being a voyeur and using masturbation to fuel my fantasy life, and crossing professional boundaries with men to try and address the emptiness in my life.

I thought that just remaining abstinent from my inner circle behaviors and not acting out was all I could expect of the Twelve-Step process. For a while I was living a pretty good life. While I was not completely healthy in my thinking and acting, I was living far better than when I was mired in the behaviors of my destructive addiction.

I was stuck in working Step Four. Writing the resentments. Going back into those painful situations and people of my life. Feeling those feelings, but not wanting to face them at any depth. So I stopped working the steps. At this time, my work as a Christian minister was in a period of seasonal busyness. I attended fewer meetings. I had long ago stopped contacting my sponsor. My excuses for slacking off on my program were numerous, but I was still not going back out there, so I thought my life was OK. Enough.

I had come to realize that my OK living was not so OK. I became over-critical of a colleague who would soon be promoted, and this anger spilled over into other areas of my life. And I came perilously close to crossing professional boundaries that jeopardize not only my sobriety, but more importantly the spiritual well being of others with whom I might want to act out.

On the positive side, I was asked to be a sponsor for someone in the fellowship. And I devised a list of tasks I wanted him to do as my sponsee—most of which I had stopped doing weeks earlier.

I needed a change. That change was to begin working my program again. I have just reconnected with my sponsor and continued my work on Step

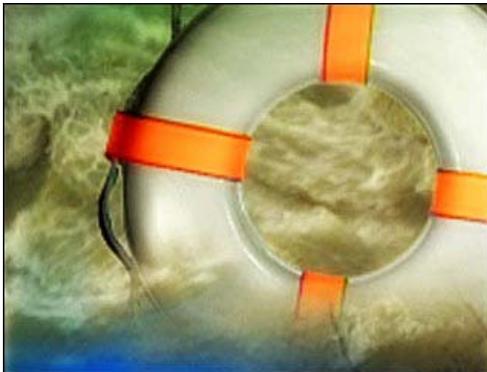
Four. Among the many words of wisdom he offered me, he shared this analogy: I do care that you achieve recovery. In that process, I cannot be attached to or stuck on whether you do the Twelve Steps now or not. The ship is sinking, and if you don't want to grab a life preserver when one is offered to you, that's your own decision. As a sponsor, I can't be co-dependent. I'm not going down on the sinking ship with you if you decide it's not yet time for you to recover.

My sponsor's words are powerful reminders to me that the work of my recovery from sexual addiction is mine and mine alone. While I have been strengthened by the stories of many in our fellowship who have shared their experience, strength and hope, I have the daily decision to be dedicated to my recovery or not. No one else's experience, strength and hope can substitute for the personal work I need to do for my recovery. No one else's recovery journey can be the personal spiritual awakening that God desires for me.

Today I'm taking my sponsor's advice of writing this Outer Circle article about this part of my recovery journey. I hope to write more in the future. My sponsor noted that people whom I'll never meet may be able to identify with some aspect of my story. If this is so, then I thank God that my initial laziness can possibly help another with examining the motivations for working the program.

I thank my sponsor for being there for me during this time, and by staying away as I wanted. If he had chased after me, I might have had to include him on my resentments list. I also thank God for giving me the space to show me how well my life was working on my terms. It was better than in my addictive past, but not as good as it could have been if I had trusted God to take me deeper into the recovery journey.

Today I am more committed to working the Twelve Steps toward the goal of the spiritual awakening that God wants for me. May I, with the help of my Higher Power, be committed to working my program today.



Spiritual Principles

by Ed G.

“The price of our freedom [from sexual addiction] is conscious contact with the God of our understanding, expressed by practicing the spiritual principles we have learned in recovery.” Sex Addicts Anonymous (first edition), Page 62.

“Spiritual principles”? When I first came upon these words when just getting started with the program, it gave me pause. I had heard of people in Twelve-Step programs who profess no religious belief. How can they come to grips with their addiction when they have to subscribe to “spiritual principles?” Spirituality equals religion, right? Wrong!

