

The Outer Circle

The Official Newsletter of the

PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270

Volume 3, Issue 4

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

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ISO Board Actions

The following actions were taken by the Board of Trustees, Wednesday-Thursday, May 20-21, 2009

- **ISO Budget:** Motion approved that the Board accept the ISO Budget 7/1/09-6/30/10 as presented by DBS, Joe H.
- **Office Reorganization Committee Motions:**
 1. Motion approved that the Board adopt the job description for the position of Director of Operations.
 2. Motion approved that the Board appoint Joe H. as Director of Operations and approve an increase in his salary to \$55,000 per year retroactive to 3/1/09, to continue for one year from the approval of the job description.
 3. Motion approved that the Board authorize the creation of the position of Administrative Supervisor at an hourly wage ranging from \$15.50 per hour to \$18.50 per hour effective 3/1/09.
- **New Board Member Packet:** Motion approved that the Board of Trustees accepts the attached "Welcome to the New Board Member" packet and allow for immediate distribution to all board members on Sunday 5/24/09.
- **DAC Document:** Motion approved that the ISO Board approve the DAC handing out and discussing a one-page document at their workshop at the 2009 ISO Convention, for the purpose of feedback from attendees.
- **Pocket Size Book:** Motion approved that the pocket size Green Book is to be sold for a special price of \$8 at the convention and then at a price of \$9 following the close of the convention.
- **Employee Retirement Benefit Plan:** Motion approved that a retirement benefit plan is authorized for the ISO staff, effective July 1st, 2009. There will be a waiting period of six months for new employees before they are eligible to participate in the plan. The retirement plan will be funded at 2.5% of the employees' salary and will be allocated monthly.
- **Bylaws Interpretation:** Motion approved that the Board interprets the Bylaws Article II, Section 1, Subparagraph A, to mean that, for the purposes of determining membership in the Corporation:

1. Any face-to-face meeting is considered an SAA group
2. Any Intergroup is considered an SAA group
3. Any tele-meeting is considered an SAA group
4. Any IRC meeting is considered an SAA group
5. Any VOIP meeting is considered an SAA group

Provided these meeting categories meet the other criteria listed in the same Subparagraph.

- **2012 Convention:** Motion approved that requested city be chosen as the site for the 2012 convention with specific hotel arrangements to be decided later.
- **Employee Mileage Reimbursement:** Motion approved that the Board approves a mileage reimbursement at the current federal rate when an employee uses their personal vehicle for business errands.
- **New At-Large Board Member:** Motion approved that the Board nominates an at-large member from the OOC; John F.
- **New At-Large Literature Committee Members:** Motion approved that the Board nominate Shira K., Jim M., and Cecilia P. for election by the conference delegates as at-large Literature Committee members.
- **Literature Committee Delegate Survey:** Motion approved that the Literature Committee be allowed to pass out a survey to the delegates at the delegate meeting on 05/21/09.
- **Director of Operations Evaluation:** Motion approved that the Board approve the evaluation form (presented at meeting) for the position of Director of Operations, which evaluation would be conducted by the supervisory authority of the standing Finance and Operations Committee.
- **DAC Issue:** Motion approved that the second directive of the DAC ("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") be transferred to the Board's internal committee on Policy.
- **2010 Registration Fees:** Motion approved that the fees for convention registration and delegate registration for the 2010 convention be changed (as presented at Board meeting).

The following actions were taken by the Board of Trustees on Sunday, May 24, 2009

- **Elections of New Board Positions:** ISO Chair: Eric M., ISO Secretary: Michelle C., ISO Treasurer: John F., ISO Vice Chair: Ken S., ISO Vice Secretary: Chris X.
- **Appointments of Standing Committee Chairs:** Fellowship Committee: Staci S., Policy Committee: Wharton S., Finance and Operations Committee: Ken S.
- **Appointments of Focus and Literature Committee Liaisons:** Online Presence Committee (OPCom) Liaison: Eric M, Online Presence Committee (Second Voting Member): Doug C, International Development Committee (IDC) Liaison: Chris X., Prisoner Outreach Committee Liaison: Rick I., Intergroup Communications Committee Liaison: Wharton S., General Outreach Committee Liaison: Staci S., Women's Outreach Committee Liaison: Michelle C., Interfellowship Relations Committee Liaison: Arthur B., Fund-raising Committee Liaison: Bill I., Disclosure Advisory Committee Liaison: Byron W., Literature Committee Liaison: Ken S.
- **Monthly Board Schedule:** Motion approved that the Board adopt a monthly schedule of telephone conferences with the Chair limiting discussion to 2 hours.
- **The New Intergroup Guide:** Motion approved that the Board authorize the office to print the Intergroup Guide and sell it at this convention for the same price as the Group Guide.
- **Welcome Packet to the Board:** Motion approved that the Board print and distribute the Welcome Packet to new Board members and alternates immediately (at the Convention).
- **Disqualification from Board Service:** Board members and alternates were notified of the previous Board's decision to disqualify a named member of the fellowship from International Service for one year until re-admitted on their written request to the Board, following an incident in which the Code of Conduct was breached. Liaisons were asked to notify committees as required. Tim E. will file a report. (Others were absent during this item.)
- **Mid-Year Face-to-Face Board Meeting:** Following a successful mid-year meeting of Board Members facilitated by an experienced AA member at the office in Houston from Friday to Sunday in the first week of December 2007, Eric M. will investigate logistics for a similar visit this year including costs for Board members only, for

alternates also, and for Literature Committee.

- **2009 – 2010 Teleconference Schedule:** Motion approved that Board meetings will be held by telephone conference on the third Saturday of each month from 10:00 to 12:00 CST.

Delegate Meeting Actions

The following actions were taken by the Delegates at the Friday-Saturday, Delegate Meeting.

- **2009-2010 Budget:** Motion approved to accept the 2009-2010 Budget as presented by Don K., Treasurer.
- **Elections of At-Large Board/Literature Committee Members:** the following members were elected: At-Large Board member: Chris X., At-Large OOC/Board Committee member: John F., At-Large Literature Committee member: Shira K., At-Large Literature Committee member: Jim M., At-Large Literature Committee member: Cecilia P.
- **Newsletter Title:** Motion approved to change the reference to the newsletter in Article V, Section 8 of the Bylaws from 'The Plain Brown Rapper' to 'The Outer Circle.'
- **Bylaw Amendment:** Motion approved to amend the By-laws of the ISO of SAA, Inc., by inserting the following language to Article V, under a new Section 9: "SAA literature shall be designated as Conference Approved upon submission by the ISO Literature Committee and affirmative vote of two-thirds of the certified delegates at a regular annual meeting (international convention) of the Fellowship. Conference Approved literature may be revised and submitted for re-approval only by the ISO Literature Committee."
- **Fundraising Plan:** Motion approved that the Board creates and adopts a strategic fundraising plan for the next 2 years following the current fiscal year.
- **Confidentiality Limit Explanations:** Motion approved that the ISO Board will support clear explanations of any limits to confidentiality where they exist.
- **Financial Audits:** Motion approved that the ISO of SAA, Inc. engage a CPA firm, not associated with any member of SAA, for a financial audit every four years beginning with fiscal year 2009-2010.

ISO Literature Committee Report from Oakland

The ISO Literature Committee (LitCom) ended a productive service year with face-to-face meetings for two days preceding the delegate meeting and convention in Oakland, California. All of the regional representatives and most of the alternates were in attendance.

Certainly a high point for literature was introduction of the new pocket version of the SAA book, *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, which contains the first ninety-eight pages of the regular-size book. The text for each page in the regular version is spread over two pages in the pocket version, so that the font size is readable and the page numbers are the same in both versions. The convention bookstore sold all of the copies they had onsite, but it is now available through the SAA Store for \$9.00 a copy plus shipping and handling. Without a logo or title on the cover, this handy little book can be carried easily in a pocket or purse and read discreetly in public places.

