

The Outer Circle

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

PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270

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

ISO News Articles

<p><u>ISO Board News</u></p> <p>ISO Board Actions Page 2</p> <p>Committee Reports Page 3</p> <p><u>Literature Committee News</u></p> <p>Feedback on</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Sex Addicts Anonymous Page 5</p> <p>Personal Story</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Submission Guidelines Page 6</p> <p>Meditation Book</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Submission Guidelines Page 8</p>	<p><u>ISO Financial News</u></p> <p>Income/Expense Summary Page 10</p> <p>Financial Results Letter Page 11</p> <p><u>Letter from the Editor</u></p> <p>By Mike L. Page 12</p> <p><u>General ISO Information</u></p> <p>E-mail Addresses Page 30</p> <p>ISO Structure & Contacts Page 31</p> <p><u>Article Submissions</u></p> <p>Guidelines, Deadlines, and</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Topic Suggestions Page 32</p> <p>General Release Form Page 32</p>
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Literature Articles

Writing to Myself from a Prisoner’s View	Page 14
Practicing These Principles in Our Lives	Page 16
Other Triggers	Page 18
Dear Grace	Page 20
On the Record With My Higher Power	Page 21
Smile My Moon	Page 23
Was I Really All Alone at the Convention?	Page 23
My Return to SAA	Page 26
God’s Words	Page 29

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ISO Board Actions

**The following actions were taken by
the Board of Trustees at the
Saturday, August 15, 2009 Teleconference:**

- **2010 Convention Budget**: Motion approved that the Board approve the proposed 2010 Convention Budget.
- **Convention Committee Board Liaison**: Motion approved that Eric M. be elected as the Board Liaison to the 2010 Convention Committee.
- **New 7th Tradition Initiative**: Motion approved that the ISO Office prepare and disseminate a letter announcing and promoting the creation of a "Freedom From Addiction Week" event. This event would start at 12:01 am on September 21, 2009 and conclude at 11:59 pm on September 27, 2009. This event would consist of passing the 7th tradition basket a second time during all 12-step meetings in the SAA fellowship during that week. Money collected from this initiative would be sent to ISO's general fund.
- **7th Tradition Name Change**: Motion approved that the name of the "Fund-raising Focus Committee" be officially changed to the "Seventh Tradition Focus Committee."

**The following actions were taken by
the Board of Trustees at the
Saturday, September 19, 2009 Teleconference:**

- **2010 Convention Brochure**: Motion approved that the 2010 Convention Brochure carry the following message: 'Members considering bringing children to the Convention may wish to consider the nature of the event. Many activities will be open to members only. Any facilities open part or full time to children will be clearly signposted.'
- **Media Anonymity Letter**: Motion approved that the ISO Board approves in concept the updated version of the Media Anonymity Letter, and forward this letter to the Literature Committee for further action as indicated.

Committee Reports

ISO Literature Committee Mid-year Report

The ISO Literature Committee (LitCom) is composed of eight regional representatives, eight regional alternates, three at-large members, and the editor of *The Outer Circle*, all of whom participate in multiple LitCom activities. The Committee is organized into five subcommittees that oversee and track a variety of projects, each one of which is assigned to a specific work group. At the present time, the LitCom is engaged in more than twenty active projects.

In addition to overall monitoring of LitCom activities, the Operations and Policy Subcommittee oversees two work groups. The Handbook Work Group is currently developing a booklet that will explain the organization of the LitCom and the policies and procedures followed in receiving, reviewing, and approving SAA literature. We anticipate that this document will clarify the process by which literature is made available to the fellowship. A new work group will be looking at re-design of the SAA pamphlets and booklets. This project will complement the ongoing efforts of other work groups to review and update existing literature.

The Major Works Subcommittee continues to evaluate feedback and receive additional personal stories from the fellowship-at-large for the SAA Green Book and to develop a plan for producing the next edition. The deadline for completing a survey about the book has been extended through December 2009. The survey is available from the ISO office or on the SAA website.

Also under Major Works is the Meditation Book Work Group, which has developed an aggressive plan to encourage writing of meditations by members of the fellowship for possible inclusion in the new meditation book. The guidelines for submissions and the dates of the next workshop are published elsewhere in this newsletter and on the SAA website.

The In-reach Subcommittee oversees six active work groups. The Audio Review Work Group is charged with review of recordings from the ISO conventions. The Group Guide Work Group is reviewing a newly edited version of the Guide in anticipation of final approval this service year. The Intergroup Guide Work Group is reviewing a newly edited version of that document, which has been referred back to the Intergroup Communications Committee of the Board for comments before final LitCom review is undertaken. Other projects under this subcommittee include ongoing review of existing pamphlets

and review of two new submissions – a pamphlet on retaining the woman newcomer and a Step Two pamphlet.

The Outreach Subcommittee is responsible for tracking seven work groups. The Audio Productions Work Group is reviewing a test recording of the women's outreach pamphlet with an eye toward developing a plan for audio recordings of other SAA literature. The Translations Work Group is working with the International Development and Online Presence committees of the Board to assure accuracy of current Spanish translations and to develop a long-range plan for translations into other languages. The newly revised basic outreach pamphlet, *Sex Addicts Anonymous – A Pathway to Recovery* is presently being translated into Spanish and French. Other active LitCom outreach projects include ongoing review of existing pamphlets in concert with the In-reach Subcommittee, development of a pamphlet to welcome sex offenders, and review of the SAA Speakers Training Manual.

