

# The Outer Circle

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

PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270

Volume 3, Issue 2

March - April 2009



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## ISO Board Actions

### The following are actions taken by the Board of Trustees at the January 17, 2009 Teleconference.

- **Northeast Caucus Elections for 2010 Terms:** that the Board authorizes the Northeast Region to Caucus for its Regional Literature Committee member and Alternate, as well as its Prisoner Outreach coordinator at Christ the King Retreat Center in Syracuse New York on Saturday November 14, 2009. The positions are to become effective at the 2010 ISO Convention.
- **Invitation of Trustees-Elect to Board Meetings:** that the Board invites Trustees-Elect and Alternates-Elect from regions whose caucuses are held outside the annual conference to all Board meetings as observers.
- **Approval of Michael B. as OOC Member:** that the Board approves Michael B. of Houston, TX as a new member of the Office Oversight Committee (OOC).
- **Creation of Speakers Bureau List:** that the ISO Board assemble a list of potential speakers for the Speakers Bureau and that these names will be provided to the General Outreach Committee for possible training at the 2009 ISO Convention. That is, that ISO Board members nominate members for this consideration, and make sure said members meet the criteria below.
- The speakers chosen to represent the ISO will be subject to the following criteria:
  1. Be currently participating or have successfully participated in ISO service.
  2. Be fluent in the message as written in the basic text of the SAA Green Book.
  3. Meet sobriety standards as set by the General Outreach Committee (at a minimum they should be the same as those required for ISO service).
  4. A long history of cooperation and participation in service in a respectful manner.

[NB: The remainder of the motion quotes the Code of Conduct for the Board and Board Committees, and the criteria traditionally listed in the Call to Convention as "Identifying Leaders for International Service Work".]

- **One-Time Mailing from Women's Outreach Committee to Professionals:** that the Board approves the Women's Outreach Committee to send a one-time mailing, consisting of a letter and two SAA pamphlets —A Special Welcome to the Woman Newcomer and Sex Addicts Anonymous — to professionals who deal with women sex addicts, using a budget not to exceed \$400.

[NB: The text of the letter appears at the end of this section.]

### DAC Directives

[NB: Four of six proposals made by the Disclosure Advisory Committee (DAC) were considered by the Board during the teleconference. Three were actionable as described below. The fourth, *ISO Office callers to be warned of the limits to confidentiality*, was referred to the Board's Committee on Committees for further consideration.]

- **DAC Directive to Include Advising the Director of Fellowship Services:** that the first directive of the Disclosure Advisory Committee is amended by appending the phrase "and the Director of Fellowship services" to read: "1. To review ISO reports about calls that contain information about ongoing abuse of minors and to act in an advisory capacity to the Board and the Director of Fellowship services."
- **ISO Office Procedure to allow reports only when legally required** Tim E. moved and Eric M. seconded that the ISO Office Procedure Manual section C-3 (Inquiries), number 3 (Handling of Information Which May Require Reporting, including Abuse or Neglect Of Minors), item f (Reporting), final paragraph, is amended by appending the following sentence: "Reports should be made to the authorities only if it appears that they are legally required."
- **ISO Office Procedure to include Frequently Arising Questions:** that the ISO Office Procedure Manual section C-3 (Inquiries), number 3 (Handling of Information Which May Require Reporting, including Abuse or Neglect Of Minors) is amended by appending new item g (Frequently Arising Questions) to follow item f (Reporting) as follows:

**g. Frequently Arising Questions** The Director of Fellowship Services should be aware of the answers to the following questions of

interpretation, which have been confirmed by ISO legal advisors:

1. Does the code require reports concerning those who are no longer children?

ANSWER: YES - the phrase 'has been' in § 261.101. and § 261.102. requires reports concerning someone who was a child at the time they were supposed to have been affected even if they are no longer a child at the time of the report.

2. Can the statute of limitations remove the need to make a report?

ANSWER: NO - the statute of limitations applies only to the punishment of offenders and the reasoning in answer 1 applies to any recent report of past abuse.

3. Does the code require reports even if the reporter has reason to believe there is nothing useful to report?

ANSWER: YES - although § 261.104. identifies mandatory contents, § 261.101. and § 261.102. mandate a report in any case where it is believed that a child has been affected.

4. Does holding a reasonable belief as to the purpose of the code remove the need to make a report?

ANSWER: NO - there is no provision in the code allowing reports to be withheld based on the reporter's perception of the purpose of the code.

5. Does following an attorney's explicit advice whether to report in a specific instance constitute a safe defense against the penalties prescribed for failing to follow the literal requirements of the code?

ANSWER: NO - there is nothing in the code allowing liability to be transferred to an attorney.

6. Does following the explicit advice of the ISO Board or any other committee whether to report in a specific instance constitute a safe defense for a member of staff against the penalties prescribed for failing to follow the literal requirements of the code?

ANSWER: NO - there is nothing in the code allowing liability to be transferred to a third party

7. Does the code require a report if the reporter has reason to

believe a child might be affected by abuse or neglect in the future if they have not yet been so affected?

ANSWER: NO – Although § 261.101. b) requires qualified professionals to report potential abuse or neglect, § 261.101. a) specifies that other persons need only report actual abuse or neglect.”

- **Literature Committee Office Support Funding:** that the previously proposed and discussed position for a person in the office dedicated primarily to facilitate the work of the Literature Committee be funded as soon as deemed feasible by the Treasurer of the Corporation, Director of Business Services, and Director of Fellowship Services.

### **Letter from Women’s Outreach Committee**

ISO of SAA  
PO Box 70949  
Houston, TX 77270 USA

Date sent

Contact Name  
Title  
Name of institution  
Institution address

Dear Contact name:

We would like to use this opportunity to inform you about Sex Addicts Anonymous (SAA) as a recovery resource for women with addictive sexual behaviors. The process of recovery through working the Twelve Steps of SAA is a completely different process from therapy, although the two may complement each other.

As our fellowship has matured, an increasing number of women are seeking resources to stop their addictive sexual behavior. Through working a program of recovery in SAA, many have experienced freedom from these behaviors. In today’s environment, many women struggle with internet pornography, cyber sex, avoidance of sex, infidelity, romantic obsessions, and compulsive masturbation. These behaviors cause risk to ourselves and harm to others that may be physical, legal, emotional, or spiritual in nature. It is our hope that as you and your colleagues encounter women struggling with such issues, you feel comfortable relaying information about the SAA recovery program as a resource for them.