Once I started reading more program literature, as well as other sources, and talking to my sponsor, I found that spirituality has a whole different meaning. There are books and pamphlets on the subject but they all seem to come to the same conclusion: it is the inner person who I know I should be in order to feel positive about myself and make a positive impact on others. It has nothing specific to do with religion. It has everything to do with my being a human being in a world filled with other human beings, with how I relate to them and with how I want others to relate to me. Not sexually, but rather in a wholesome, positive manner.

When following the Steps, I learn to see inside myself in ways I never did before. Such insight gives me the opportunity to make changes that will make me a better person and help me to live a more spirited life filled with energy and excitement.

When I think of spirituality, I think of it in terms of a positive and vigorous life opening up new horizons; new possibilities.



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 have been to a few meetings, and other members are encouraging me to call them. Why do I need to call other people in recovery?

Signed,
Temperamental in TN

Dear Temperamental:

Another sex addict can support us in our recovery and bring us back to earth. Most of us use the telephone on a regular basis just to let someone else in the program know how we are doing or to reach out when we are struggling in our addiction. Some of us have made a commitment to call a friend in recovery whenever we are in a slippery situation or when obsessive thinking and desires begin to arise. Sometimes all we need is for someone to ask us what is going on and to listen to the answer. Before long we know what is bothering us, and once we know, the urge to act out usually passes. Some suggest calling three to ten people a day in order to build and maintain a support system. The practice of making phone calls, even when you don't have a specific reason, will make it easier when you do need support.

Grace

Identifying the Ritual of Addiction and Sobering Up

By Lisa Jo B.

I'd like to begin this article by revealing some questions I have asked myself: "What are the steps you take to get from point A-OK to point Acting out? Pinpoint how you ritualize your addiction. What do you see, feel, think? Describe your sensations. How do you perceive reality? How do you make your plans to act out? What are the steps?"

The very planning or ritualization of my addictive behavior is hypnotic, compelling, thrilling. It is a doorway for my addict to walk through, possess me and take over.

Now is the time to get out my journal. I think about myself consumed by the addict. How does the addict affect your personality? What influence does it have on my ego? On my self-esteem? In my acting-out state, how do I perceive your own abilities?

My addict always makes me feel invincible, as though I am the sexual bi-
onic woman.

That nothing can bother me. This is accompanied by a carefree "the hell with it" attitude. So I make a list of the attitudes I embrace when the addict is out.

The key is to IDENTIFY. To identify the landscape of planning and plotting my acting out in and to get to know the addict's personality. The importance of this is to enable me to recognize when I'm within the grips of acting out, both prior and during.

When we recognize and acknowledge where I'm at, then I can make another choice.

Knowledge is power. Ignorance is not bliss. When I don't recognize where I am, I cannot navigate to a different place.

Once I am conscious that the addict is out and about, I can sober myself up. I have successfully done this at what used to be a "point of no return." Here are some things that have disrupted the addict's pattern:

1. I make a phone call to a fellow addict in recovery. I explain exactly where I am. I describe the dangers I am about to put myself in. I express myself the best I can. I listen attentively to feedback.
2. I ask GOD to reveal to me the reasons behind wanting to act out. I take five minutes. I ask for the willingness to know the reasons why I want to act out. I listen to God. I breathe and pray. I notice anything that comes to mind including imagery, emotion, physical sensations,

thoughts, conversations, memories. Anything. These are all clues to help me “get to know my addict well,” to know what makes my addict tick. When I know my addict, then I can move into a more authentic place. I can take specific actions to bring myself back into my authentic self, rather than being entangled in my drug of choice.

3. I replay a conversation I’ve had with a program member or sponsor.
4. I recall a powerful share at a meeting.
5. I read program literature. I keep a pamphlet with me at all times, preferably in my wallet where I keep other valuables, and in my car.
6. I say out loud to myself and to another person, “I am a sex addict.” Admitting this fact invokes the serious nature of “getting high” and where it will lead.
7. I focus on the dark consequences of acting out. I make a list of aftermath consequences I have suffered in the past. I recall in the past how I have felt after acting out.
8. I meditate on the idea that “all acting out can lead to death.” I think of STDs, rape, murder, legal trouble and other types of disruptive consequences that acting out can bring me. I remember to include the emotional consequences. I brainstorm for five minutes and write them down in list form. I thank God for His protection.