The Periodicals Subcommittee is responsible for oversight of *The Outer Circle* and the content of the SAA website. The Newsletter Oversight Work Group reviews articles for publication in the newsletter and oversees the evaluation of the editor and other policy issues relating to *The Outer Circle*. The Website Work Group has been particularly active, working with the Online Presence Committee of the Board in developing, reviewing, and approving content for the new SAA website that was launched in May 2009. Typically, because material for posting on the website is time-sensitive, it is edited and given immediate approval under the LitCom Concurrent Review/Distribution policy. This content will be thoroughly reviewed and will be given full approval by the LitCom at a later date.

As is evident from this brief report, the LitCom is very busy. We take our responsibility within the ISO very seriously, and we are striving to be responsive to the rapidly growing SAA fellowship. In addition to the active projects mentioned above, we are working with the ISO Director of Operations and other members of the staff to develop the resources necessary to support the needs for literature within the service structure of the ISO and throughout the fellowship. We consider it a privilege to serve during this exciting time.

Respectfully submitted,

ISO Literature Committee

Literature Committee News

Feedback on *Sex Addicts Anonymous* (Deadline extended to December 31, 2009)

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



Personal Story Submissions for *Sex Addicts Anonymous*:

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 on the last page of 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

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 personal story for
Sex Addicts Anonymous:**

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 (located on the last page of this newsletter), 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*.

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 are 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:

Sundays, 5:00 p.m. Central Time

November 22

January 24

February 28

March 28

April 25

**The workshops last approximately 1.5 hours
and include time for writing.**

To register, call 1-800-477-8191
or email:

meditation@saa-recovery.org

ISO Income/Expense Summary

As of September 30, 2009

	September 2009	Monthly Average	Year to Date
Income			
Sales	16,158	16,761	150,849
Shipping & Handling	1,256	1,513	13,613
Donations	16,150	16,682	150,137
Delegate Meeting Registration	0	843	7,585
Interest Earned	7	181	1,632
International Convention Revenue	0	11,294	101,642
Total Income	33,571	47,273	425,459
Total Cost of Goods Sold	8,278	9,170	82,526
Gross Profit	25,293	38,104	342,933
Expense			
Wages	14,614	14,421	129,788
Employee Benefits (Not Wages)	1,998	1,387	12,485
Payroll Taxes	1,118	1,116	10,047
Insurance	264	269	2,422
Depreciation	175	175	1,575
Postage/Shipping	222	73	655
Communications	491	377	3,391
Office Expense	324	577	5,190
Occupancy Expenses	1,484	1,707	15,364
Board/Committee Expense	1,682	1,608	14,469
The Outer Circle	2,160	1,211	10,899
Financial Charges	1,099	1,459	13,134
Bad Debts/Refunds	19	115	1,034
Translating/Literature Projects	495	55	495
Miscellaneous Expenses	1,176	143	1,287
Delegate Meeting	0	1,122	10,101
Convention Related Travel	0	2,425	21,829
International Convention	0	7,878	70,902
Total Expense	27,320	36,118	325,066
Net Income	-2,027	1,985	17,867

Financial Results for September, 2009

Our income for September showed a loss of \$2,026, which was budgeted to lose \$4,305. There were two significant financial events in September.

The first was a change in the process used to book sales by our distributor (HCI). We receive a monthly report from HCI on the sale of the book, but we do not receive the revenue from these sales for 90 days. We had been booking the sales from the books when we received the revenue. Since our accounting is done on an accrual basis, following generally acceptable accounting principles, we should have been booking the sales in the month in which they occurred. To correct this problem, we booked sales for May, June, July and August in September. This essentially overstated the HCI sales in the September Profit and Loss report by \$2,136.

The second was the discovery that our inventory value associated with the hard cover *Sex Addicts Anonymous* was incorrect. We sold out of the hard cover books but our inventory still showed a value of \$1,175 dollars. This was due to the initial entry of the product into inventory at the wrong item cost. This \$1,175 dollars was expensed as a miscellaneous expense. We verified the value of the other inventory items and found no more discrepancies.

Our product inventory is valued at \$40,801. This is a decrease of \$5,303 dollars in inventory value from last month. \$1,175 of the decrease was due to correcting the value of the hard cover *Sex Addicts Anonymous*.

Sales were \$382 less than our budget for the month of September, but if you take into consideration the change in the accounting process, our sales would have been \$2,518 less than our budget for the month. Our sales were down in September, but this was expected as our budget was expected to show a loss of \$4,307 in September.

Donations exceeded our budget by \$1,049. The donations were up because they included \$2,703 from our fundraiser, "Freedom From Addiction Week."

In using the new budget, our September expenses were \$1,115 less than our budget. The translation cost of the SAA Basic Pamphlet and the write-off of the inventory value associated with the hard cover *Sex Addicts Anonymous* were unexpected expenses in September.

Our operational reserve is fully funded. Our other reserve accounts, which are funded based on sales, were all fully funded.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

In Your Service,
Joe H.

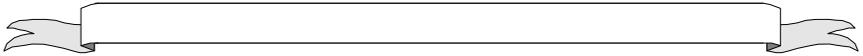
director@saa-iso.org

[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 SAA fellowship as a whole.]

From the Editor

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

I'm writing this piece on the first official day of fall. It's been a "warm" summer, to use the euphemism I sometimes hear in this part of the country for temperatures in the upper 90s. For some reason, autumn appears to have arrived here a bit early this year, although none too soon for me.