Another significant event at the convention was completion of a test recording of the Women's Outreach pamphlet. Based on the response to this first-of-a-kind recording, the LitCom will consider the feasibility of making other pamphlets and the SAA book available in audio versions.

The LitCom approved under concurrent review/distribution the new Intergroup Guide developed by the Intergroup Communications Committee of the Board of Trustees. Persons interested in organizing a new Intergroup or in learning more about how other intergroups operate may obtain copies from the ISO office.

On Sunday morning, the LitCom presented a workshop on writing entries to be considered for the new SAA meditation book. The response was excellent. For the coming service year, the meditation book work group is planning a busy schedule of activities designed to move this project forward as quickly as possible. If interested in participating, please see the announcement elsewhere in this issue or on the SAA website.

Later on Sunday, another workshop encouraged fellowship-wide participation in LitCom projects. After a brief introduction, the session divided into three working groups focused on 1) the ongoing editorial review of the SAA book, 2) a new plan for review of convention recordings, and 3) the development of one or more pamphlets about sponsorship.

In the coming year, the LitCom anticipates completion and final approval of three important pieces – the SAA Group Guide, the SAA basic outreach pamphlet (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*), and the LitCom Handbook. Other active projects include initial review of a new pamphlet on retaining the woman newcomer and continuing work on a pamphlet to welcome sex offenders who are sex addicts, as well as development of plans for translation of SAA literature into French and for systematic review of previously approved pamphlets and booklets. Consideration is being given to coupling the latter with an effort to redesign the pamphlets to be more attractive in appearance. In addition, the LitCom anticipates receiving multiple new pieces for consideration from Board committees, as well as from a newly formed authors work group and from other members of the fellowship at large.

If you would like to participate in the development or review of SAA literature, please join a work group in your area of interest. You may call the ISO office or email a statement of interest to your regional representative at the address given elsewhere in this issue. Participation by non-LitCom members is encouraged.

In grateful service,
ISO Literature Committee

SAA Literature Terminology

To clarify the terminology used with respect to SAA literature, the ISO Literature Committee (LitCom) offers the following definitions and explanations:

- **SAA literature** is an informal term describing all literature copyrighted and published by the ISO of SAA, Inc.
- Official designations:
 - **ISO Literature Committee Approved** indicates approval by the LitCom for publication by the ISO. These publications are copyrighted by the ISO and carry the SAA logo.
 - **ISO Literature Committee Approved under Concurrent Review/Distribution** indicates material that has received initial review by the LitCom and has been released for distribution to members of the fellowship while more in-depth review by the LitCom continues. Typically, these documents have been generated within the

ISO and submitted with a request for immediate distribution to meet an urgent need or provide time-sensitive information.

- **ISO Conference Approved** indicates the added endorsement of the delegates voting at an international convention. The ISO Bylaws, as amended at the 2009 convention, stipulate that a two-thirds majority of the voting delegates is required to confer this highest level of approval on a piece of literature.
- **Outside literature approved for sale** designates literature published by entities other than the ISO but approved by the Board of Trustees for sale by the SAA Bookstore. By definition, these publications fall outside the supervisory authority of the LitCom.
- **SAA Green Book** is suggested as the preferred informal term referring to the book entitled *Sex Addicts Anonymous*. The term “basic text” is not an official designation and, if used in informal speech, should not be capitalized.

Use of the following terms is strongly discouraged, as they lack precise meaning and may be misleading or confusing:

- **ISO-approved literature** is imprecise, since the ISO as an entity does not approve literature. The LitCom approves; the ISO publishes.
- **SAA-approved literature** is unclear, since the SAA fellowship as a whole does not approve literature. The LitCom is given that responsibility. SAA literature, as noted above, is the preferred informal term.
- **Non-SAA approved** is ambiguous. The LitCom does not have authority to approve literature published by outside entities.
- **Non-approved literature** is meaningless. The ISO does not publish any pieces that have not received LitCom approval, and the LitCom does not have authority to approve or disapprove outside literature.

If you have questions about these terms, please email the LitCom at:

litcom@saa-litcom.org

Do you have a personal story to tell?

The ISO Literature Committee continues to accept personal stories for consideration for future editions of the SAA book, *Sex Addicts Anonymous*.

Guidelines for Submission of a Personal Story

Stories in the SAA book, *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, are an intensely personal way to help carry the SAA message to the addict who still suffers. While there are no absolute requirements for the content of a personal story, the Literature Committee recommends that a story describe:

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

It is recommended that a story emphasize the experience, strength, and hope found in SAA recovery. It is further recommended that the writer disclose his or her length of sobriety (or abstinence from addictive behaviors).

Personal stories are intended to help carry the message to the addict who still suffers. As much as possible, highly explicit descriptions of places, people, or acting out behaviors should be avoided. The best stories provide sobering details of unmanageability contrasted with the hope of recovery from sex addiction.

The preferred format for manuscripts is double-spaced with one-inch margins on all four sides in MS Word (or similar). Each submission must be accompanied by a signed release conveying ownership to the ISO of SAA, Inc. The release form is available in this newsletter or from the ISO office or SAA website (www.saa-recovery.org).

Submissions and a signed release form may be emailed as attachments to the ISO Literature Committee at info@saa-recovery.org.

They may also be sent in hard copy by postal mail to the ISO Literature Committee at ISO of SAA, PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270.

IMPORTANT

Please carefully read the following before submitting a story:

Every story submitted for possible inclusion in the SAA book will be thoroughly reviewed and given in-depth consideration by the ISO Literature Committee, which is deeply grateful to every member who takes the time to write and submit a story.

The ISO of SAA, Inc. and the ISO Literature Committee do not guarantee that any particular story will appear in a future edition of the SAA book. Once submitted with a signed release form, the written story becomes the permanent property of the ISO of SAA, Inc., and may be edited or modified as deemed appropriate by the ISO Literature Committee.

Please also note that, while the ISO Literature Committee will acknowledge the initial receipt of a story, the ISO may or may not communicate further with the author about the suitability of the story or the likelihood of publication in *Sex Addicts Anonymous*.

OPINION POLL / SURVEY

The ISO Literature Committee continues to seek feedback on *Sex Addicts Anonymous*

A opinion poll/survey on the SAA Green Book, *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, is available to all SAA members through September 1, 2009, on the SAA website or from the ISO office. Your thoughts are important to the LitCom, as we make decisions about future editions of the book and as we prepare the book for conference approval.

Let us know what you think!



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

ISO Literature Committee Guidelines for submission of entries to be considered for the SAA Meditation Book

The ISO Literature Committee welcomes submission of entries from the fellowship-at-large for possible inclusion in the SAA Meditation Book. The Meditation Book will consist of 366 entries, one for each day of the calendar year.

To ensure consideration, submissions should follow these guidelines:

A short quotation should be taken from SAA publications that are Literature Committee approved or Conference approved (see list below). The quote must be exact and followed by a citation that includes the name of the publication and page number, using the following style: *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, p.20. Submissions using quotes from other sources will not be considered.

The main body of the entry should be a thought-provoking expansion of the topic or principle expressed in the quotation, ideally including some fresh perspective on a particular aspect of SAA recovery from your own experience, strength and hope.

At the bottom of the page, a concise statement in the author's own words should summarize the main idea of the meditation or offer a poignant challenge or affirmation.

Each entry should be 200-300 words including the quotation and the closing affirmation, so that each meditation will fit on a single page. Multiple entries may address slightly different aspects of the same subject.

Submissions must include your name and contact information and be accompanied by a signed release. By signing the release, the author grants the ISO of SAA, Inc. sole rights to edit, alter, publish, or reject any submission. A blank release form is available in this newsletter or may be obtained from the ISO office or downloaded and printed from the SAA website.