With all of this work, I notice the shift in ego function.

Now I list characteristics of my addict’s inflated ego vs. healthy functioning ego. For example:

Inflated ego of the addict: Invincibility, seductress/seducer, “nothing bothers me,” “the hell with it” attitude.

Healthy, balanced ego: I acknowledge and express feelings, I verbalize, “I’m a sex addict,” I admit imperfections.

When I start moving into characteristics of the first list (the addict’s inflated ego), then I can counter-balance this by doing something in the second list.

I remember, “progress, not perfection.” Someone said that slips are part of the recovery process. Most solid change happens gradually before the major shift occurs. I am a part of the solution and not the problem. This is the gift of recovery.

[Editor's Note: The following article originally appeared in the January 1991 issue of the newsletter.]

Letter from Linda

Dear fellow members,

SAA has given me so much, I would like to share some bits and pieces, also simple truths.

The continuous lessons that I have been learning for over three years always come back to one primary gift: respect for “free will of choice.” I call it a gift because that is exactly what it is. “Free will of choice” was the first and continuous gift and expression of “love” that God gave to each of us.

Unfortunately, everyone has been indulging more in the business of thwarting choice, relinquishing choice, manipulation, buying choices, allowing choice to be bought, threats, submission, punishment tactics, aggression, passive compliance, traditions, obligations, rules, roles, and on and on, including the “shoulds” and “should nots” that the world hands down to us.

The most frightening thing, for me, is to assert myself to respect my right to make choices and to respect the right of others to make choices—as long as my right to choose is not infringed upon.

Basically, I have been learning to “honor self” and “honor others.” Learning to honor my true self has been terrifying, to say the least. I have been pretending a self, feelings, emotions, intelligence, beliefs, righteousness, afflictions, caring, interests, happiness, joy, status, etc., all of my life because of my fear of making choices that are true to me. Instead, I opted to conformity of the ideas and expectations of others and the world. Then people wonder why we all have addictions, which further strip away choice.

I have an equation: Respect for the “Gift of Choice” = “Sharing” = “Love”

Perhaps each of us could learn to give ourselves and others the Gift of Choice, just as God did, does, and always will.

Even at those times in which I turn my back on God, He still gives me the precious Gift of Choice. When I suffer enough from the consequences of self-direction or the negative directives of the world, He is there, with His hand reaching out to me.

God does not punish. We simply experience consequences of turning our backs to Him and His guidance. Thank God for SAA—that reaching hand.

What is love? The continuous Gift of Grace.

In appreciation of “the truth” (Step Four) and the Gift of Choice,

Linda

Step One

by Frank M.

We admitted we were powerless over addictive sexual behavior—that our lives had become unmanageable.

On page 24 of *Sex Addicts Anonymous* is the following statement, which always jumps out at me when I read it: “We may think, for example, that the risks we took were not that dangerous, or that the consequences were not that severe.” Does that bring back memories!

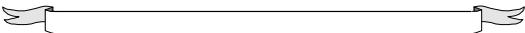
I remember when I was in my addiction that I would act out or attempt to act out with highly inappropriate partners; I would attempt to pick up these partners in semi-public settings, where it was easy for others to get a good idea of what I was up to. As a result, I was repeatedly held up to ridicule. I learned to live with these reactions and rationalized to myself that they were just, s o t o s p e a k, “occupational hazards.”



“We may think, for example, that the risks we took were not that dangerous, or that the consequences were not that severe.”

Sex Addicts Anonymous

page 24



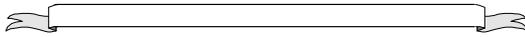
I failed to realize into what dangerous territory I kept repeatedly treading. In some cases, the potential sex partners I was approaching did not welcome my advances, and at least some of them were capable, both physically and emotionally, of rebuffing my advances in ways that could have been very harmful to me. Severe consequences? Forget about jail for the moment; how about the hospital or the morgue? I don't know if I went as far as to think of these things as more “occupational hazards.” I just knew that I would risk anything to get that momentary high.