Sex Addicts Anonymous is a Twelve Step program of recovery based on the principles and traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous. Our primary purpose is to stop our addictive sexual behavior and to help others recover from sexual addiction. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop addictive sexual behavior. Our fellowship is open to women and men regardless of age, race, religion, ethnic background, marital status, or occupation. We welcome members of any sexual identity or orientation.

We are grateful for your willingness to consider this information. We have enclosed two pamphlets as a resource to use at your discretion. There are active SAA groups meeting weekly as well as daily telephone meetings. Further information about SAA can be obtained through our website located at [www.saa-recovery.org](http://www.saa-recovery.org) or by calling the International Service Organization at 1-800-477-8191.

Sincerely,  
SAA Women's Outreach Committee

## **ISO Board Committee Reports**

**The following Board Committee Reports  
Were received prior to the January 17, 2009  
Board Teleconference.**

### **General Outreach**

We've met monthly, per usual schedule. 3 out of the 5 subcommittees of General Outreach (Public Information, Men's Outreach, Teen Outreach, GLBT Outreach, Young Person's Outreach) have met--the men's outreach and young person's outreach did not for lack of participation.

Public Information: Polishing off editing for the SAA Speaker's Handbook/Guide--it is over 70 pages!!!!

### **Women's Outreach**

The Women's Outreach Committee has been meeting every 3 weeks as a whole and more often as subcommittees (Literature, Professional Outreach, Convention).

The committee is continuing its work on updating the Trusted Servant Guidelines for the Grace email, answering questions from newcomers via

the Grace email as well as maintaining an outreach list for the Grace email, continuing to work on the new pamphlet "How to Retain Women Newcomers" and on a Q&A booklet for the woman newcomer, and planning for the 2009 Convention.

The committee is also continuing to support the LitCom, OpCom, GLBT Outreach, Prisoner Outreach, Men's Outreach, General/Young Adult Outreach, and Teen/Minor Outreach with their experience, strength and hope.

Women's Outreach Budget for 2008-2009: Telephone Budget = \$750, so far this year we used \$612.50, Other expenses = so far spent \$175.03, which was used on literature. So far we have spent \$787.53. We also expect to spend another \$360 on postage if the proposed motion is passed as well as \$425 for the 2009 Convention.

### **Disclosure Advisory Committee**

Met monthly as usual. Also, chair of DAC and board liaison (Staci S.) met with ISO Office Oversight Committee to discuss possible edits to ISO staff procedure on handling calls that include disclosures of abuse. Good meeting, motion passed to be brought forward to board. I'm still looking for champion for this motion, and will ask Don K. and Roy T., as OOC members, if they will champion it...

The following proposals are intended to reflect lengthy discussion and experience within the Disclosure Advisory Committee (DAC) under our directives:

1. To review ISO reports about calls that contain information about ongoing sexual abuse of minors and to act in an advisory capacity to the Board
2. To continue work on recommendations to the Board for guidelines for other levels of the SAA fellowship with regard to procedures for handling information about ongoing sexual abuse of minors

On 2008-11-15 the Board asked the DAC to present all outstanding proposals for their approval in January, after first reviewing any proposals that would amend existing Office Procedures with the Office Oversight Committee (OOC).

On 2008-12-18 the OOC approved proposals 1 through 4 and 5 for submission to the Board. Proposal 5 relates to general SAA literature rather than the Office Procedures, and was therefore not reviewed by the OOC.

The proposals are listed here:

1. DAC Directive to include advising the Director of Fellowship Services
2. ISO Office Procedure to allow reports only when legally required

3. ISO Office Procedure to exclude all names from internal reports
4. ISO Office callers to be warned of the limits to confidentiality  
(Not for Consideration)
5. ISO Office Procedure to include Frequently Arising Questions

### **International Development Committee**

At our last teleconference we discussed putting a survey on the ISO website patterned similar to one that a Canadian intergroup made. The specific questions were being designed by committee members. We were checking the possibility with the OPCOM on how it could be placed on our website. I asked if we wanted to proceed on a recommendation for the French translation, but decided to defer this until we got more input from a committee member who was not on the teleconference. We have not been active these past two months and have a teleconference scheduled for January 18.

### **Online Presence Committee**

The Online Presence Committee (OPCom) continues to work on both the Outreach and Service Websites.

### **Convention Charter Committee**

The Convention Charter Committee (CCC) was one of three committees created by the ISO Board of Trustees to revise and/or implement processes and procedures for three specific areas: An ISO ByLaws Committee, an ISO Board Committee and the Convention Charter Committee. All three committees will work separately, but coordinating with one another based on the precept that the actions of one committee will directly impact the work of the other two.

The CCC will develop the process that will affect how the annual Business Meeting is conducted during the convention, the relationships of the various entities within the Business Meeting and the responsibilities of the various entities within the Business. Somewhat based on AA's Service Manual the Convention Charter will, hopefully, bring about important procedural changes to the Business Meeting. In addition, the committee is developing better lines of communication and coordination within the ISO organization that may include new levels of representation for Delegates to the convention. An important concept of the Convention Charter is adhering to the Twelve Traditions of SAA.

The committee is in the process of adding members to the committee and developing a basic outline for the charter. Those who have an interest in participating in the activities of the CCC are encouraged to contact the

Committee Chair, Ken S. either directly, or through the ISO office. Committee telemeetings are being held but participation is not limited if someone is not able to make them. The committee has also been encouraging input from the fellowship of SAA since it is the Delegates at the Business Meeting who will have the ultimate responsibility for approving the Convention Charter. Workshop(s) are being scheduled at this year's convention to update the Delegates and the Fellowship as to the progress made thus far, and to receive input about completed work, additional items to be considered and the general goal of the committee.

The convention in 2010 will have a progress report, as well. It is hoped that a charter will be presented with the goal of a complete charter ready for consideration by the Delegates at the 2011 convention. Much work remains to be done between then and now, and those in the Fellowship with an interest in the work of the committee are encouraged to be involved in the process.