SAA Literature

Sex Addicts Anonymous (SAA Book)

Abstinence and Boundaries in SAA

First Step to Recovery

Getting Started in Sex Addicts Anonymous

Sex Addicts Anonymous (SAA Pamphlet)

Sexual Sobriety and the Internet

A Special Welcome to the Woman Newcomer

Abstinence

The Bubble

From Shame to Grace

Group Guide

Tools of Recovery

Three Circles

**Send your meditation, contact information,
and signed release form to the ISO.**
(release form is located on the last page of this newsletter)

Send by postal mail to:

ISO
PO Box 70949
Houston, TX 77270

OR

Scan and email to:

meditation@saa-recovery.org

**You will be sent confirmation that your
submission has been received.**

Interested in helping with the SAA Meditation Book?

Yes, you can write meditations for the new book!
Are you not quite sure how?

Come to one of the LitCom teleconference workshops
to learn how to write a meditation.

These teleconferences will be based on the workshop
presented at the Oakland convention.

Learn step-by-step what is involved,
and practice writing a meditation during the workshop.

Please join us at one of these times
for an hour and a half of creative service.

Meditation Writing Teleconference Workshops

Sunday July 26 -- 5:00 p.m. CT

Sunday September 27, -- 5:00 p.m. CT

Sunday November 22, -- 5:00 p.m. CT

**The workshop is free, but you need to
make reservations to get the call-in number.**

Please call the ISO office at 713-869-4902 or 800-477-8191
or send an email to:

meditation@saa-recovery.org

ISO Income/Expense Summary

As of May 31, 2009

	May 2009	Monthly Average	Year to Date
INCOME			
Sales	17,336	16,021	80,105
Shipping & Handling	1,522	1,518	7,592
Donations	12,377	17,281	86,403
Delegate Meeting Registration	6,650	1,517	7,585
Interest Earned	8	320	1,598
2009 Convention Revenue	45,614	20,145	100,724
TOTAL INCOME	83,507	56,801	284,007
COST OF GOODS SOLD			
Cost Of Goods Sold	8,615	8,797	43,986
TOTAL COST OF GOODS SOLD	8,615	8,797	43,986
GROSS PROFIT	74,891	48,004	240,021
EXPENSE			
Wages	13,871	12,097	60,483
Employee Benefits (Not Wages)	1,319	1,197	5,983
Payroll Taxes	1,090	946	4,729
Insurance	229	340	1,698
Depreciation	175	175	875
Postage/Shipping	42	24	118
Software	1,096	219	1,096
Communications	414	353	1,767
Office Expense	90	316	1,579
Occupancy Expenses	1,238	1,865	9,326
Board/Committee Expense	1,688	1,545	7,726
The Outer Circle	1,828	1,195	5,976
Financial Charges	1,301	1,216	6,080
Bad Debts/Refunds	2	75	374
Delegate Meeting	664	310	1,552
Convention Related Travel	5,259	1,052	5,259
2009 Convention	61,076	15,224	76,122
TOTAL EXPENSE	91,384	38,149	190,744
NET INCOME	-16,492	9,855	49,277

Financial Results for May, 2009

May showed a net deficit of \$16,492 dollars. When Convention income and expenses are removed from the profit and loss statement, our net income ends up with a deficit of \$31,953 dollars.

Below are significant activities during the month:

1. We sold over 350 pocket edition SAA books at the convention.
2. Our 7th Tradition at the convention raised \$8,875.00 and we received ten new Lifeline Partners.
3. The 2009 International Convention set a new attendance record of 427 members.
4. We sold 143 books through our book distributor, HCI. We have sold over one hundred books per month through HCI for the last six months.

Our product inventory is valued at \$51,531.72.

Sales increased by \$2,583.94 and donations decreased by \$578.00 from the prior month.

Expenses were over budget by \$44,163.59. This was due to the hotel convention expenses being booked in May even though they had been budgeted to be booked in June.

The amount of funds raised at the 2009 International Convention has not been determined because all the expenses by the hotel have not been submitted.

We funded our reserve accounts, which increased the fund by \$4,147.79.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

In Your Service,
Joe H.
Director of Operations
director@saa-iso.org

[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, all. As I anticipated, I was not able to attend this year's convention in Oakland because of a conflict with my job that landed me in Milwaukee instead. I certainly enjoyed being in Milwaukee. The day I arrived, April 28, it was still quite cold there, bordering on freezing, but nevertheless I got out and started exploring as soon as I could. I was reminded of how I was originally supposed to be in Milwaukee on January 2 and how I probably wouldn't have been walking around town if that indeed had been the day I had arrived.

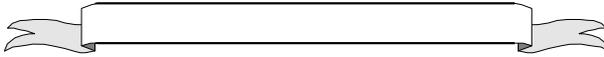
The hotel where we were staying was only some six blocks away from Lake Michigan so I made a point of getting down there that very first day. That makes three of the Great Lakes that I have managed to visit during my lifetime. Back in 1957 my family visited Ontario, Canada, including Toronto, so I saw Lake Ontario. Then in 1977 I was in Cleveland to attend a conference and deliver a paper for it, so I saw Lake Erie. Now in 2009, skipping over Lake Huron, I have managed to see Lake Michigan, five or six times actually. So I only have two more Great Lakes to go, although at the rate I am going, I will have to stick around for another seventy years or so!

Things began to wind down for me in Milwaukee the Tuesday before the convention started, and I was on my way back to Houston on the Friday evening that the convention did start (and many thanks to the ISO employee who stayed at the house for me and took care of the cats for the three-and-a-half weeks that I was away; I couldn't have done it without you). As much as I enjoyed my time there, I'm very sad that I missed the convention this year. This is only the second convention I have missed since 1995, the first time being in 2005 when another job conflict caused me to be in Ft. Lauderdale rather than in New Orleans.

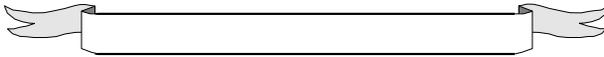
I am happy to hear, however, that the convention was successful and well-attended. At this point I am not aware of any job conflicts or even potential job conflicts that could interfere with my being at next year's convention, so I'm looking forward to catching up with my brothers and sisters in recovery at that time.

As is the case with every convention, it is the time of year when the terms of some Board and LitCom members come to an end, and so sev-

eral members have stepped down to be replaced by new ones. As always, *The Outer Circle* publishes a list of the members and alternates broken down by regions, so you may want to check to see who your representatives are for the next year. I certainly encourage you to be in touch with your representatives about any matters that concern you.



**This idea is to have
a suggested topic
that a couple
of articles in
each issue of
The Outer Circle
could address.**



The Outer Circle is implementing a couple of content-related changes. One we have tried in the recent past, and we are looking forward to making it a regular feature; that is a regular Letters to the Editor column. I am very interested in hearing what you think about the articles and other material that appears in *The Outer Circle*, and I invite you to write and let us know what you think. We have recently had a couple of articles that have inspired responses disagreeing with what the original authors wrote, and what I am really looking for is more along those lines. Your letters don't by any means necessarily need to differ with what you have read, or even be in great detail. There may be something in an article that particularly spoke to you, and if that is the case, then I would like to be able to pass your experience, strength and hope on to our readership.

The other change I am particularly excited about, having seen it work very well in the periodic publications of some other twelve-step programs. This idea is to have a suggested topic that a couple of articles in each issue of *The Outer Circle* could address. We do of course already have our standing suggested topic of articles related to the steps and traditions, so that the January/February issue has articles on Steps and Traditions One and Two, the March/April issue has articles on

Steps and Traditions Three and Four, and so forth, and I am planning to have these standard topics given more publicity in future issues. So for September/October, the steps and traditions to keep in mind are Nine and Ten, and for November/December they are Eleven and Twelve.