*The topic for March/April 2010 is
"Acceptance."*

*The next couple of topics,
with their deadline dates, appear
on the final page of this issue.*



Sometimes, if I get away from an activity for a while, I'm convinced that I can never do it again, if indeed I was ever able to do it in the first place. To give an example, if I get away from playing the piano for a few months, I'm absolutely certain that when I sit down at the keyboard again, I will no longer remember how to read music, or which keys represent which notes. Same with going to my local fitness club; I'm positive I won't know how to put one foot in front of the other on the cardio machines, and I might as well forget about being able to lift more than five pounds or so because it just isn't going to happen. Of course, these self-defeating predictions never turn out to be accurate, but that isn't enough to keep me from thinking the exact same thing when the situation arises again.

Actually, putting one foot in front of the other is not a bad analogy here. I have lately been in the process of reconnecting to a number of the activities I was formerly involved with before beginning to spend so much time working behind the scenes for SAA and my other recovery-related groups. I have allowed this work, while certainly still healthy, largely to take the place of the in-person connections that I had formerly come to cherish so much.

So I find myself overcoming the same types of fears I have previously mentioned here. For some reason, I didn't do in this situation what I normally do, which is to go after a bunch of activities at once. Rather, I found one or two that I especially enjoyed and slowly began picking those up. I guess it was partly my innate fear that convinced me that I wouldn't get a positive response from those with whom I was beginning to reconnect; so it came as an extra shock when I was asked to start taking trusted servant roles in some of those groups. In other words, so far my experiment is working out well, and I have plans to add other activities in the next few weeks.

I committed to taking somebody without transportation to a Spanish-speaking meeting of another Twelve-Step fellowship roughly eight days from now, and since I haven't been to that meeting myself in a few months, I now have a little extra incentive to show up at that meeting once or twice between now and next week to reintroduce myself to the folks there before introducing someone new to them. So I'm making haste slowly, as one of the piano instruction books from when I was a pup used to call it.

This Nov/Dec 2009 is the premiere issue of our intended goal of having a topic in each issue. The topic for this issue is "Practicing These Principles in Our Lives." We have received a couple of good articles that I hope you will enjoy. The topic for Jan/Feb 2010 is "In and Out of the Bubble." The next couple of topics, with their deadline dates, appear on the final page of this issue. The topic for Jul/Aug, perhaps based on some of my recent experiences in reintegrating myself into life, is "Progress, Not Perfection." As always, how you want to approach the topic is up to you, the same as it would be with a meeting where a particular topic was suggested.

Of course, I'm always looking for articles on steps and traditions. My first preference is that the articles be related to the numbers of the months to which the issue pertains, and this is certainly not a requirement. We have received quite a few articles recently that are based on one step or another, and I really hope this trend continues.

Of course, I want to see your articles, regardless of the topic. If you're interested in submitting a piece for *The Outer Circle*, please send it to toc@saa-recovery.org, or you can send it by regular mail to: ISO of SAA, P.O. Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270-0949 (if you would, please write somewhere on the envelope that your letter pertains to *The Outer Circle*).

Well, it's time to let this month's contributors speak for themselves. I hope you enjoy this issue of *The Outer Circle*, and I look forward to talking to you again next issue.

Writing to Myself from a Prisoner's View

by Kasey S.

[Editor's Note: This article follows up on Kasey's article, "Writing to Myself from a Correspondent's View," which appeared in the last issue of The Outer Circle. As can be seen by the title, it approaches the concept of writing to prisoners from a perspective different from that discussed in the previous article.]

Receiving letters from anyone was the highlight of my day. I anxiously awaited mail call every day, and was elated when I received a letter from my SAA friends on the outside, especially one from my sponsor.

I was released from prison on July 26, 2008, after serving ten years for crimes stemming from my sexual addiction. When I was first incarcerated I felt "less than" and was filled with shame and remorse. A psychiatrist in the county jail suggested that I was a sex addict and recommended books by a well-known writer in the field of sex addiction. These books led me to the local area SAA service group where I requested a sponsor who could write to me. I impatiently waited each week for his letter, and when it arrived, I found my first glimmer of hope in a seemingly hopeless situation.

SAA's Prisoner Outreach Program maintains a policy of answering every letter received. And, when I read my future sponsor's letter, I realized that I had to make a decision. I had to admit I was powerless over my addiction and was willing to go to any length to recover. But, did I really want to find out who I am? Did I want to ask myself, "Is what I believe true?" The challenges over the next ten years proved very painful and very fulfilling. Without my sponsor and the other SAA members who wrote me during this time, I would never have been able to succeed.

Those who wrote to me made a strong commitment. They kept reminding me, "The only requirement for SAA membership is a desire to stop addictive sexual behavior." The focus of their letters was always recovery and how it relates to my daily routine, how I could lead a new life even in prison. They saw me as genuinely sincere and looking for help, although I didn't feel that way for a long time. My correspondents helped me discover recovery through the Three Circles and setting boundaries. They cared.

Because of my crimes, my family and friends rejected me. I was shunned and disowned by my brother and sister. I felt a non-person, without value and without a future worth living. Throughout my prison experience, I found among other sex offenders this same attitude. However, with the care, concern and guidance from my correspondents I began to change my outlook. I began to grow and see that I could live without my addictions in a life that was happy, joyous, and free.

My experience before recovery told me that it is not wise to share personal information, which could be incriminating or otherwise compromising; that I had to keep secrets and there was no one I could trust. SAA correspondents said "I was a sick as my secrets," and I learned to trust through them. They told in a general way what it was like before, what happened, and what it is like now in recovery. This gave me the courage to disclose my story and share all my fears and failures. I began to ask for guidance from others and got honest with myself. We soon found a level of sharing about the addiction that was comfortable, friendly, and helpful.

They avoided becoming emotionally over-involved with me, but encouraged me to seek out professional help when necessary. I greatly appreciated this as I suffer from various psychological problems. The encouragement I received helped me address these problems honestly and appropriately. Most of all, I came to believe that I was not alone.