### **Director's Search Committee**

The Director's Search Committee was established at the December 2007 meeting of the Board of SAA. Initially, its assignment was to search for a Director of Business Services, but with the resignation of the then Director of Fellowship Services, its charge was expanded to include a search for both positions. The first few months were spent filling out the membership of the Committee, trying to get a wide representation of experienced persons with expertise in some of the fields in which our candidates would need to have competence. Eventually, the Committee consisted of Bill I. from California; Don K. from Texas and the Board and Treasurer of the Corporation; Elizabeth N. from Arizona, Ken S. from Indiana and a Board Member; Roy T. from Texas, the Office Oversight Committee and a Board member; Shelly K. from Arizona and a former Board Member; Shira K. from Florida and the Literature Committee; Ted G. from Minnesota; Tim E. from California and the Chair of the SAA Board; and Wharton S. from Minnesota and a Board member, who was appointed chair of this committee.

Once the membership of the committee was established, we began developing job descriptions for the two positions. These were finalized in several working sessions by the Board at the Convention in May of 2008, at which time the announcement of the positions and their descriptions was made public, and the deadline for applications was published.

The process which was followed was to distribute the applications as they came in to all of the committee members. The application form had several specific questions, and applicants responses to the same questions, their work history, and their experience in recovery allowed the committee (meeting in teleconferences) to make some preliminary evaluations.

For those whom we wished to obtain more information, we set up telephone interviews, each lasting about an hour. The telephone team varied with availability; its members at different times were Bill I., Elizabeth N., Don K., Ken S., Shira K., Tim E., and Wharton S. We developed a group of about twenty questions which we used to structure the initial part of the telephone interview, and which subsequently allowed us to compare and contrast candidates. We also had a period of time for informal conversation with the candidate, during which the candidate was encouraged to ask any questions of the interviewing team which he had not previously had a chance to ask.

The next step was to do face-to-face interviews, which were held in Houston so that the candidates would have a chance to see the office and meet the staff. These were set up to last for about an hour and a half. Unlike the structured twenty questions of the telephone interviews, the face-to-face interviews consisted of three twenty minute open-ended and unstructured conversations, in which the candidate talked first with one interviewer while the other interviewers observed, and then the process continued with the second and third interviewers leading the conversation while two other interviewers observed. This was followed by a more general conversation among the candidate and the interviewers. The interviewing team then met privately to discuss what had been discovered by the conversational process. In this section of the interviews, we felt that all the candidates were easily capable of doing the job which they had applied for. Our concern was attempting to ascertain the candidate's character, maturity in recovery, and suitability for the position, not only in terms of skills and experience, but also thinking about the personality mix in the office. The interviewing team consisted of Shira K., Tim E., and Wharton S.

When we came up with recommendations, we consulted with the entire Director's Search Committee, and then made a report with recommendations for the Board's action, all by teleconference.

Every effort was made to insure the process was thorough, fair, open, and transparent, while respecting the privacy of the candidates. Arriving at our decisions was done almost entirely by open discussion leading to a group conscience, regardless of the level of organization, whether it was the whole committee, the telephone interviewing team, or the face-to-face interviewing team. The whole process took a year and was often frustrating because of delays required by giving notice in a timely fashion and scheduling plane flights in such a way as to reduce costs.

We received about fifteen applications from Great Britain, Alabama, Indiana, Louisiana, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Washington,. About half that number was interviewed by telephone, and six were seen in face-to-face interviews, which were done in two sweeps, because the initial set of interviews, done in August, did not result in a successful candidate, requiring a second round of announcements, telephone interviews, and then the final face-to-face interviews which were done in early December of 2008.

## Feedback on *Sex Addicts Anonymous*

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

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

Please send any feedback to:

E-mail address: [info@saa-recovery.org](mailto:info@saa-recovery.org)

Mailing address:

ISO of SAA  
PO Box 70949  
Houston, TX 77270 USA



## Guidelines for Meditation Book Submissions to the Literature Committee

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

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

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

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

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



**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

## ISO Income/Expense Summary As of January 31, 2009

January 2009

<b>INCOME</b>	
<b>Net Sales</b>	<b>6,454</b>
<b>Shipping &amp; Handling</b>	<b>1,359</b>
<b>Donations</b>	<b>28,840</b>
General Donation	23,735
LifeLine Partners	4,800
Designated Donations	305
<b>Interest Earned</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>TOTAL NET OPERATING INCOME</b>	<b>36,653</b>
<b>OPERATING EXPENSES</b>	
<b>Wages/Benefits/Taxes</b>	<b>10,120</b>
Program Related	6,186
Administration	1,434
Employee Benefits (Not Wages)	1,835
Payroll Taxes	665
<b>Insurance</b>	<b>297</b>
<b>Depreciation</b>	<b>175</b>
<b>Postage/Shipping</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Communications</b>	<b>301</b>
<b>Office Expense</b>	<b>384</b>
<b>Occupancy Expenses</b>	<b>2,886</b>
<b>Board/Committee Expense</b>	<b>1,291</b>
<i>The Outer Circle</i>	<b>300</b>
<b>Financial Charges</b>	<b>1,038</b>
<b>Bad Debts/Refunds</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES</b>	<b>16,831</b>
<b>TOTAL NET OPERATING SURPLUS</b>	<b>19,822</b>
<b>NONOPERATIONAL INCOME</b>	
2009 ISO Convention	11,763
<b>TOTAL NONOPERATIONAL INCOME</b>	<b>11,763</b>
<b>NONOPERATIONAL EXPENSES</b>	
2009 ISO Convention	2,676
<b>TOTAL NONOPERATIONAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>2,676</b>
<b>TOTAL NONOPERATIONAL SURPLUS</b>	<b>9,172</b>
<b>ISO SURPLUS – ALL INCOME/EXPENSES</b>	<b>28,909</b>

## Financial Results for January 2009

January showed a net surplus of \$28,909. When adjusted for early Convention income without corresponding expense our surplus was \$19,822 compared to a budget of \$5,233.

The increase was due to the following:

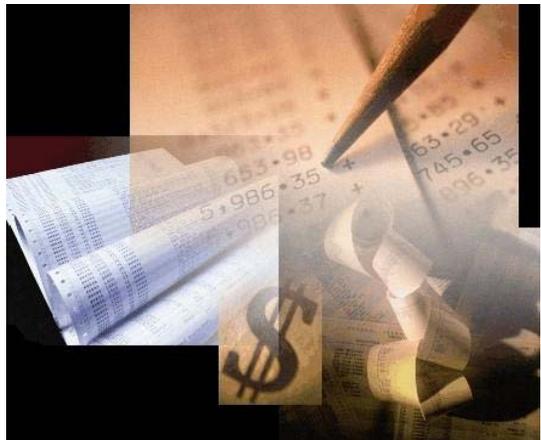
- Increase in donations, primarily from Groups. \$7,658 was record in January compared to a budget of \$4,100 and an average monthly of \$5,811 in 2008. Group donations have been on the rise for the last 4 months.
- Lower sales were the result of HCI being \$ 3,586 off budget
- Expenses were \$10,000 under budget because the staff was forecasted to include a DFS and an additional administrative assistant. Occupancy expenses include the repair of a heating element and adjustment for insurance and property taxes.