In order to give you some time to think about the topics, and also to give me some time to read your articles, we will begin this process with the November/December issue. The articles will always be due by the 5th day of the second month prior to the first of the two months listed on the cover of the publication, which means that the due date for articles for November/December is September 5.

The topic for November/December is “practicing these principles in our lives.” What I’m looking for here is articles that talk about how you have applied program principles in areas of your life that don’t directly relate to the SAA program. For example, you might write on taking a tenth step with a friend, co-worker or significant other; in other words, with somebody who may not be in SAA or any other twelve-step program.

The topic for January/February (due November 5) is “in and out of the bubble.” I confess that I picked this topic in part because the whole idea of the bubble seems to me to be so open to varying interpretations. For example (and your article doesn’t have to follow this schema): What was the bubble to you? Did you know when you were in it, and if so, how? What are the things that you are doing in your program now to help assure that you don’t wind back up in the bubble? This last question of course relates back to something I request on a regular basis which is that the articles should focus more on the solution than on the problem.

The topic for March/April (due January 5) is “acceptance.” This is a little more open-ended. So you might want to write about how you finally came to accept that you were a sex addict. Or it could be how you gradually came to accept a certain thing in your life that you had been resisting. It could even be as specific as sharing about a spiritual experience you have had that helped you in the area of acceptance. As I said, this topic is a little more open, so what does acceptance mean to you and what role has it played in your life?

As time goes on, I will continue to come up with topics. Or you may have a topic you would like to see written about. You can submit your articles and your suggested topics to me at toc@saa-recovery.org.

So I will close for now and I look forward to seeing you in the next issue of The Outer Circle. And I especially look forward to seeing you at next year’s convention!

Stepping up to Service in Oakland

By Shira K.

The night before I left for the Bay Area to attend my fourth ISO convention, I got on my knees to speak to God. I thought for a moment about what to ask for. I notice that as I move through my sixth year of sobriety, my prayers have changed. I ask for less specific things; mostly I pray for strength, guidance, courage, and of course God's will for me and the power to carry it out.

On that Monday night, three weeks ago, however, I asked God to help me separate my business from "Not my business." I asked God to help me keep my nose where it should be. I concluded my prayer with "Please God: No drama this year." I stayed on my knees for a few minutes, long enough to hear the small still voice within me saying "That's really up to me, isn't it?"

The drama of my own creation began with me arriving at the airport five minutes too late to check my bag. (Traffic jam on 826, yadda yadda yadda.) Two years into my sobriety, I would have yelled and screamed at the check-in lady, conveniently ignoring my own part in this scenario. But now I'm five-and-a-half, and I sponsor other people who may look up to me from time to time, and I really try to behave as though a sponsee had a video camera on me when I get into situations like that. I try to move through the world as though God and my sponsees were watching me on YouTube.

So I took a deep breath and asked what my options were. The lady re-routed my luggage through Dallas, and told me it would arrive in San Francisco three hours after I would. I realized that my tardiness had not only caused strife for myself, but also for this ticket agent. I apologized for the extra work I had made for her. (When we were wrong, PROMPTLY admitted it).

I reminded myself that running late is in my middle circle, a sign that my life is starting to spin out of control, and asked God to take me back to my Outer Circle. He did, and I grabbed a very sober financial newspaper to read on the plane. I prayed for a safe journey (when traveling, the Eleventh step is like an I.V. for me, keeping me hydrated and sober).

We arrived safely in San Francisco six hours later. I hung out on the phone and returned the six newcomer phone calls I'd gotten in the few days prior (women's outreach list—gotta love it). It was a luxury to be able to give them each a good 40 minutes of focused attention. I had a \$17 latte, and my bag arrived.

When I got to the hotel, I changed and went for a run around Lake Merritt (outer circle is a GREAT place to hang out), and felt grateful to the convention committee for finding a hotel so close to such a beautiful run. The hotel staff was so gracious and kind as well. Thank you, convention committee!!

LitCom (which I'm also grateful to be on) went out *en masse* to a fantastic and inexpensive Chinese restaurant that had something called "Clay pot fish" which was stellar. When LitCom gets together, we seem to talk about three things: LitCom business, Recovery, and Food. The latter, I'm aware, is an outside issue, but you know, it is what it is. LitCom likes food.

I roomed with my awesome sober friend Michelle, who's the board rep for the South Pacific region. Sober people are cool to room with because they have boundaries. They don't use all the towels or play the TV too loud when you're trying to sleep, AND they leave you half of the swanky shower gel.

The first night, we hardly got any sleep at all, because there were very loud guests in the next room who preferred to have a party rather than sleep. We called the front desk several times, and they sent security, but to no avail. Again, I'm grateful for my sobriety which prevented me from yelling or acting jerky. I just calmly asked them to see if they could solve the problem. The next day, the hotel sent a fantastic huge basket of treats up to our room, and an apology letter. Recovery brings lots of gifts. Sometimes they come in baskets and have Cheese Puffs.

LitCom spent two full days, Wednesday and Thursday, in meetings from 9 to 6. We got lots of stuff done and sorted out, which I think LitCom Chair Jim L. will write about in his article. One of my favorite things we did was vote on a sticker that will be on all the CDs we sell from the convention, explaining that the views expressed in the workshop are not necessarily the views of the ISO. I liked that because I have, in past years, attended a lot of workshops, some of which had a lot of conversation about a lot of outside issues that we are officially to have no opinion about. I was honored and humbled to be a part of it.

I love the way we get things done in international service work. When I've had the honor to work on committees with other people who work awesome programs, service is a really elating experience.

Here's what I love the most: We'll all start out with a problem that none of us has the answer to. Then we'll all express our opinions, and our experience around the issue at hand. And what's really cool is that no one seems to have their heels dug in the ground; everyone really LISTENS to everyone else's opinion, with their ears and their hearts, and

NOT THEIR EGOS. Then the magic happens: we all seem to massage the issue into a solution that everyone feels good about. THAT is true group conscience. It's not about one person stating and re-stating their opinion and everyone either opposing or agreeing. It's not about the best orator "winning." It's about everyone listening to everyone else. I've done so many 180-degree turnarounds in service work when I listen to people whose recovery I admire. And it feels great!

The delegate meeting on Friday was as drama-free as I've ever seen. I think the calm demeanor of the chair and the board helped to set a no-drama tone for the rest of the room.

I was grateful to be given another year to serve on the Literature Committee as an at-large member.

I hung out a lot in the Women's Outreach room, which had a quiet serene energy, and was a nice place to get centered and talk with other women in recovery. I went to a lot of great workshops, and made it to and around Lake Merritt every day I was there.

Here are my convention highlights: 1) Walking around Lake Merritt with a sponsee who was attending the convention, explaining to her the history of the Women's Outreach list and Dear Grace and the Women's Outreach Room. 2) Having an absolutely decadent breakfast with Staci and Michelle before the delegate meeting on Friday, and just hanging out and being with awesome sober women doing service and eating waffles. 3) Hanging out in the women's outreach room eating In and Out burgers that Kathy and Michelle went out to get for all of us. Wow! Now I know what all the fuss was about. That's a good burger. 4.) I asked someone who I've looked up to for years if she would agree to sponsor me, and she said she would. So now I have a new sponsor, and I'm going through the steps again. What a gift. I can't even describe how amazing it is.

As far as what I would change, it's just me. (I've always thought the "change the things I can" is really just ourselves.) I was up each night until 1 a.m., having volunteered to be a trusted servant for the meetings in the women's outreach room at 10 pm, talking to newcomers and reaching out to old-timers who were having issues. And sometimes the old-timer having issues was I. The result was six consecutive nights of insufficient rest. The improvement was that I got an hour of great exercise each day, whereas I had not been able to do this for myself at prior years' conventions. Next year, I'd like to take better care of myself in terms of sleep. Next year I think the prayer will be, "God grant me the serenity to do better self-care."

Going to a Convention

by Randy W.