When I finally stumbled into recovery, still wondering if I really needed to be there, I wondered why the first step was so redundant. It told me I was powerless and that my life had become unmanageable. It took me a long time to get the distinction between the two.

I was indeed powerless, and my powerlessness had to do with me and my relationship to the addictive behavior. If I experienced something

good or bad in my life and my first reaction to what I had experienced was to go and act out, that showed I was powerless over the addiction. If I promised myself ahead of time that I would not act out in a given situation and then did it anyway, that once again showed I was powerless.

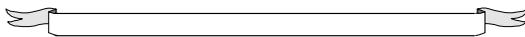
On the other hand, the second statement had to do with my life, and it didn't even have to reach the extent of jail, the hospital or the morgue. My life was unmanageable if: I went to work in the morning utterly exhausted because I had been up the entire night before looking for opportunities to act out; my car was in a wreck because I had left it somewhere unsafe so that I could pursue a perceived opportunity; I was broke halfway between paychecks because I had spent my money on



When I finally stumbled into recovery, still wondering if I really needed to be there, I wondered why the first step was so redundant.

acting out; I spent all my time isolating so that I would be free to go act out if the urge hit me. These are just a few examples of the ways in which my life was unmanageable.

According to the sentence immediately before the one I quoted at the beginning of this article, "A sponsor can also help us face those parts of our disease about which we are in denial." I had gotten so far into my addiction by the time I came into the rooms of SAA that I didn't think there was anything unusual about any of the manifesta-



tions of the my powerlessness or the unmanageability of my life. Looking back after some seventeen years in recovery, and thanks to some very wise sponsors, I wonder how I could have ever thought anything else.

The first step is just what it says: the first step. Even though I finally "admitted" the things that the first step describes in general terms (and one of my favorite dictionary definitions of "admit" says it means ("confess to be true or to be the case, typically with reluctance"), it wouldn't have meant anything if I hadn't done something about those things, i.e., gone and done the rest of the steps. I'm grateful for SAA and for the tools I have gotten from the program that I am sober today, one day at a time.

Step Two

by Mike A.

Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

For me, part of the recovery process was facing head-on the demons I grew up with in the name of organized religion. And indeed it says on page 27 of our basic text, "Some of us have found it helpful to explore our past beliefs concerning God or religion, in order to gain clarity about old ideas and assumptions that may be blocking us now."

By the time I had reached adulthood my understanding of God was of somebody up there in the clouds waiting to hurl a thunderbolt at me if I made one false step. On top of that, I was, thanks to many years of studying the humanities in school, what another twelve-step program describes as "the intellectually self-sufficient man." A deadly combination in terms of believing in a higher power, let alone developing a relationship with one.

So I came into the program as an agnostic, and that only because I couldn't take the final step of proclaiming myself an atheist. I had certainly been around a number of atheists as part of one of my volunteer activities and was even invited to one of their winter solstice parties. I enjoyed the party and only heard two topics of conversation the entire evening: God and organized religion. I learned from this the truth of the sage's remark that each of us has a God-shaped vacuum.

I did not come to SAA wanting to believe in a higher power. That came a little farther down the line. I had to take baby steps at first, and that meant adopting the group as my higher power. As I listened at those first meetings, I considered that I finally, thanks to the sharing I was hearing from the group, had "permission" (and that is how I saw it) not to act out any more. As time went on and I attended more meetings, both of SAA and of other twelve-step programs, I started to pay more attention to what folks had to say about what God had done in their lives. Looking back, I'm certain that there were such shares from my very first meeting and that I simply tuned all that out for a while.

I have occasionally flirted with the idea of returning to the religion in which I grew up. My conflict with doing so is that particular religion's interpretation of God. I therefore am looking more and more to other religions (quasi-religions might be a better word) who hold a concept of God more in line with my view of God. Whether I eventually land somewhere or not, I do know one thing: God, my power greater than myself, has restored me from a place of severe insanity back to a place of sanity.