Although the climate in prison is generally dangerous and more so for us sex offenders, I requested formal step work and twice worked the steps with my sponsor. He encouraged me to take an honest look at my powerlessness, unmanageability, and sexually compulsive behaviors. I described how my sexually compulsive behaviors were manifested, paying particular attention to my powerlessness and unmanageability.

I had a hard time writing my Three Circles, identifying behaviors for each circle. I have a tendency to overdo each assignment, seeking perfection and not progress. Here again I was guided by the experience of those already in recovery. Of course, I was in denial; knowing the truth and being unwilling to tell it. Yet I found gentle care from my correspondents. I was encouraged and reinforced by their focus on my outer circle behaviors during this identification process. I learned self-care.

I learned that each Step had a related principle as well as a related character defect. I practiced the principle and quickly became aware of my own character defects. Through this I realized that I had been living in delusion, living a lie. The First Step showed me that I had come from selfishness to honesty. With the help of SAA correspondents, I saw that there was hope; without which I would have been lost in the inmate life of alibis and dishonesty.

There is no real way to prepare for release from prison. To re-enter society after any period of incarceration is overwhelming. My sponsor picked me up at the prison gates, and that evening we went to my first SAA meeting. I discovered the same caring, loving, and accepting community I imagined through the letters I had received over the past ten years. I knew I was home. The continuity was essential to my recovery. From shame to grace, with the road paved in between with letters, was priceless.

Practicing These Principles in Our Lives

by Mary F.

My neighbor angrily confronted me about piling sticks on his property. Over the next week this is how I applied the twelve-step principles to this life situation.

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

Amidst uncontrollable and obsessive anger and revenge fantasies, I admitted that I was powerless over my neighbor and that our relationship had become unmanageable.

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

I reminded myself that God was in charge of both of us and that God could heal our relationship.

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

I turned the whole situation over to God and stopped worrying about the outcome.

4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

I painfully looked at what I had done wrong. I piled the sticks wherever I felt like it without consulting with anyone. I intentionally ignored this neighbor and gossiped about him. I resented him for complaining about any problems in the neighborhood.

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

I called my landlord and told her what I had done.



6. *Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.*

I realized that I needed to be free of control, dominance, anger, gossip, and resentment toward this neighbor.

7. *Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.*

I asked God to help me feel better about my neighbor and to replace control with assertiveness; dominance with consultation; anger with gratitude; gossip with respect; and resentment with acceptance.

8. *Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.*

I realized that I had been harming this man with my thoughts, words, and actions and that it was my responsibility to right the situation.

9. *Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.*

I consulted with my landlord about where to put the sticks, moved all the sticks off of my neighbor's property, made a new stick pile at an appropriate location, and called the city for pickup.

10. *Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.*

Miraculously, a few days later, I saw my neighbor breaking up and bagging all the sticks, even though they were no longer on his property. I stopped and asked him if I could help and promised him I would not put any more sticks on his property. I let him know the actions I took to prevent it from happening again. For the first time in six years, he responded to me in a warm and friendly way. He actually said that cleaning up the sticks gave him a satisfying job to do that day!

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

I reflected on what happened and thanked God for his guidance. I asked him to continue to guide me in peaceful resolution and to give me the courage I needed to transform my negative feelings and traits.

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

I felt joy about my new positive feelings toward my neighbor. I asked other neighbors and the landlord to put their sticks in an appropriate pile. I continued to work with another neighbor on a collaborative gardening project.

Other Triggers

by Frank M.

On page 68 of *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, under the heading “Withdrawal and Relapse” in the Chapter “Our Life in Recovery,” I read the words “Gradually we learn to identify our ‘triggers.’ Triggers are any situation or behavior that causes us to feel a powerful desire to act out.”

I certainly remember the time when just about anything could serve as a trigger. Since I was already spending my days either acting out, thinking about acting out, or acting in—isolating, in a word—I didn’t need much of a trigger to go into full-fledged acting out mode. It really didn’t take much more than somebody looking at me cross-eyed for me to be off to the races.

In my early recovery I learned about the circles. I eventually learned how very important the outer circle was, and I began to pursue some outer circle activities. To be sure I already knew some outer circle behaviors, but they were, by and large, ones that I could practice in solitude. I learned well in childhood to be alone, but this behavior only fitfully served me in early recovery.

Along with these new activities, I came face-to-face with a character defect whose power I became only slightly aware of while doing my initial fifth step: ego. Almost any time a group gathers in order to accomplish a purpose, leaders are going to emerge. I wanted to be the leader of any group I belonged to, or, to be more accurate, I wanted to be the “star.” I couldn’t stand for anybody else to receive any of the attention. Even in those situations where I had manipulated myself into a spot where I was getting eighty percent of the attention, I wanted to know why I wasn’t getting that other twenty.

I think having a huge ego was only a part of my issue here. The other part, I believe, was a carryover from my sex addiction: In my addiction, I wanted everybody I met to want to be sexual with me as proof of my self-worth. If I had been able to achieve this impossible goal I had set for myself, I could have told myself that I was number one in the life of everyone else. Even when I was in my active addiction, I had plenty of opportunities to learn that I was far from being number one in the life of every person with whom I was sexual. Still, I persisted in this insane goal.

The huge irony in this situation is that if anybody was aware of the size of my ego, he or she did not let on. Keeping this character defect well under wraps was doubtless another childhood trick I had acquired. I constantly heard it said about me, “Oh, Frank has no ego. He is only here to serve.” If only they knew...