Overall, our surplus was the result of the Houston Giving Thanks event, which raised \$15,200, \$12,480 recorded in January. Cash improved by \$14,195 excluding Convention funds. Accordingly, we were able to restore our Operating and Capital reserves and reserve \$ 7,000 for SAA book printing. The Translation and Literature reserve increased \$1,000.

If you have any questions please let me know.

In Your Service

Don K



*[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*

Let's hear it for decisions! Macbeth, while struggling to make a decision that ultimately proved to be his undoing, said: "If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well it were done quickly."

It's not often that I take time as part of my piece to respond to an article in the issue. I am doing it this time because the article expresses a point of view that I hear in Twelve-Step meetings from time to time and that I think at least deserves a "take-what-you-like" response. I'm talking about the value of making a decision.

I heard the story told in the article in a much briefer form: "Three frogs were sitting on a log. One of them decided to jump off. Question: How many were left? [Pause while everyone who hasn't heard this story before answers "two."] Answer: Three, because the frog had only decided to jump. He hadn't actually jumped." Of course, this story has an easy validity, and the article giving a longer version of the tale makes some extremely valid points related to this anecdote. Still, I want to take a closer look at the story because I think in some ways it sells short the act of making decisions.

First, I want to go back to a well-known sentence from a piece of literature from another Twelve Step fellowship, a sentence that is particularly appropriate as I write in early January: "They . . . make many resolutions, but never a decision." This sentence implies that making a decision is an action that by definition carries more weight than, say, a resolution. Even more appropriate to our fellowship is the language of Step Three: "Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God." If the act of making a decision were of as little worth as the story about the frogs tends to imply, then we would need to have thirteen steps instead of twelve. Step Four, following up on the decision made in Step Three, would then read: "Turned our will and our lives . . ."

I'm certainly not trying to downplay the importance of following through on any recovery-based decision that one might make. And certainly some decisions are better left as just that, without the accompanying action (Macbeth could probably vouch for as much, were he still with us). What I am saying is that making a decision carries a great deal of validity and brings one infinitely closer actually to taking the action decided upon, and less likely to end up "Letting 'I dare not' wait upon 'I would,' Like the poor cat i' the adage."

Normally I take some time in each issue to ask you to consider submitting an article to *The Outer Circle*. Briefly, you can send your article by e-mail to [toc@saa-recovery.org](mailto:toc@saa-recovery.org) or by regular mail to ISO of SAA, P.O. Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270-0949. If you're puzzling about a subject for your article, we can always use articles on the steps and traditions, or even the concepts if you're feeling adventurous. This issue, covering March and April, the third and fourth months of the year, has, among other things, articles on Steps Three and Four. I want to see us stay on this track practiced by issues of the SAA newsletter in recent years, and still is a rule, unwritten or otherwise, of the literature of some other Twelve-Step fellowships.

Also, please keep in mind that we are looking for meditations for our planned meditation book. Guidelines for meditations are contained elsewhere in this issue. We are starting to receive a number of meditations, so if you'd like one or more of your recovery-based meditations to have a chance of appearing in our meditation book, please send yours in at your earliest convenience.

And with that, I'll just close by saying that I hope you enjoy this issue of *The Outer Circle*. I look forward to talking with you again next issue.



## Why do I go to the SAA Conventions?

By Tim L.

In our modern world, we have many different types of insurance policies. We have policies for our cars, homes, trips, lives, and banking deposits. (Well, as of mid-October, I wouldn't count on the FDIC!)

As a responsible man in my 40's, I know the value of spending a little money today to protect against larger, unexpected damage or loss to my personal property tomorrow. I have auto insurance to take care of my expensive car if someone hits me on the road. My homeowners insurance will replace my house if there is a fire or if someone is injured on my property. My insurance agent reviews my policies each year to make sure I don't end up bankrupt in the event of a disaster.

So in SAA, can we buy insurance policies from our Inner Circle? Well there are many ways to avoid spiritual and sexual bankruptcy. I work with my sponsor, work my Steps to the best of my ability, and in my service work, I reach out to addicts who are still suffering.

However, my best insurance policy is heading to the annual SAA convention each year. How does this single event provide me with so much peace of mind?

Each time I travel to the convention, I create a sober history of travel. Before recovery, I acted out on personal and business travel for years. With the past 5 conventions, I have proven I can travel and stay sober and in my Outer Circle. I also have less fear that I will miss family events that I have the tools to deal with the stress of traveling, feeling alone and not connected to my Higher Power.

Every year, I meet new sober friends from my own Fellowship and from around the world. These men and women have become part of my new sober family, and I can talk to them anytime. I feel less isolated and more in touch with my sexual sobriety. I have friends across the country in cities like Miami, Denver and Minneapolis and small rural towns in Iowa, Hawaii and Texas.

In each of the conventions, I hear new ideas and ways to work the 12 Steps. I gain new momentum in my own recovery. I create new spiritual tools by listening to the Workshops and Speakers. In New Orleans, on a beautiful Mississippi paddleboat cruise, I learned more about "sober dating" from a friend in the program. I began to trust my Higher Power deeper by listening to my friend's experience with being patient with dating.

Each year I look forward to the laughter, hugs and warmth of the hundreds of recovering sex addicts. This year we will gather just 8 miles from my

home. I urge you to come for three full days of deep recovery. Not only is the my home city one of the most beautiful places in the world, but you will also be taking out one of the strongest and most comprehensive recovery "insurance policies" around. Attending a convention costs only a fraction of what my last acting out binge cost me. In these tough economic times, there is no better way to bolster your program and take out a recovery "insurance policy" than to commit to the 2009 Convention.

Together, we can all add to our "spiritual bank accounts" and commit to our beautiful recovery family of SAA.

## Step Three

By Marilyn S.

*"Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God."*

Wow, this is tough for me at times. My whole concept of God changed in recovery. I had grown up Roman Catholic. I had been very wounded at the hands of people who represented God and the Church. What I know now is that these people were flawed and human. Through misguided teachings I had put these people on pedestals. I believe that injustices have been done in the name of religion and God.