[Editor's Note: I received this contribution prior to the recent convention in Oakland.]

I have been to six conventions. It is one of the gifts of the program. Of course I was nervous at my first one...who knew what it would be like... who knew?

A year ago today I almost died. I was taken to the hospital and they told my friend to call my next of kin. My partner of five-and-a-half years rushed to my side. This man would never have been in my life if I did not have my sobriety. My best friend, who is also in the program, sent out an e-mail; from that time on I was never alone.

Eleven years ago I was suicidal and had few friends. I was acting out on a daily basis. I went to my first meeting in January of 1998. I have always searched for community, but never really found one until I got into SAA. We are a community because our lives depend on each other.

Going to a convention is an opportunity to see the larger SAA family. People come from all over the world to gather for a weekend that is like no other. This next convention will be my seventh; I have always been a delegate. I am sure there are those who might think we are crazy to want to be in a day-and-a-half business meeting, but there is something about doing the business of the whole fellowship that is so powerful. Watching a group of one hundred fifty-plus people come to a consensus is a magically spiritual experience.

Listening to speakers share their experience, strength and hope in front of four hundred people is phenomenal. I look forward the most to the Sunday night LGBT Memorial candlelight meeting that is open to everyone. People come in and out and share as much as they need to, and the meeting goes on and on, until there is no one there.

There are many people that I only see once a year and I feel deeply bonded to them. I hope to meet you at next year's convention.

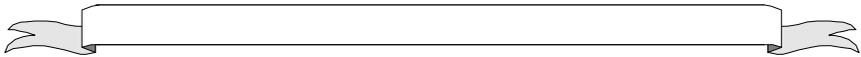


Remembrance

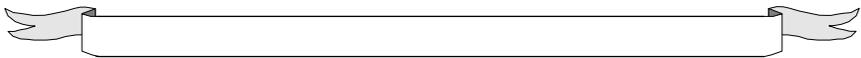
by John L.

It is with profound sadness that I would like to let everyone know that Paul S., one of the very early members of S.A.A., died on Saturday February 27, 2009. I believe his passing should be noted. While I do not believe that Paul was a member of the original founding group, and cannot claim with any certainty that he was one of the first twenty-five, I believe he was one of the first one hundred. He was certainly one of the early mainstays of SAA, at least to me.

When I attended my first meeting in May 1981, Paul was already there. As I recall, there were only three meetings at that time. We didn't even have a name yet. We were just three groups of people meeting and trying to solve our common problems. Many of us were discovering, for the first time ever, that we were truly not alone.



*While his feedback at meetings
could be hard to hear, he was never
more challenging to others than
he was to himself.*



I was painfully shy, terrified and certain that I would never fit in anywhere. Although all my brothers (there were no women in that group) were compassionate, Paul was one of the first to reach out to me. At one of my first meetings I must have mentioned that either my girlfriend or I needed a car. The next week, Paul took me outside the church and offered to sell me his. He then took me on a complete tour of the car, including all of its strengths and its flaws. While I did not buy the car, I was impressed with Paul's honesty and directness. I mean, seriously, what seller tells a prospective buyer how much oil the car burns?

I learned quickly that a commitment to honesty was one of Paul's trademarks, especially as it applied to his own program. While his feedback at meetings could be hard to hear, he was never more challenging to others than he was to himself. One of my strongest memories from those days was the night Paul came and announced he had "slipped" during the week. He had just had an anniversary a week or

two before and had brought a cake to the meeting that his wife had baked. When he described how he had slipped, most of us felt he was being too hard on himself, and told him so, but Paul did not budge. He wanted the promises; he wanted to be happy, joyous and free; and he wanted his sobriety to be clean. I desperately wanted what he had.

It should come as no surprise that when the group, after I completed my first step, recommended that I choose a sponsor, Paul was at the top of my list. One sponsor was not enough for me, of course. I wanted to recover right now! I was due to start law school in three months and had to be "fixed" by then. I chose three sponsors. Paul was one of them. In retrospect, that decision to choose three sponsors, although made for all the wrong reasons, was one of the best I ever made.

Each of my sponsors gave me something different. From Paul it was gentle, loving honesty that forgave me all my mistakes, as well as the example he set which helped me see the way forward. He never judged or berated me and he never held back from me. As I shared my struggles with him, he shared his with me. Watching him deal with those struggles directly and honestly gave me courage to face mine the same way. When it came time several months (and one serious relapse) later to admit I was not ready to leave to go to school, one of the reassuring voices I heard in my head as I called the school to ask for a deferred admission was Paul's.

As time went by, I began to build sobriety. Paul was right there with me, supporting me and setting an example for me to follow. I did not know then how lucky I was. I had three of the best sponsors anyone could ask for. When I decided a year later that I was ready to go to school, I was sad and frightened by the prospect of leaving them behind.

The next few years were hard. There were no sex addiction meetings of any kind in the state to which I moved. I was certain that I was to be the Bill W. of that state, opening the way for what I thought would be throngs of people who needed and wanted the program. It did not work out exactly that way. I shared at open meetings of other programs. I spoke to therapists and counselors. I held meetings in my apartment. I was a guest speaker at a meeting of Sex Therapists. I even appeared (with my identity hidden) on a local cable TV show focused on emotional health issues. While most people responded kindly, I heard my share of bad (and unrepeatable) jokes. When things got bad, Paul's courage was one of the things I remembered that kept me moving forward.

When a group for recovering sex addicts did get started, it was through

no doing of my own, and my already bruised ego broke. I began to lose faith in and contact with my higher power. I was already experiencing relapses and now I began not to care. I would have quit then, but the memory of what I learned from Paul, his quiet patient voice echoing in my thoughts, was a large part of the reason I didn't. Instead, I kept coming back, and coming back, and coming back. I kept talking about my struggles, working the steps, calling people on the phone list and, inspired by Paul's unwillingness to deceive himself, began looking at the role my own ego had played in every setback I had faced. The path between to higher power began to reopen.

Twelve years after I left, I came back to my home state. I was living in a new community and I had lost touch with my old group members. I lived in a small town that was fairly remote from my old community, but now it was 1994. I called the central office and got the contact number for a group in my town. I met with the contact and attended my first meeting – and there was Paul. In the intervening years, he had moved south. Now he was a mainstay of a whole new group.

Paul had not changed much. He was still gentle and strong, but now I got to learn about his other side. He was not only the mentor I remembered, he was also funny and clever and friendly. I was shocked that to the members of my new group, Paul was not the serious fellow focused on the job of getting sober that I remembered. He loved to laugh and (this did not surprise me at all) he was as willing to laugh at himself as at anything else. Tears fill my eyes and there is a lump in my throat as I realize that my higher power brought Paul back into my life to teach me how to laugh again.

As always, he was a terrific teacher. He had had his own struggles with his higher power. As we shared our frustrations and pains, the wall between my higher power and me began to break down again. I started going to retreats in large part because Paul would be there, and I listened hard to everything he said. It was rare when he shared at one of the retreats without touching some part of me and deepening my recovery.

Now he is gone. I know that I and my recovery will go on and that knowing makes me grieve. I wanted him to be in the world always. Paul and I had not had much contact over the past few years, but my heart knew he was there and that was enough. There was still time; plenty of time. Perhaps that is the next lesson he has for me: there is no such thing as "plenty of time."

Whatever the lesson is, wherever I go, any recovery I have, I have because I stand on the shoulders of giants. Paul S. was one of those giants, a true pioneer in sex addiction recovery. He should be remembered. He will be missed.

Step Five

by David S.

“Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.”

First, I found someone I trusted to hear my Fifth Step. An “objective other.” I gave my most recent Fifth Step to my sponsor. The person who heard my Fifth Step had to have nothing at all at stake in the outcome other than my honesty, serenity, and healing. An earlier Fifth Step experience of mine led, eventually, to an acting-out relationship. I learned two lessons from this experience: (1) I had to find a person I trusted with my most intimate life; and (2) I had to avoid anyone who could become an acting-out partner. The vulnerability of sharing this information can create a false sense of emotional/sexual intimacy.