Well, I finally found a spot in an organization of the kind I had always wanted to be in. To my chagrin, I have had to face the reality that I will never be suitable for the kind of role in that organization that I want, because of the lack of certain innate talents with which nature did not see fit to endow me. A good analogy would be somebody who is five foot eight and weighs one hundred fifty pounds having it as his goal to play quarterback on an NFL team. To bring it closer to home, I am the one who desperately wants to be the rock star; yet I find myself instead working as an organ grinder, standing on a street corner with a monkey on my shoulder.

My initial thrill at being involved with the organization eventually gave way to frustration and resentment that I wasn't being considered for the kind of positions within the organization that I aspired to. While I have many gifts to offer the group, which are genuinely and warmly appreciated, I felt that these gifts did not matter compared to the goal I wanted to attain. I fell back into my old pattern of comparing myself to others and considering that I had come up wanting. This situation was a trigger for me, not a trigger to act out, but rather a trigger to act in.

My situation is one where I have to remember and live by the slogan "life on life's terms" and continually say the Serenity Prayer. Just as I have had to adopt a much more restrictive inner circle in my SAA program, in order to avoid thinking of myself as one whose main value to others is in being the object of pursuit, so have I had to stop thinking of myself in terms of always being the "star" in the sense I would like. The sexual addiction-related change in attitude was much easier to achieve than the life-related change, since the latter meant finally facing the fact that a dream I had for forty-plus years was just that.

I was recently reminded of a passage in another well beloved piece of literature that talks about all parts of the body having a function, even those parts that seem least likely to. It gets easier for me, as time goes on, to accept the application of this passage to my own life. I have also had the blessing of working on being grateful: grateful that five years ago I had a chance to offer my services to this group and that they were accepted; grateful that this topic was suggested for *The Outer Circle*, and grateful that I have had a chance to write about it.

I would like to end this story by saying that my old fears and concerns are completely gone. However, they still come back sometimes. I still find myself serving as the water carrier rather than being the star quarterback. I still find myself the organ grinder with a monkey perched on his shoulder across the street from the big stadium where the rock star I want to be is performing. Thanks to the tools of this program, today, most of the time at least, the only thing perched on my shoulder is that monkey.

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,

Will you be my sponsor? If not, where can I find a sponsor?

Sponsor-less in Spokane

Dear Sponsor-less,

Grace is not a sponsor. I simply give out information and the SAA Women's Outreach List upon request. If you would like to be added to this list, email me at grace@saa-women.org. There are women at meetings willing to sponsor. Go to meetings, online meetings or telemeetings and listen for women who have completed the twelve steps, are abstinent from addictive sexual behaviors and have experience in the program. For more information about sponsorship, read pages 13-14 in the SAA Basic Text.

Grace



On the Record With My Higher Power by Cameron S.

“Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over
to the care of God, as we understood God.”
(Step Three, *Sex Addicts Anonymous*)

In completing my third step I followed a suggestion I read somewhere to write a letter to my Higher Power. I thought the suggestion a bit unusual until I realized that by taking Step Three I would be in effect entering into a contract, a covenant of sorts, with my Higher Power, and that a letter would be an effective way to document “my” side of the agreement. Since my addiction caused me to walk away from my Higher Power many years ago, it was important for me to carefully identify the one to whom I would be turning over my life and will. Drafting this letter enabled me to archive my commitment and surrender to the one who would do for me what I could not do for myself.

What follows is the actual letter I composed to my Higher Power. The text has been edited a bit to reflect the nonsectarian spirit of Sex Addicts Anonymous, a spirit to which I have given my wholehearted support and respect. I offer the following with the hope that other addicts might find strength and hope through my experience, as well as find the courage to go “on the record” with their own commitment and surrender to their Higher Power. Here is the record of my decision to yield once again to god “as I understood god.”

Step Three A Letter to My Higher Power “May Your Will Be Done”

July 15, 2007

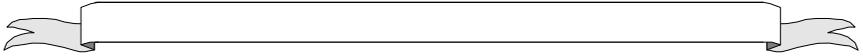
Dear God,

I feel that it is important that I begin this letter by identifying you as my higher power. As important as Sex Addicts Anonymous has been to my life over the past year, the program has meant nothing to me without the assurance and knowledge of you as my Higher Power. You are my god as you have revealed yourself in the bible through the testimony of many witnesses. You, god, and I call you Father, are my “higher power.” I have come to believe that I will know you better as I engage your self-revelation in the scriptures.

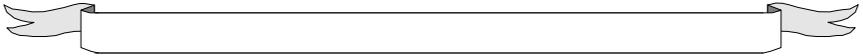
I address this letter to you to document my decision to turn my life and will over to you. I have decided to let you direct the affairs of my life from this day forward. I have come to this decision because I have tried everything to solve the problem of my sexual addiction, but nothing has worked. I could not “work harder” to recover. I could not “read” my way out of my

addiction. My circumstances have brought me to the point of turning to the only source of power and wisdom that will enable me to find sanity and wholeness in my life. That source is you. I am powerless over my addiction. So here I am.

I want to live my life in your power and that alone. I don't want to put any more trust in my own abilities. I desire to know your will and to receive the power to carry it out. Gone is my doing what "I" want. I now want to do what "you" want with my life.



*My circumstances have brought me to
the point of turning to the only source of
power and wisdom that will enable me to
find sanity and wholeness in my life.
That source is you.*



It is certain that we have a long way to go. I must admit that I have never given you the opportunity to direct my life. I have always directed my thoughts and actions, using what I consider to be my own wisdom. But I have come to understand that outside the influence of your Word my wisdom is flawed at best.