My whole idea had to change. I chose to see God as a benevolent being who rejoiced in my recovery, who desired more contact with me. I believe recovery is about redemption and resurrection. Every day is an opportunity to be renewed. I had to strip out most of my old ideas and replace them with the intuitive knowing of God that I receive from my spiritual recovery. My attitude is key. If I am negative, I attract negativity. If I am positive, I attract the positive.

I am such a strong-willed person that many times I take back control of the helm. However, after nineteen years I have learned to follow God's lead for me if I will be silent and listen. I have learned to see God's hand even in the small things. I try to thank God for all good things that occur and for my blessings. Sometimes I don't seek God's wisdom in a timely manner. However, like other addicts I have known, after about a few days or weeks of being disturbed I remember to try to turn it over. Sometimes I have to pray for the "willingness" to turn it over. Sometimes I think I see God's will through the other members of my group.

I pray to God; sometimes with rote prayers, sometimes just talking. I also like to use religious music to set the atmosphere as I drive to work. Sometimes I like the silence to just wait for God to fill my mind with His message. When I do this I get validation. I also see windows to the world open for me that I do not believe would be there if I were not receptive. Some of this

sounds like Eleventh Step, but I am trying to explain how I look at God, communicate with God, and how all this has changed for me.

Three months after entering the program, I was trying to zip through the steps. I tried to make an amends to an unsafe person and wound up acting out. This was a very sobering experience and the last time I acted out in my bottom line. I realized I had been taking God for granted and doing it my way. God is patient; I am not. Recovery is a process, not a quick fix. It took months and years to undo the harm and trauma I had experienced. It is okay not to be perfect, but to keep striving and working our program, putting one foot in front of the other. I realized that God had not turned away from me, but rather I had turned away from the light. That light was still there, and all I had to do was ask. I had confused people's or institutions' concept of God with the reality of God. I also learned that things come in God's time. God will help me at the perfect time and in the perfect way. It is up to me to see that miracle in my life. However, I still have to do the footwork and have faith in the result.

After I acted out the last time, I was humbled. I started to get on my knees to pray. I started to thank God and ask for His help and guidance. I was tentative at first asking God to show me His will in my life and give me the strength to carry it out. I mostly asked for help, and then surrendered to the process of recovery: meetings, service work, prayer, steps, phone calls, writing, etc. As I saw progress, I could see God's hand. Sometimes we only see with our human eyes through the filters we have developed growing up. Recovery gives us new eyes. I knew I had taken myself as far as I could go on my own, and had made quite a mess in some areas. I believe recovery is God's gift to us to help us learn a new way.

What does it look like when it's working?

I will have nineteen years sobriety tomorrow. I continue to attend meetings and gain from the experience of others. I am on our intergroup, answer the local e-mail, make Twelfth-Step calls, write articles for *The Outer Circle*, started a new meeting last year, sponsor a number of people. I do all these things because I know that is God's will for me. I keep my recovery by giving it away. I help others as I was helped along the way. Recovery keeps me sane. I also work my own program. My life is totally and radically different. I no longer have the roller coaster of emotions. I am married to a man who has just completed ten years in recovery and is still actively working his program as well. I believe when we are healthier we attract healthier people into our worlds. What a gift to have a partner who understands this process.

## 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 just got home from treatment for my sexual addiction and I live in a remote area of Ohio. There are no meetings close to me, but I want to stay sober. Can you tell me what I can do each day to support my recovery?

Signed,  
Optimistic in Ohio

Dear Optimistic:

Meetings are the foundation of the program of SAA. They explain the program, keep us sober, and answer all the questions that come up along the way. There are many things you can do touching meetings that may be helpful for you. First off, you can check out the list of meetings on the SAA website, [www.saa-recovery.org](http://www.saa-recovery.org), if you haven't already, to confirm that there aren't any in your area. If it turns out that there are, ordinarily you could go to six meetings and find the one you like best. If indeed you don't have face-to-face meetings in your area, there are telephone meetings seven days per week; you could go to one today. Some are women's only—there's a list on the SAA website address above. There's also a women's website, at [www.saa-women.org](http://www.saa-women.org). You can get SAA literature off the website and read more about recovery. I especially like the white pamphlet, "A Special Welcome to the Woman Newcomer." "Tools of Recovery" is another great resource—it's like an instruction manual on how to gain and maintain sobriety. And of course the book *Sex Addicts Anonymous* is the basic text of SAA. If you have any more specific questions you can email me back.

Grace

## The Courage to be Happy

By Lisa Jo B.

Happiness makes my addict trigger-happy. Isn't it funny? Not ha-ha-funny, but ironic-funny.

I want to act out after I've had a great day. Not to reward myself, but to put myself in a more familiar place.

You see—stress and chaos are familiar to me. Sure, they're uncomfortable, but not as much as the unfamiliar waters of happiness and confidence. So to act out on addiction puts me back in a familiar and predictable space. I'll know exactly how I'll feel during and after. I can count on it.

But I can't count on what I don't know. It makes me edgy, triggery. There is a fear of the unknown. It's so powerful. I fear and distrust what I don't know. How do I counteract this phenomenon? I act despite my feelings. Feelings are not facts. I keep doing the things that nurture my heart and souls. I relax and I pray. I listen to the wisdom within.

I use imagery to push past the fear. I hold onto a vision. I imagine the new me: calm, confident, wise. I am comfortable in my own skin. My active addiction is in the past.

I bring to mind all the people that I love, in and out of the rooms. Then I feel love. I feel it in my chest, in my bones. I breathe it in. Next, I take all that love and imagine pouring it back into myself. I feel empathy for the person I am today. I look at my eyes in the mirror and I see all my pain and my joy. I know that my addict is just trying to protect me from the unknown, trying to medicate me from feeling pain. It's simply a defense mechanism.

I think of expansion. Like the ocean or the sky. That is what my potential is like—expansive in all directions. The best things happen when I encourage myself through action. I feel love, feel the fear, and do it anyway.

If I have a good day, I strive to make it two in a row. I allow that of myself. I know that I deserve the best. God wants me to be happy and living in purpose.

I thank the addict. I love the addict within. Then I politely decline what it forcibly asks me to do. I allow myself to experience newly found joy. Peace and beauty can become the norm for me, if only I allow it. If only I give it to myself and practice, practice being happy.