Another aspect of my most recent Fifth Step is that it was part of the natural progression of sharing the information from my Fourth Step. This leads me to my second point: I have to do my Fourth Step or I have no Fifth Step to share.

My Fourth Step work was my first real experience with doing “homework” in recovery. I made a list and I checked it twice. I was honest, thorough and fearless. This is an inventory, not a trial. Once my Fourth Step work was done I was able to share the “exact nature of my wrongs.” This is very important language here: “Exact nature.” This is not a litany of evils, sins, crimes and misdemeanors; it is a shedding of light on the nature of my addictive behaviors, beliefs, and thought processes.

Here are some examples of the “exact nature of my wrongs”: I had an extra-marital affair that began with “phone-flirting,” evolved into phone sex and eventually sexual physical contact. Flirting, phone-sex, and sexual physical contact are not the issues here. They are simply behaviors that can often be, and are now, completely healthy for me. (How? they are based in spiritual, sensual, sexual, emotional intimacies shared with my primary life-partner. That’s how it works for me. It may be different for you).

The exact nature(s) of my wrongs were: (1) dishonesty—lying to my committed partner at the time; (2) fear—I was afraid that this was the only way I could experience sex; (3) self-loathing—I did not deserve a loving, sensual, spiritual, sober sexual relationship; (4) selfishness—I did not connect with the woman with whom I was acting-out on any other level but sex (again, pure sex can be a lovely and beautiful sober experience...under the right circumstances and with the right person., even one’s self). The woman with whom I acted out was seeking a fuller relationship. I wanted to get sexually high.

Another aspect of the Fifth Step is admitting to God, ourselves and another human being.... I already knew the exact nature of my wrongs. I learned about them in my Fourth Step. God already knows; at least the God of my understanding does. God knows everything. That's why He's God and I'm not (but that's another topic). Another human being? The reason for this is simple and very powerful. When I chose the appropriate person to hear my Fifth Step, I learned that I was not the person my disease had convinced me I was. My Fifth Step receiver listened, asked a question here and there, and affirmed me for the work I had done and was continuing to do. In sharing these "exact natures," I was able to enter into an intimate, trusting and conversational relationship with God (I like to think of Step Five as the promise of Step Two coming true). I also learned that another human being can hear all of my deepest, darkest belief systems and thought processes and accept me for who I am (something God already does). In doing so, I am then shining the light in the darkness of my disease. It no longer has secret control over us. I have real, intimate allies.



*Admitted to God, to ourselves
and to another human being the
exact nature of our wrongs.*



The Fifth Step has also shown me, as a sister in recovery shared with me recently, that I can admit all of my defects of character and still be accepted. Accepted by God, by myself, and by another human being.

Now, one of the cool things about my most recent Fifth Step is that I proceeded directly on to my Sixth and Seventh Steps. By the time I was done, I felt as if I had evolved into a new level of my ongoing spiritual awakening. Was I healed? No. Was I perfect? No. Did I slip? Yes. Did I keep coming back? Yes. Did I get better? Yes. Am I still getting better? Yes. Are the steps a destination? No. Are the steps a process? Yes.

And so, I move forward. Surrendering my exact natures, defects of character, shortcomings, and what-have-you, on a daily basis. I am also replacing the old tapes of these exact natures with a new series of tapes: affirmations. I spent so much of my life in the disease-based belief systems and self-talk. I am now more intentional about affirming that: I am a loving and lovable child of God. My true name is "Beloved, Child of God." I am capable, I am a good man, I am decent, I am a spiritual/sexual/sensual being, I am evolving.

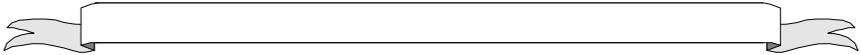
My Story

by Glenn R.

Dear Readers of *The Outer Circle*:

I have been in prison for the past nine years. I was convicted for a sexual offense. I have eleven more years to complete my sentence. Today, an inmate handed me your publication, *The Outer Circle*.

Looking back to being twelve years old, I can see how my sex drive became an escape from the inner turmoil of my home life, the fear of people and deep insecurity. I became obsessed with masturbation that gave me a split-second high that left me in shame. I acted out with boys and girls to find some form of acceptance, as if to feel appreciated. At thirteen years of age, I crossed the line of obsession, pre-meditation, into compulsion, acting out at any opportunity, loss of control.



*I am truly sorry for my past behavior
and, wherever possible,
I have made direct
amends to my victims.
Part of my amends is this letter
to your publication.*



Once, an older man gave me drugs and alcohol and molested me. A year later, an older woman did the same. This opened a pathway to free drugs and sex. This negative attention was my solution to the loneliness I felt. In reality, it only compounded the negative thoughts and feelings already present. I prostituted myself, feeling as though others needed me.

I know now I was a sex addict and drug addict at thirteen years of age—seeking a mood-altering experience or mood-altering substance any chance I could find. I would act out any chance I got. Anything to cover my low self-worth, continuing to compound my problems. In answer to the question, “How in the world could a twelve-year-old have so many emotional and mental problems?,” my answer is that I am a third generation alcoholic/addict.

Turning the clock to age twenty-five, I entered rehab for alcohol/drugs and entered twelve-step programs for those addictions. However, I did not pay much attention to the last part of Step Twelve, "to practice these principles in all our affairs." I became a successful businessman, married, had two children. Within a few years I was starting to act out outside of my marriage. Even though I had admitted my wrongs in a thorough Fourth and Fifth Step, I minimized my sexual acting-out because I believed everyone was sexual, and sought to confirm this belief by the number of people I was sexual with in my lifetime. Male or female, young or old, it did not matter; my delusional thinking believed everyone wanted to be sexual with me.

As I got older, my lustful fantasy stuck to those in their twenties, then late teens. I progressed to mid-teens because, after all, had I not been sexually active in my teens with older people, and had I not found comfort, acceptance, and appreciation from the attention of older people? I told myself I was helping these youngsters out by showing them how easy it was to be sexual, as if I was doing them a favor. I did not entice them with drugs, alcohol, or money—so it must be okay. Absolutely delusional thinking on my part. I realize that this rationalization was a way for the sex addict to protect itself. My sexual addiction was now multiplying itself by feeding other peoples' addictions, thus keeping my addiction alive and spreading the illness to others by introducing sex to the innocent. Young people are so vulnerable, trusting the adult. I abused that trust. I did not know that then, but I do now.

I am truly sorry for my past behavior and, wherever possible, I have made direct amends to my victims. Part of my amends is this letter to your publication. Should you choose to put this into print and it helps one person see the horrors active addiction can be, reinforces one program of recovery, then it has served a purpose in helping another addict's healing process.

I cannot change my past, but today I am able to write my SAA sponsor weekly. I attend another twelve-step program here in prison, and have discovered the importance of practicing the twelve principles in all of my affairs, no matter what it is; alcohol, drugs, gambling, sex, food, work, religion. For those who might not know what the twelve principles are, they are, in order and relation to the twelve steps, (1) honesty, (2) hope, (3) faith, (4) courage, (5) integrity, (6) willingness, (7) humility, (8) love, (9) discipline, (10) perseverance, (11) awareness of God, and (12) service. Putting these into action in my life, one day at a time, is remodeling me into the man, I believe, that God has originally created me to be.

During my last four prison sentences I have become aware of my sexually compulsive acting out. I have the opportunity to awaken the sleep-

ing addiction at any given time. And I wish I could tell you that I claim perfection in recovery, but I cannot. I do, however, claim progress. My sponsor knows everything because I realize any secrets I keep within my soul will only feed the addiction. I am as sick as my secrets, so I do not keep any. I thank God for my sponsor, and my sponsor's sponsor, for they love me still, encourage me and know all too well that no one among us can maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles.