I have always searched for some magic potion, some magic formula to turn my life around. That search is over. Today I come to make a simple declaration: "not as I will, but as you will." I now turn to you with this simple surrender of my life and will. I surrender every thought and action to you. Do with me, as you will.

My only vow is to "work out my [recovery] with fear and trembling." My commitment from this day is to choose recovery over my addiction one day, one moment, at a time by using the program to guide me in my walk in dependence upon your power.

Thank you for your loving-kindness, patient love, unfailing grace and tender mercy. I love you with all my heart, soul and strength. May our bond and fellowship grow stronger each day.

Faith, Hope and Love,
Cameron S.

Smile My Moon

by Carol Ann R.

When I leave the pull
of usual things
and enter the
deep, blue dark,
I find the rock
I was meant for.
Unfamiliar dust
outlines my footsteps
and a windless sky
holds aloft my flag.
I close my eyes
to breathe in
my own sure place.

Was I Really All Alone at the Convention?

by Craig A.

I have recently taken on a service position in SAA. The word “help” is a tricky word for me. I have helped other addicts (starting with my mother) over my lifetime and the only thing I ever got back in return was a seat in my first Twelve-Step meeting.

Seven years ago, I began the process of dealing with my co-dependency. I was tired. I gave and I gave, freely (or so I thought), and what did I expect in return? Not much, just a little respect and thanks from every addict I had “helped.” I mean, really, is that too much to ask? When I began my first Twelve-Step program in 2002, I knew what was killing me: my expectations of others.

If you asked me then if I was a sex addict, I would have said “no.” But I had just spent the previous fourteen years looking for the man of my dreams in a smoky bar at 1 am. You name it, I did it. I rarely rejected the attention of any man. Attention to me meant love. And in the vast majority of those encounters he was usually drunk or high and I was always, always sober. I needed to stay in control; I realize it now for what it only ever was, an illusion of control. I, too, was out of control. And because he was drunk and because he approached me for sex, he had the problem, not me. Being

passive and waiting for him to approach me, I could be the “innocent victim.”

Fast forward to 2001. Compared to my previous one hundred thirty-eight-plus sexual encounters (yes, I've counted), I was now in a “healthy” relationship with another man. “Dan” was an alcoholic who was married to his partner. But they were in an open relationship; they could sleep with other men, as long as they were honest with each other. When I met Dan, I felt I had hit the jackpot. A man who, for about five hours at a time, would do anything for me: take me out to dinner and the movies, give me lots of undivided attention, and then he'd disappear and go back to his partner to deal with their mortgage, their laundry, the boring messes of everyday life. And all I had to do was give him sex. I had become an unpaid prostitute.

One year later, my sponsor suggested I could find a healthier relationship. She told me not to change anything yet, but just to pray about it; she said the process of ending this relationship could take up to six months. Two days later, I told Dan I never wanted to sleep with him again.

I realize now that all I ever wanted was someone to “sign my permission slip” so that I could get off this roller coaster and stop having casual sex. I once heard someone in a meeting say, “As a gay man, it was my right to have all the sex I want.” And I believed that; the friends I chose back then validated this belief too. But now I was in heaven; I saw the light. I was only going to be in a healthy, monogamous relationship with one man for the rest of my life. The problem was that I didn't have the slightest idea how to make this happen. Yes, I stopped going to bars and my acting-out areas. And yes, I stopped having sex. And then day turned to week, week turned to year, year turned to another year. Four years later, I knew I needed more help with my sexual addiction than I could get from my co-dependency program. In terms of the solar system, co-dependency is the “sun” around which all the planets (my issues with sex, food, addicts, money, etc.) revolve.

Three years in SAA and I clearly can say it now: I am a sexual anorexic and avoidant. Every sexually acting out pattern I have ever engaged in (to my knowledge) is now in my inner circle. As a sexual anorexic, it is pretty easy to stay out of my inner circle; as of today, I have not slipped or lost my sobriety. Though I realize that sexual anorexia is just the flip side of the sexual addiction coin, it is still truly an addiction. Stop having anonymous sex? No problem. Go to a place to meet gay men and others in a safe, non-sexual way? Big problem. I would go to my local SAA conventions where I knew a lot of people. There was no way I was ever going to go to an international SAA convention, until I heard the magic words: “The convention committee needed HELP.”

So I went to this year's convention in Oakland, determined also to conquer

my social anorexia, which is never far from my sexual anorexia. Hundreds of sex addicts, SAA meetings with gay men, being with members of my home group for the weekend! It was a dream come true and my worst nightmare. I attended the gay SAA meeting and felt so happy to meet and see other gay men in recovery. By the next day, my anorexia had me in its grip. That thing inside of me that wants me to stay small, to not change for the better and sometimes wants me dead, had reared its ugly head. Suddenly, the conference sucked. Who were these convention committee members and who gave them the right to put on a convention? Did they just throw this convention together in five minutes or what? The food was horrible, there was not enough of this and not enough of that, and those people walking around with those stupid arm bands, asking if anyone is struggling at the convention. These people needed to be fired.

Saturday, I hardly left my hotel room at all. It was safe there and I was disappointed in everything at the conference. I had tried and I had failed. I remembered I had brought a razor blade, and I could cut my arms and legs to relieve the pressure. I hadn't had those thoughts in years.

As I sat there on my bed watching the TV and trying to numb out, a different thought entered my conscious. I remembered the lady with the arm band, who said she was available to talk to those who are struggling at the convention." It's not that bad." I thought, "I'm not that desperate that I have to go ask someone for help." *I help others; I don't ask others for help.* And yet, I left my room, and found that lady with the armband, and told her everything that was going on in my head.