I can become a beacon of light for other addicts. I let my light of happiness and love shine. I honor my own healthy choices through action and remember that the universe supports me.

## Power in Numbers

By Robert S.

As I search for a higher power I find myself turning to knowledge. I believe knowledge holds what I need to regain sanity. Not knowledge I can gain personally, but a collective knowledge; all that mankind knew before me, all that is known now and all that will ever be known is available for study. Experts have written books and conducted seminars; a meeting allows sharing of experience; a phone call to a sponsor can give insight as well as affirmations and meditation. The whole is thereby greater than the sum of its parts, and as far as collective knowledge goes, what I know is a small part of it. I think of the ocean as being what can be known, and I am a flea sipping from it. I can never even imagine I could taste it all. Water is a good metaphor to me for knowledge; a single molecule of water has a mass so tiny that it can barely be measured. Seemingly invisible and insignificant, in numbers these molecules can form an ocean or carve out the Grand Canyon.

So for me, a flea trying to drink from an ocean, I have one other struggle: my addiction to sex resulted in my committing offenses that landed me in prison. I cannot attend meetings, take classes or call a sponsor. I can read books to share in the knowledge of authors; I can write to and receive letters from a sponsor, and I can maintain faith in knowing that SAA is there. I have faith in the fact that I am part of the collective whole, and my actions affect that whole.

I have had a lifetime of negative self-talk. I read affirmations, say them out loud to myself, but hear my inner voice calling me a liar. Like those molecules of water, the negative self-talk also has power in numbers, each building on the ones before it; but positive messages are more powerful still. A single kind word can lift up my spirits that have been whittled away by the forces of negativity. In Gulliver's Travels the hero landed in Lilliput, where he was a towering giant compared to the natives; yet the inch-high Lilliputians managed to overpower him.

My goal is to take the positive self-talk, the affirmations, thoughts and feelings, and give them power in numbers. I can reach out to others with a kind word, and allow that act of kindness to be paid forward. Negative self-talk is powerful, but positive thinking is more so. I need to continue to build it up, and win the battle for my sexual sobriety and sanity.



## Recovery's Parole

by Dana G.

When I live in my many addictions  
This is their role  
They have me serving a life sentence  
With no chance of parole

First they take away my God and faith  
Steal them right out of my heart  
Is this all addiction will steal?  
Ha! That's only a start!

Addiction robs me of friends and family  
Drives them all far away  
Destroys their love and trust in me  
So they won't or can't stay

Then they slowly wreck and destroy my body  
YEARS these diseases can take  
As I slowly surrender my life to them  
And all other good things I forsake

Then they steal my mind away  
Driving me slowly crazy!  
I wind up not caring about anything  
Fearful, angry and lazy

The incredible irony of all these thefts  
The one that can truly matter  
In my addictions I hardly resist this thief  
I hand my life over on a platter

To find my next fix I'll hand over my joy  
Love and friendship as well  
Not caring the least about all these losses  
Or that I'm on a slow road to hell

The devil himself becomes my jailer and warden  
Holding all the keys to my life  
He keeps me drugged and numb enough  
To ignore all my inner strife

Finally at the end of this long ugly road  
Addiction's thief looks at me and grins  
Since you have nothing left for me to steal  
I'll try taking your life for all your sins

Now finally in pain and sorrow I look around and yell  
Desperate for any way out  
"I'm tired of watching my life be destroyed!" I scream  
But who would answer my shout?

It was God himself who heard my pleas  
Extending recovery's gentle hand  
"I've lifted up folks in deeper than you, son,  
Right out of addiction's quicksand"

God set me on a long difficult path  
Forcing me to honestly face myself  
He stood close by to watch and care for me  
As I slowly reclaimed my health

He nudged me back into the world  
Asking me to make my amends  
Helping me heal so many old wounds  
With many of my family and friends

Till finally he held out my parole  
In a mighty and loving hand  
Telling me I now had a duty to help others  
As I travel throughout this land

"Remember always," He said to me  
As I turned to go  
"You owe it to everyone like yourself  
To pass on what you know"

"To give love and acceptance to wounded souls  
And help lift them up  
Until it's time after death to meet again  
And drink from my Son's Eternal Cup"

As I now travel my new road in recovery's new world  
Watching my spirit slowly mend  
I often find myself wondering  
Does addiction's sentence ever truly end?

Soberly I try to remember all I've learned  
Along this painful way  
The simple fact is: I'm only out on recovery's parole  
For just one more day...

## About my Experience, Strength, and Hope by Richard P.

My name is Richard; I'm an alcoholic, a drug addict, and a sex addict. I have no particular sobriety date because I am in prison where a sobriety date is impractical. In here the opportunities for temptation are few, and the fact that I have not drunk any alcohol or used any drugs in years is not a true test of how difficult this task can be in the free world. It is, however, easy to be a sex addict in here--at least, in thought--where my imagination can still be excited by erotic fantasies. In prison I have worked all the steps; admitted all my faults to an inmate sponsor (who has been released); and read *The Outer Circle* as my only opportunity to hear from the group conscience. This little book is my meetings.

Some may wonder why I waited so long--going to prison first--to seek help. Well, I did seek help in AA and NA prior to my incarceration, but I never realized I was a sex addict until, in prison, I read *Hope and Recovery*. That was about ten years ago.

I remember the first time I ever went to a twelve-step meeting. My wife and I; in our ignorance, knowing we had a problem, but not having a name for our addiction, one day decided to use the yellow pages, find a meeting, and attend it. We were very tired of the continuous aftermath of our addictive behaviors and the risks we were taking. At that time I had a good job at a large construction company and my wife was an accountant for a large utility company. At the prime of our youth, we also had three beautiful children. We had a lot to lose and we needed help.

So, we went to a Twelve-Step meeting, a small group of about twelve persons. They all sat around a long, large table, at which we were invited to have a seat. The atmosphere was friendly but reserved, and everybody seemed to know each other. The meeting started with some words and declarations, which I now know are the Preamble and "How It Works." Then, to my surprise, the leader, addressing us newcomers, asked me to make a statement. "Tell us a little about yourself," he queried sincerely. I cannot remember my exact words, but I told him that my wife and I believed we had a problem and we decided that it was time to go to a meeting, so we went.