Today I see people as a creation of God. They belong to him; they have souls encased in a body. Before I saw only the body; now I see and respect God's property, the soul. If ever I begin to be intrigued by another person's body, my thoughts of God's creation, the soul, kick into action. I tell myself, God does not want me abusing His creation, others or myself! I ask myself, "Are my thoughts, my words, my actions, pleasing to you, God?" And, being sober, I know the answer and act accordingly. Through the third and eleventh step my loneliness leaves. Having a conscious contact with God keeps me in the present moment, and the present is right here, right now, this very split second of a breath. Not resenting the past, not experiencing anxiety over the future, but living right now in God's hands.

Five years ago I shared my story with a new arrival in prison. Five years later, he handed me your publication. I was moved to tears to see his personal growth.

I started an SAA meeting here in prison, with the help of the chaplain. That meeting served a purpose for a couple of years until the new administration discontinued it. Denial will always help hype the defects that keep feeding the addiction. Strange, we live in a society that is so uncomfortable with openly discussing sex, yet we are all sexual. We would hardly be human if we were not.

Meanwhile my two children are growing. They are healing with forgiveness. They have written and visited a few times. Many tears have stained our pillows at night. That's a fact; active addiction not only destroys the person, but the immediate family and society as a whole.

Once coming into acceptance of the first step, there is no excuse for turning back from whence I came. We have a loving, caring, understanding, educated fellowship that supports us individually. Meetings, sponsors, literature, tapes, phone numbers and all. No more loneliness. A loving God is present. If I just pray and ask, he will contact me.

Progress. Thank you, SAA members, for extending your hope to me. Thank you for *The Outer Circle*. If you choose to publish this letter, in its entirety or edited, and it helps another, then it serves a purpose.

In Solitude Is the Solution

by Anonymous

GOD, quiet my soul and spirit...

Give, as you always do, but I sometimes don't see, what you know that I need.

I need continuously and consciously to concede to You as the answer to my all and all – for within You are all my answers.

In this search for recovery – the path winds, the temptations come, the friends may fail, but in daily surrender of my will to this process of understanding the underlying reasons (which really don't even need to be known) – I found that working the steps, having a sponsor, being accountable and becoming real within the denial of the disease; a breakthrough happened inside of this used-to-be shell of existence.

I found that, once I became comfortable in my own skin, it really began the process of discovery within. I didn't have to pretend any more, I wasn't putting up façades or masks with people, I wasn't trying to be something I wasn't, and I could begin to be the me that I believed GOD really wanted me to be.



A Recovery Choice: Dishonesty or Honesty? by Scott W.

After a recent slip/relapse, my sponsor gave me an assignment around being honest with him and others. This is what I came up with.

Dishonesty played a major role in my relapse. Therefore, I went back to the SAA Basic Text and the AA Big Book to help me see how insane being dishonest in recovery really is. Here is what I found out:

Our Basic Text states: "As long as we can be honest, even a little bit, we can move forward in our recovery. Honesty is the foundation in which further progress is based." (pg. 23). "By practicing rigorous honesty and giving up the dream of overcoming our addiction by ourselves, we become open to the spiritual solution offered by the twelve steps." (pg. 25). "And the more we denied our addiction and its consequences, the less we were in touch with reality...to be restored to sanity is to rediscover the spiritual nature we have always had, but which was hidden by the insanity of our disease" (pg 26). "Rigorous Honesty is one of the essential principles on which our program is based. Without honesty, we do not stay 'sober.' We live in faith that God's care is enough for us and that we don't need to be dishonest to survive" (pg. 63).



*Each day I am either working on recovery
or working on relapse.*



Furthermore, the AA Big Book states: "Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program. Usually men and women who are constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves" (pg 58). Well, by doing an inventory I discovered that I am not "constitutionally incapable of being honest with myself." Whether or not to be honest is my choice.

Each day I am either working on recovery or working on relapse. Dishonesty, for me, feeds my addict, that "dark dog" within me. Honesty, on the other hand, feeds my sober self, the "golden dog" within me. So, by being dishonest, by feeding the dark dog, I am working toward relapse. It's just a matter of time before I act out, going into my inner circle.

Further inventory revealed that dishonesty helps me justify and rationalize my behavior. It keeps me in denial of my addiction. It helps me lead a double life, even in recovery, a double life I so successfully led in my addiction, a double life that has no business in contented recovery. Dishonesty helps

me pursue my selfish ends. It keeps people away. Dishonesty is an insanity to contented sobriety.

What would my life look like if I decided to let go of my dishonest behavior? Simply put, honesty leads to my life being an open book to those who matter to me and whom I decide to let in; friendships and relationships are stronger and more intimate. By giving myself completely to the program, I am honest, I am turning to a Higher Power to restore my sanity, which is tainted by being dishonest.

Honesty helps me seek out, find, and hang around those people who matter to me, those people that I need to help me in my recovery efforts. A quote by Dr. Seuss has helped me through some tough times: "Be who you are, say what you feel, because those that mind don't matter and those that matter don't mind." Being honest with others, as risky as it can be at times, helps strengthen my ties to "those that matter," thereby strengthening my recovery.

In regards to being honest in my relationships, I have noticed that the safer I feel in a relationship, the more I am completely honest with someone. Whatever I may tell them, as risky as it is, I am not rejected. That is the benefit of hanging around "those that matter." My dishonesty, I have also noticed, stems from wanting to be safe too, to feel respected and accepted. However, this is underlined and motivated by fear of rejection. As long as no one knows, it is okay and I don't risk anything. That is my addict's way of viewing it anyway.

Let's do the math on dishonesty vs. honesty. On one side, dishonesty = feeding the dark dog = blocking me from the "sunlight of the spirit" = opening up the obsessive/compulsive thinking = leading to a slip/relapse. While on the other side, our recovery literature states that being honest = forward movement in my recovery = being open to the "spiritual solution offered by the Twelve Steps" = a spiritual awakening, a personality change sufficient to recover from my sex addiction and all the obsessive, compulsive thoughts and behaviors that go along with active addiction.

The math illustrates the insanity of being dishonest and the contentment that being honest helps bring to my recovery efforts. By being dishonest, I "flunk" the recovery equation. Furthermore, I harm my recovery and myself. When I am tempted to be dishonest, I must do the math and work the steps, an easy choice, especially if one desires contented sobriety.

My recent slip/relapse has been helpful to me finding this out and learning the recovery benefits of being honest. I wanted to share this with you in the hopes that someone reading it can get something out of it and by doing so, not have to place himself or herself, as I did, in the position of "adding" to his or her story.

Sharing My Second Step

by Tim S.

1) What is your definition of insanity?

The inability to make safe and sound decisions concerning my mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being; and consciously or unconsciously participating in behaviors that do not agree with my mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being, while lacking the capability to recognize the consequences of my actions.

2) Can you find moments in your acting-out behaviors that seem insane to you? If so, what?

Telling myself that I would spend an hour at most to act out, for instance watching a DVD, only to discover an entire day or two passing by. Risking my safety and health by leaving my house in the middle of the night to have unprotected anonymous sex with random women. Spending hundreds, and at times, thousands of dollars of borrowed money compulsively to act out, without having the ability to realize the consequences. Jeopardizing my health by having unsafe sex with highly paid escorts.

Staying up all night to act out, regardless if I needed to work or go to school the next day. Acting out compulsively to the point of physical pain, and despite the pain, continuing to act out. Downloading pornographic pictures on public computers in non-private areas, jeopardizing my reputation, and possibly even my job. Depriving myself of my most basic daily needs, while isolating myself for days at a time so I could continue to act out.