And the change happened, the recovery began. I had connected to someone and the shift happened. The food didn't taste any better, but the conference was better; I saw that everyone was doing the best that they could. On the last day, a man whom I had met gave me a hug and I burst out crying. I still don't what that meant, or if I'm ever supposed to know what that meant. Seven years of sharing very personal stories in Twelve-Step programs and I hadn't cried; I go away to a weekend conference and I'm the only person I see in the room bawling like a baby. When people asked me about the conference, my answer was always the same. I didn't have the conference I wanted; I had the conference I needed.

I became willing to change and my higher power made it happen. I might be a person struggling at the next convention too, and that's okay. God willing, I am going to ask for help if I need it. Actions contrary to my anorexia help me towards recovery.

Going to a convention changed my life. I hope that you will be able to attend the next convention and have a similar experience.

My Return to SAA

By Jack G.

I'm Jack. I'm recovering from sexual addiction. I'd like to begin by saying that the following writing is from my own experience. Just as I do not agree with everything stated in the Twelve Step Program, so not everyone will agree with mine. This is not carved in stone; take what you like and leave the rest.

I was in the program before May of 2008. I'm glad to be back among those faithful, but I'm sad to see others have gone and moved on. I thought the main reason I left the program was that I just wasn't learning or growing anymore. I really thought I had said, heard, and done everything there is to be said, heard, and done in the Twelve Step Program. God knows how tired I was of hearing myself sharing in the meetings about every time I acted out.

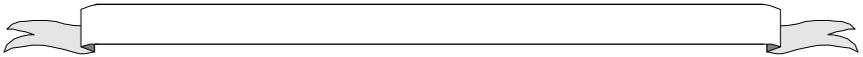
As a loving friend has pointed out to me, I was, unfortunately, focusing on the problem. So I needed time to reason things out with myself, my counselor, and especially my Higher Power. In retrospect, that last statement was the main reason I had to remove myself from the Program. Indeed, I needed to refocus on the solution.

I just want to elaborate a little bit about why my old program did not work for me in the long term. I think for several years I stuck to the cookie cutter kind of sobriety—abstinence. That's all that was in the box, according to my definition of sobriety in my first five years in SAA. For me, abstinence was like riding on rollerblades. As I have proven over and over, I just wasn't born to be a rollerblader. In the beginning, I was determined to learn to skate and I had some very limited measure of success. I was able to go some distance on my rollerblades but it never became quite natural to me, like riding a bike did. One false move and I ended up crashing down on the ground, hurting myself very badly at times. It was very much like acting out. Similar to rollerblading, my old program did me more harm than good.

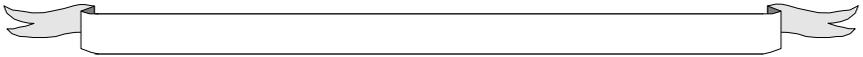
I acted out enough, I hurt myself enough, and I complained about it enough. It was time to make a change. It was time to change my program.

Change didn't happen to me overnight. My Higher Power had been trying to convince me, saying, "Take those ridiculous rollerblades off!" And of course, I was reluctant to remove them, because I had nothing else other than my old program of abstinence to count on. But very gently my Higher Power convinced me, saying, "You just need to learn to stand on your own feet and start walking." I perceived that message as "It's time for you to learn to think for yourself and to live with yourself, Jack."

From what I gather, I find that God is very reasonable and he doesn't set terms that are too difficult for any of us to comprehend or achieve. I also believe that God wants us to succeed not only in our recovery but also in the rest of our lives. I began to accept that I have a very analytical mind, except that I often direct that analytical energy towards negative thinking, as a very good friend suggested. He also said, "Now, use that same energy and re-channel it towards positive thinking." To sum up the idea, I believe that God allowed me to process this thought and learn to apply it to the rest of the way I think, which I consider as a life-transforming experience of "conscious evolution."



I truly believe that when I am living a satisfying, meaningful, and purposeful life and practicing healthier sexuality, there is no need for me to act out.



In more specific terms, I think God and I made a breakthrough when I recognized that I can go beyond Step One, being powerless over my sexual addiction. When I moved into Steps Two and Three, being restored to sanity and having surrendered my will and my life to God, he in turn empowered me to experience healthier sexuality. I cannot explain the whole transformation in words, but I realized that I could begin to accept "what is outside the box." I have found that I can have all the healthier sexuality I want with my personal values and beliefs intact, by respecting my boundaries and practicing moderation. That's as simple as it gets.

I truly believe that when I am living a satisfying, meaningful, and purposeful life and practicing healthier sexuality, there is no need for me to act out. Thus, so far, my own experience of Steps One, Two, and Three, from admitting my powerlessness to being empowered by My Higher Power, is a very precious experience I needed to learn.

In connection to my previous point, the solution part of my recovery from sexual addiction is to make the best out of the rest of my life. This makes the solution stand out even more by looking further "outside the box."

Week after week, with help from a friend who has been my mentor this past year, I discovered that I find satisfaction in pursuing writing as a way of life. There is something about expressing my thoughts in words that helps me feel understood, and writing to share about my own self-discoveries gives me a sense of accomplishment. I've discovered that my passion for writing, which I consider as a gift of my Creator, comes with a responsibility to advance common human good and spiritual well-being.

If there is anything that keeps me coming back to the Twelve Step program, it is the spirituality component. While things haven't always been a bed of roses the last eight months, I've had some wonderful discoveries of freedom from my addiction. I truly believe that "reality is not tailored to the limitations of self, and that hardship and loss as a valid part of life as joy and pleasure," as it says in the SAA Green Book on page 58 under Step Eleven. Yes, sometimes I wish I did not have an addiction to sex and that I did not have to suffer its consequences any more, but I am convinced that hard-won recovery from this affliction proves greater in defining my higher spiritual purpose. Yes, I know, it's easier said than done.