I will never forget the shock my wife and I felt during and after the group leader's response. Once again, I do not recall exactly what he said but it went like this: "In these meetings we always start by admitting we are addicted. We come to meetings to get sobriety for ourselves, not for anybody else." Looking directly at me he continued: "You can't get sobriety because your wife wants you to; you have to want it for yourself. You have to give yourself to this simple program, grasp and develop a manner of living which demands rigorous honesty, go to any length to get sober, and there is 'no easier, softer way.'"

Both my wife and I, being ignorant of the lingo of the program, felt he was making a personal attack on us. I thought I was being rebuked, chastised, and accused of being dishonest and soft. I frowned the rest of the meeting and do not remember what anybody else said. When the meeting was finally over, we abruptly left, with nobody having a chance to stop us and explain things in terms we could understand.

That was the last time I went to a meeting of this fellowship until after I was first incarcerated. My now-ex-wife has never gone back to a Twelve Step program, as far as I know, but has found sobriety from that addiction through a company-sponsored treatment program.

I was reminded of this when I read "The Chip System: My Experience, Strength, and Hope," by Karl V. (*The Outer Circle*, Sept-Oct 2008). He makes a conservative argument for keeping things the way they are--specifically the chip system. I believe what he says is true and believe that conservative attitudes are important; without them there can be no group stability. But we also have to keep in mind that we, as both individuals and groups, are not perfect people and we make mistakes. We have to be attentive to special needs and attitudes. Does a person have to hit rock bottom before he can be helped by the program? What is rock bottom? How much knowledge is needed to join a group? Is a chip system needed at all? In prison we do not use one and, seldom does anybody mention how long he has been sober.

All I am really saying is "be careful." A "no easier, softer way" attitude can be dangerous to some individuals and to those who do not understand exactly what it means. It could easily be taken to an extreme. Does it mean we cannot change or adjust any traditions, even the chip system? I believe the group, not just the individual, has to learn by our experience, hope, and prayers.



## Decisions Regarding Recovery

By Santi L.

Almost nothing is either all black or all white. Other spiritual beings who have gone before us have faced some of the same perplexing decisions that we do. Any decision of conscience always involves some risk. If we choose to go north, we may never know what would have happened had we gone east, west or south. A hyper-cautious withdrawal from all perplexing situations is not the virtue of prudence; it is, in fact, a bad decision, for "not to decide is to decide."

Now what does all this have to do with addiction and recovery? Put very simply, I believe nothing of value will happen to a person seeking sobriety and a release from his/her addiction until a decision is made and the corresponding action is begun.

Here is an analogy: there were four blue jays, sitting on a branch of a big oak tree shooting the breeze. What a glorious time they were having reminiscing of days gone by. Suddenly one became frightened as he looked over his shoulder only to see an ominous looking storm heading directly at them. The friends discussed the consequences of continuing to hang out. Denial won out as three of the birds stayed put. Only the one scared bird decided to leave. Soon the storm turned into a major hurricane which wiped out the tree and sent all the birds to an early death at the base of the tree. Now then, how many birds died? The answer of course is all four, because the scared one only decided to leave. He never actually left the tree!

And so it is with our decisions in recovery. Unlike other decisions that can wait, be put off or reconsidered, a decision to act must accompany a decision to wish for recovery. What good is the Admittance of powerlessness and Acceptance of the terrible consequences of a life in addiction (Step One) without the corresponding Action to move away from any sort of self-delusion that somehow, someday we will be able to control our addiction? And just how does one move away from that dream world? By continuing to work on our Steps; Steps Two and Three form the basis for recovery as a relationship to God is restored.

I have found out in recovery that I am an ideas person. Unfortunately, some of my best business ideas (I dreamed of starting a drive-through coffee business as far back as fifteen years ago) have gone the way of my dear blue jays. Kaput! Why, you might ask? I did not take the corresponding action to allow my dreams to become reality. Had I finished a timely business plan and sought proper financing I might be living the life of Riley today. Who is Riley anyway?

Fortunately, where I have so far failed in my business life, I have had a great deal of success in my recovery from all kinds of devastating addictions, the

toughest of which has been my addiction to sex. And so the question is why I have been able to be successful, so far in my recovery, when I could have continued to slip. I could have been turning the doors of SAA into those moving rotating doors like the ones in major buildings. In and out and out and in...round and round they go, when I might have surrendered nobody knows.

It is not that I am so smart. I believe I was trained well by my early sponsors, in another Twelve-Step program and in SAA. They instilled in me a desire for a different type of life and fed my willingness to "go to any length" to be delivered from my addiction. They helped me to know that desires without decisions and decisions without action are just fantasy.

So here we are at the beginning of 2009. My ideal remains the same; to be the godliest man I can be; and if I do that, I will gratefully serve (Step Twelve) both God and my fellow man. What better place to do that than in SAA?

## **I Hate These 'Feelings'** by Cindy

Coming back off of a slip for me wasn't as devastating or scary as was the sliding into it or the sorting through the feelings. The slow process back was nevertheless still difficult inasmuch as I truly just wanted to learn to be healthier in my sexuality and to be able to relate differently. It seemed impossible.

What should have been forefront in my mind was the Steps again. Confusion reigned, for it was as if I had become addicted to getting over the addictive process. I knew it wasn't going to be a hop, skip and a jump; or ever be possible just to get to be where I'd been when I'd worked through all the Steps months before, when my sponsor had to step aside for her own well-being. I had to accept that with every thought it felt as if I were starting over; really it was just a beginning from a different place with different lessons to be learned from what had happened.

Was I okay? Would I be? Questions ran through my mind: Why couldn't I just do this without anyone's screwed-up interference, just me and God. At certain points, I would wonder if I could ever regain the serenity I had. Then I would think that, if I had had it before, it couldn't be unattainable.

When feelings come and go, I don't have to act out over them. I can just sit back, remember to breathe and relax, knowing that "this too shall pass": things take care of themselves without my interference and control. Really God takes care of things!

All this is possible if I trust the process, work the Steps, reach out and continue to be in recovery, rather than floating around in my own "bubble of existing knowledge of what I think things should be." I do know that I never want to be that person I was before finding SAA.

## Step Four

by Anthony X.

On page 32 of *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, I find the words “In taking the Fourth Step, we become willing to challenge these old ways of thinking and examine ourselves with a new clarity.” And, ironically enough, a lot of these “old ways of thinking” are spelled out as clearly as I have ever seen them in the chapter on Step Four in a book of another fellowship dealing with the Steps. There, they take the form of a list of questions dealing specifically with the reader’s sexual life. Using those questions as a basis, I can extend the same concepts expressed there to other areas of my life.