Tradition Two

by John D.

[Editor's Note: This article originally appeared in the February 1995 issue of the newsletter.]

For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as expressed in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.

This extraordinary tradition has two parts; let me address the one about “leaders” first. A few months after I had joined SAA and had given my first step, my group nominated me as a trusted servant. I was stunned. Did it mean that I was an exemplar of recovery? Did it mean that people looked up to me? Did it mean that administrative decisions were mine now?

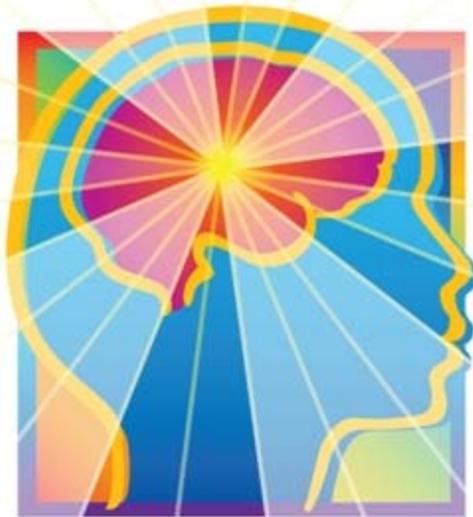
I was clear enough to figure out that my delusions of grandeur were misguided, but I was not wise enough to know that the success or failure of the group had nothing to do with how I functioned in the job of trusted servant. I assumed, for instance, that the weekly attendance depended on how I ran the meetings, that it was solely my job to make newcomers feel at ease, that it was solely up to me to fill or find a replacement if someone who had volunteered for a presentation couldn't make it. The trusted servant before me had been witty and well liked; I thought I had to measure up. I must have conveyed my anxiety, because finally an old-timer told me to settle down; the group was going to be fine all by itself. What a revelation! Basically all I had to do was be sure we covered the agenda and had enough time for presentations and check-ins. (I also found out later that my group had a long tradition of nominating newcomers; my recovery had nothing to do with it.)

In the eight years since that time, the group has had many trusted servants with lots of different styles. Occasionally I see someone as nervous as I was; sometimes someone comes in who is more gung- ho and authoritative than I like. (That's when I learn about patience!) They usually settle down too. The group has survived no matter who been on the post. I attribute that remarkable fact to something other than their “leadership.” More likely it results from service. Most obvious to me, however, is the power of a group of recovering addicts compared to the strength of any individual. As trusted servant, I learned something about humility, and this brings me to the first part of Tradition Two, the manifestation of God in our group conscience.

One time at a speaker meeting, I heard someone say, “When I was acting out, I was operating with only part of a brain. So I look around this room and figure that all of us addicts put together probably come up with one good brain.”

My brain is usually just a fragment of a perfect one. Like a loose light bulb, it has good days and bad ones. All in all, it is much steadier than it used to be, but sometimes I need the help of others. I look around the faces of my group. Some reflect serenity and confidence, some are troubled. Some are learning to let go; others are afraid of being out of control. Some are willing to make the leap of faith; others are afraid there will be no safety net. Furthermore, nobody's light bulb is perfectly constant. Yet light always emanates from the group and in that group I am safe.

Substitute "spirit" for "brain" and we have something even more astonishing. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Put the small spirit that resides in each of us in the presence of others like it and it flourishes. To me, that is the meaning of "a loving God as expressed in our group conscience." I count it as another occasion for humility and gratitude.



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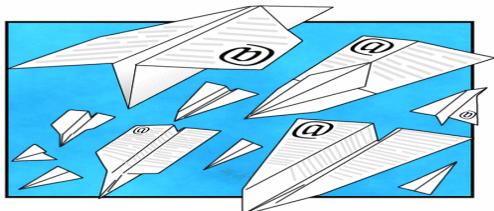
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First: Write from your experience, strength, and hope. Others may need to hear exactly what you have to say.

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

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

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

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