In contradiction, some may say, "What for?" "Why go through this hardship and loss, when we can't see the end of it?" Some say "Recovery has no destination; we'll never arrive, but it's one heck of a journey!" While some may not believe that there is a destination, others do, and I know that there are rewards for our hard work. Let us not forget that the Promises are there for us to stand on, to comfort us, and to encourage us to keep going when nothing else seems to matter.

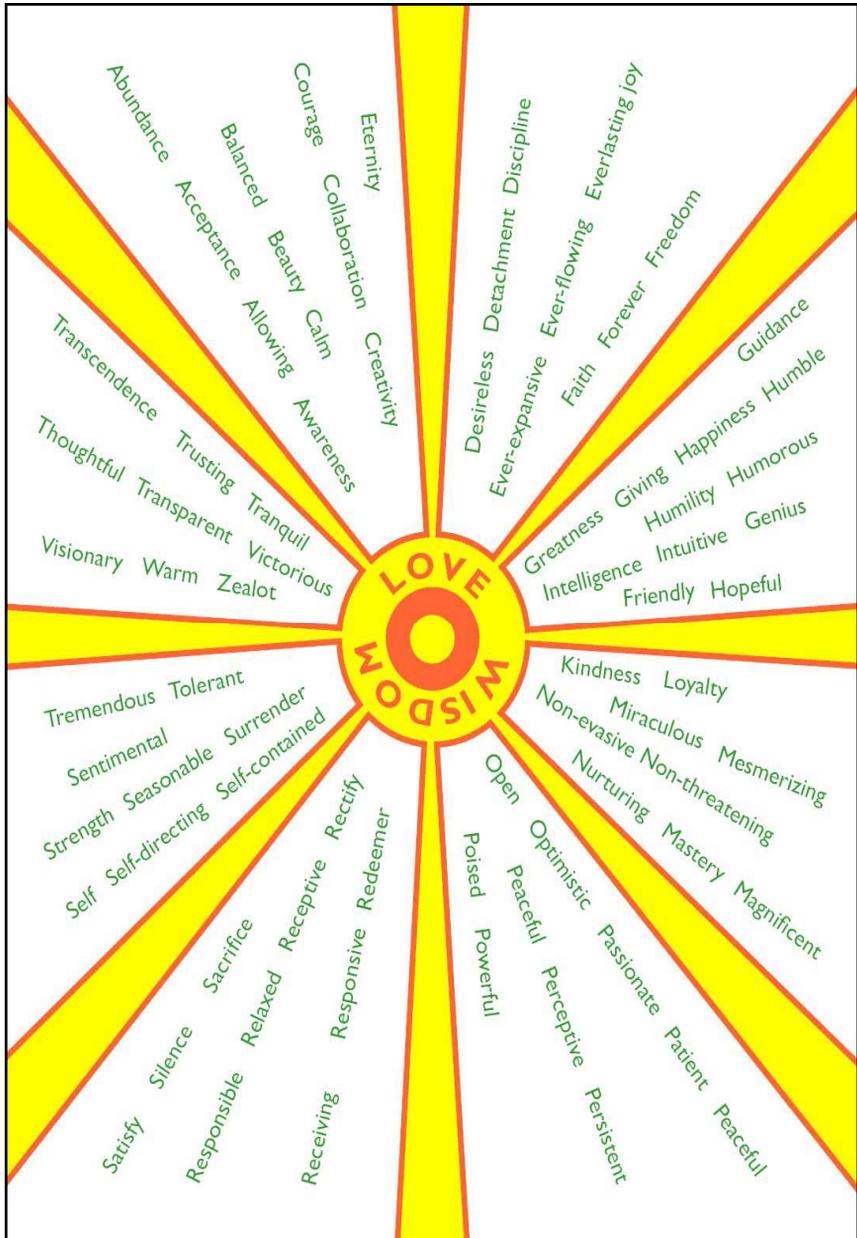
I had to leave the program. I had to do what I had to do to get some sobriety, but God never left; he has always been there for me. I found that, to paraphrase something I read in a meditation book, I had to keep looking for God until he found me. Besides, is it not his will to fulfill the Promises for me, if I continue to work for them and, may I add, with him?

In conclusion, I am a beneficiary of a loving God who has graciously and generously afforded me the lessons to think for myself and to learn to live with myself. As such, there are still precious reasons to hope, for there is more room to grow. Even without any guarantee that I will always be present, sober, and sane; I know I am safe in the hands of God. Yet, I may sometimes wander from the path of recovery, which only reminds me of a comforting song that my pastor sang for me after my long absence from church. The song is called "Even Though There Were Times I Stepped Out of His Will, I've Never Been Out of His Care."

In this gracious spirit, may God bless you and keep you safe! And just like we say in our SAA groups, "Keep coming back! It works! And we're worth it!"

God's Words

by Tim



E-mail Addresses

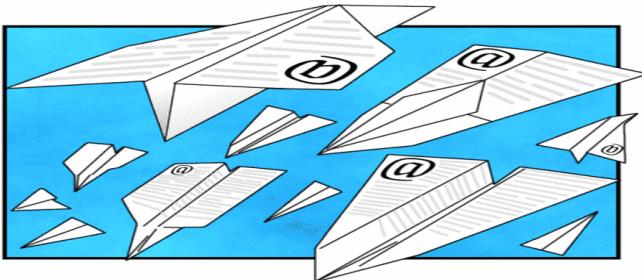
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