The question from that list that jumps out at me on this reading of them is the one that asks me if I become vengeful or depressed when I am denied. While I can certainly see the validity of asking myself if I react in such a way in that particular situation, I’m also aware that I can easily have a similar reaction in areas of my life that have absolutely nothing to do with sex. And this is certainly an “old way of thinking” for me, an “old way” that nonetheless persists.

I can think of an example of this phenomenon as recently as this past week. I had a situation crop up where I was absolutely certain that someone was reacting negatively to me. I also had “evidence” that this same person was favoring someone else over me. I call this train of thought my “don’t-you-know-who-I-am?” syndrome. In other words, I am actually able to define my malady. And, as I learned a long time ago in Twelve-Step fellowships, self-knowledge does absolutely nothing to help me recover.

And not all the insights I have gained over the years with regard to this character defect have come from Twelve-Step literature. I learned, or had the opportunity to learn, years ago that I have no business telling myself that I know what a particular person is thinking about me. Once I have decided that I do, it is an easy process for me to find “evidence” to back up my belief. How much unhappiness and grief I could save myself if I were to remember a pithy saying I heard in another fellowship years ago and did not understand at the time: “What someone else thinks about me is none of my business.” (Possibly because I really don’t know what someone else thinks about me?) And yet, I manage to ignore all I have learned about this matter from Twelve-Step literature, other self-help literature, sharings in meetings, conversations with friends, and the like. When I get into this particular bubble, all the tools I have acquired over the years become like the voices of the parents which are portrayed in that delightful series of prime-time cartoons by a trombone making the sound “bwaa-bwaa-bwaa.” Like the children in the stories, I hear the noise, but none of it penetrates my skull.

So I spent a couple of days this past week feeling depressed over the situation. For me this took the form of going home in the evenings and going straight to bed. This meant canceling social engagements, lying about the

reason for canceling, and so forth.

Then yesterday I was speaking with the person whom I had decided was the favored one—my resentment was not against him but rather against the one I believed was doing the favoring—and learned that I had completely misunderstood the situation. I had not known the story behind the facts that had taken place, so I did the next best thing which was to make up a story and then believe it with all my heart. Well, my “made-up story” was wrong.

As I said earlier, this is a situation that I undergo from time to time, certainly more frequently than I would like. I have not always learned to behave in ways consistent with what I regard in theory as being one of the most important benefits of doing a Fourth Step, which is to recognize patterns of behaviors, so I can at least be aware of those patterns when I am starting to slide into them. I hope that writing this story down in *The Outer Circle* will help me to recognize it when next it occurs and find a healthier way of dealing with it.



# Recovery

by Ron S.

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

What is recovery? I hear this word a lot these days. In the past, I thought of recovery as a period of convalescence and healing for people that have had a physical catastrophic illness, injury, disease, or some accident that affected the quality and well-being of one's life. Until I started working on myself, I had no idea what recovery was. Today, for me recovery means so much more than healing from physical injuries or diseases.

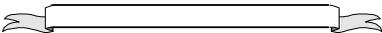
Explaining or giving a definition for recovery is not easy. The meaning of recovery is personal, private, and has different meanings to people working to improve their lives through Twelve-Step programs. My recovery is a combination of things that have occurred in the last year to help me get focused about what it means.

Recovery is honesty, trust, helping, awareness, being present, living with feelings, sharing, love, forgiving, and establishing a spiritual relationship with the God of my understanding.

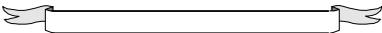
Recovery is changing patterns of denial, isolationism, self-indulgence, stuffing feelings, resentments, selfishness, acting-out bottom-line behaviors, dishonesty and self-will.

Being in recovery has meant changing some behaviors that I have learned from birth. That's neither an easy task nor a quick fix. Recovery takes time. I know that what takes a lifetime to develop is not going to be undone in weeks. Recovery is being patient and working a program. It takes time to work.

Recovery is changing my life and helping me be the kind of person I have always wanted to be. It is, to coin a phrase, a journey and not just the destination.



I thought of recovery as a period of convalescence and healing for people that have had a physical catastrophic illness, injury, disease, or some accident that affected the quality and well-being of one's life.



## Meditation on Grace

by Anonymous

Identity brings freedom  
Freedom brings responsibility  
Responsibility to choose recovery over addiction  
Life over death  
Staying in the game  
Fighting the demons  
Moment by moment, in the Now  
Victory in the end.

We receive when we give. We're all in life together. That's reality. One affects another. The choices I make, to love or to stay addicted, to give life to ourselves and others by choosing the life our Higher Power gives us, a life that gives to others, to pass the love and recovery to the still-suffering addict, these things are recovery's reward, the grace of love. Starting with the one in the mirror. A poem says not to cheat the one in the mirror, even if others think I have it together. I can say all the right things, but I'm still in early recovery. I'm still choosing life over addiction, daily, moment by moment, and sometimes failing. That's my daily choice, to love or not love; to live or not live; to stagnate or to thrive; to assert or remain passive; to work my program or not. It's a simple program if I simply work it. I can use the tools: friends, HOW, HALT, both sides of sponsorship, prayer; exercise, art, music, service in the program and out of the program. I can stay in the game until victory.

Two friends at a meeting passed along these thoughts: Paradise is now. Hell is not wanting to be in the now. My Higher Power is with me everywhere. I can pray/touch/access the power of peace, presence of mind whenever, wherever I work the Steps, whenever I surrender to my Higher Power. Simple. Choose life, choose now. Now is the time for recovery. Fear comes that I can't do it. No, I can't. I am powerless and my life is unmanageable. "There is one who can. That one is God. May you find God now." There is no condemnation in God, only lessons learned, gratitude, honest feeling, honest thinking, honest action. Honesty, openness, willingness.

Victory  
Life

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

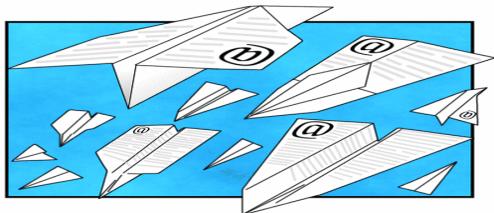
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## How to Submit an Article to *The Outer Circle*

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

**Second:** Send your article by e-mail to: [toc@saa-recovery.org](mailto:toc@saa-recovery.org)

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

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

### Submission deadlines:

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