During my worst and most depressing acting out rituals, spending all of my time, energy, and money to act out, neglecting every area of my life, including not showing up to work or school. Going to any lengths to act out, no matter what, even at the cost of lying to everyone around me including myself. Spending most or, at times, all of my paycheck to act out, carelessly neglecting my monthly bills. Continuing to involve myself in risky and immoral behaviors that directly were in opposition to my most personal and intimate spiritual beliefs, despite the moral repercussions.

Consciously traveling into high crime neighborhoods to act out, knowing that my life was in great danger. Acting out in public knowing that I could be arrested. Acting out while driving, endangering others and myself. Living my life in total and painful secrecy, and going to any lengths to protect my secret, double life.

Living in constant fear that my double life would be openly revealed, or that it would financially ruin me. Feeling physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually exhausted and empty, as a result of my acting-out events, and yet, regardless of the pain, continuing to act out. Often feeling unavailable, and at times, unapproachable, to everyone around me, including my students, as a result of acting out. Still continuing to act out, even

knowing this.

Abandoning the most precious, and most important things in my life, such as music practicing, my spiritual practices, my exercising routine, my friends and family, my beautiful cat, my quiet time with Mother Nature, silent time with God, and most importantly, time with myself, when acting out, or following an acting-out event.

3) Do you believe you need a Power greater than yourself in your life today? Why or why not?

Yes. God is the source of ALL of my love, grace, strength, and wisdom.

When I am aware of and accept the presence of God within me, and allow it to guide and love me, my life becomes full and healthy, protected and peaceful, manageable and simple, nurturing and enjoyable. Synchronistic miracles become a frequent way of living my life. Through the grace, love, and many blessings of God, I believe and have faith that God has and will continue to direct my thoughts, behaviors, and actions towards mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual balance. Without balance, life becomes extraordinarily difficult. Therefore, without an acceptance and awareness of God, I lose my balance and everything that comes along with it.

4) What is your definition of sanity? And how do you know when you are sane?

Sanity is the ability to make safe and sound decisions concerning my mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being; and choosing to participate in behaviors that agree with my mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being, while consciously ALWAYS recognizing the consequences of my actions.

I know I am sane when I am experiencing peace of mind and peace of heart; I am aware of, and in tune with, my soul (that is, the Divinity of God within me). My behaviors, actions, and thoughts radiate love and kindness, acceptance and appreciation, trust and honesty, compassion and understanding, patience and forgiveness, respect and courtesy, to others and most importantly to myself. I feel joy and lightness in my heart.

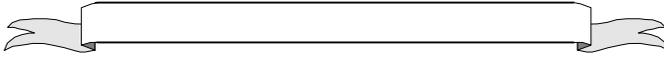
After completing Steps One and Two, I am proud to say that today through the Grace of God and this program, I consciously choose, to the best of my abilities, sobriety over acting out, celibacy over promiscuous and unhealthy fantasies, positive/optimistic thoughts instead of negative/pessimistic thoughts, feelings of: complete and utter honesty over feelings of deceitfulness; connectedness rather than emptiness and isolation; forgiveness over anger and resentment; calm instead of nervousness; peace rather than turmoil; gratitude instead of selfishness; self-respect rather than self-loathing; surrender over willful control; and love rather than judgment. Today I choose to live a faithful life instead of a fearful one. Today I choose God!

Step Two

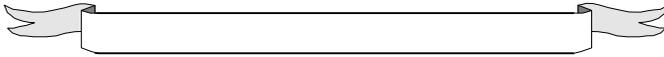
by C.J.J.

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

Let me start off with “sanity.” What is it? All I ever knew was insanity. Doing things as usual, but expecting a different result. Sanity, what a concept; it was unimaginable to me. All my life, all I ever got for my troubles was more trouble. I longed to love and to be loved, but to no avail. The only love I ever knew was in the form of abuse while being told I was loved, or being given the so-called “gifts” to keep my mouth shut



*I came to believe
that God could
and would
restore me
to sanity
if I just let him.*



At 39 I entered the sex offender program at the correctional program where I was incarcerated. It was there that I was introduced to SAA. It was also there that I met my real self for the first time since my childhood, before I was abused the first time. (That's a whole different story.) Anyway, I had learned a few years prior that God as I understood him wasn't God at all. You see, all I ever saw was this big image who stood there shaking his finger at me all the time. But let me tell you, I was so wrong. A counselor in a different twelve-step recovery inpatient center introduced me to a God who stood with open arms waiting for me to run to him and receive his love (true love). But when one has never experienced true love, how does he know when he finally finds it?

Then God shook my whole world upside down. I was sentenced to forty-six years in prison; I thought I was going to prison for what would be the rest of my life. Here came all the anger, hurt, hatred, and pain from my childhood once again. The lawyers, the police, the

judge all said victims always wind up becoming perpetrators. I remember thinking at one time that they should lock up such people for life; here I stood eating my own words.

So here I was; I had come. I thought about it. Was I going to lie to the counselors and fellow inmates in the prison? For the most part, they were like everyone else and didn't believe me.

Next I came to; to SAA and to my senses, that is. I was awakened by members of the program who proved over time that they cared about me and genuinely loved me for me and not for what I could do for them. Here I was. And wow, I was learning to love myself and others, and to trust others to help me. How could I trust anyone after all I had been? Besides, everyone knows all inmates are no good and just want to use others; right?

That leads me to my next point; I came to believe that God could and would restore me to sanity if I just let him. I came to SAA; I wrote my life story and sent it off to SAA as suggested by the Basic Text. I have written stories since then for *The Plain Brown Rapper*, now *The Outer Circle*. And I know I can't do it without God and the help of my friends. I am no longer in the sex offender program, though I miss it at times. But I am very much a part of SAA; my days aren't perfect but they're getting better. I was requested to write this article a few months ago, but I am still a procrastinator. For what it's worth, here it is. I hope it helps restore someone to sanity. I give back today for all SAA has given to me.

As I have been told, "Wake up and run into the open arms of your higher power." True love does exist. Or we could give back all of your trouble!"



E-mail Addresses

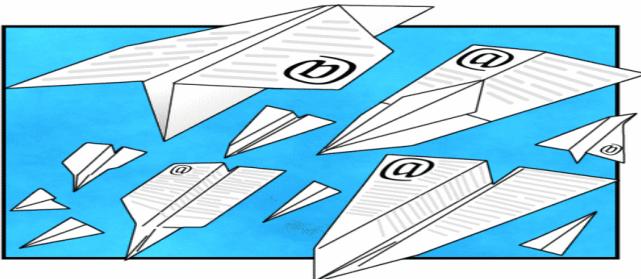
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How to Submit an Article to *The Outer Circle*

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

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

Second: Send your article: by e-mail to: toc@saa-recovery.org
or mail to: ISO
P. O. Box 70949
Houston, TX 77270

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

Submission Deadlines & Suggested Topics		
Next Issues	Deadline	Suggested Topics
Nov-Dec, 2009	Sep 5, 2009	Steps & Traditions 11 & 12, and <i>“Practicing These Principles in Our Lives”</i>
Jan-Feb, 2010	Nov 5, 2009	Steps & Traditions 1 & 2, and <i>“In and Out of the Bubble”</i>
Mar-Apr, 2010	Jan 5, 2010	Steps & Traditions 3 & 4, and <i>“Acceptance”</i>
May-Jun, 2010	Mar 5, 2010	Steps & Traditions 5 & 6
July-Aug, 2010	May 5, 2010	Steps & Traditions 7 & 8
Sep-Oct, 2010	July 5, 2010	Steps & Traditions 9 & 10

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In consideration of being reviewed for possible publication, I hereby transfer and release to the ISO of SAA, Inc (assignee) all legal rights to the publication of my submission(s) or any edited version thereof in any official ISO publication, including *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, *The Outer Circle*, the SAA meditation book, the SAA websites, or any other SAA program material, such as pamphlets, booklets and audio recordings.

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