

The Outer Circle

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

PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270

Volume 4, Issue 1

January - February 2010



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ISO Board Actions

The following actions were taken by the Board of Trustees at the Saturday, October 17, 2009 Teleconference:

- **Mailing to 2010 Delegates:** Motion approved that “the ISO office mail by November 13th, 2009 to all known groups:
 - Notice of 2010 Convention dates and location and request to choose a delegate and alternate delegate and notify ISO Office of selection by March 1st, 2010.
 - Delegate Registration Form
 - Group Registration Form
 - Delegate New Business for submission by February 1st, 2010 to ISO Office in Call to Convention.”

- **Delegate Meeting Procedures:** Motion approved that, “beginning with the 2010 ISO Convention, the Delegate Meeting business item presentation procedure be changed as follows:
 - Allow 5 minutes for the Champion to present the motion;
 - Allow 5 minutes for the Delegates to ask questions with the following conditions:
 - All questions would be addressed to the Delegate meeting chair;
 - No amendments, friendly or otherwise;
 - Questions should be for information only, not for stating opinions;
 - The champion answers only when directed by the Chair;
 - Debate would begin with 10 1-minute presentation for and 10 1-minute presentations against.”

- **Delegate Meeting Schedule:** Motion approved that, “beginning with the 2010 ISO Convention, the Delegate meeting be extended by 2 hours; The 2 hours would be added to the Saturday morning session from 10 AM to 12 PM with the Focus Committee meetings to be scheduled for Saturday afternoon.” Motion approved with amendment by inserting “if practical” after the words “2010 ISO Convention.”

Literature Committee News



Interested in writing or editing?

The ISO Literature Committee welcomes the participation of volunteers in the process of developing SAA literature.

If you are interested in writing, editing, or proofreading, consider serving as a volunteer on a LitCom work group.

For a list of opportunities, contact us at

litcom@saa-litcom.org

“Pocket” Edition of *Sex Addicts Anonymous*

Now Available from the ISO!

The SAA Green Book, *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, is now available in a convenient size that fits easily into pocket or purse.

Now you can discreetly carry your recovery program with you.

Order one for yourself or your sponsee from the ISO office or through the online SAA Store.

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 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 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

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 November 30, 2009

	Nov 09	Monthly Avg	Jul - Nov 09
Income			
Sales	13,470	16,833	84,165
Shipping & Handling	1,310	1,458	7,291
Donations	51,435	24,966	124,832
Delegate Meeting Registration	5	1	5
Interest Earned	8	7	36
International Convention Revenue	0	180	901
Total Income	66,228	43,446	217,230
Total Cost Of Goods Sold	6,725	8,597	42,983
Gross Profit	59,503	34,849	174,247
Expense			
Wages	16,579	15,829	79,143
Employee Benefits (Not Wages)	1,776	1,782	8,908
Payroll Taxes	1,268	1,207	6,037
Insurance	264	264	1,321
Depreciation	125	165	825
Postage/Shipping	13	72	358
Communications	788	481	2,404
Office Expense	1,141	784	3,919
Occupancy Expenses	1,313	1,477	7,385
Board/Committee Expense	2,589	1,651	8,253
The Outer Circle	2,268	1,383	6,913
Financial Charges	1,269	1,046	5,231
Bad Debts/Refunds	63	170	851
Translating/Literature Projects	0	234	1,170
Miscellaneous Expenses	0	257	1,287
Convention Related Travel	0	98	488
International Convention	449	90	449
Total Expense	29,905	26,988	134,941
Net Income	29,598	7,861	39,306

Financial results for November 2009

In November we showed a surplus of \$29,598. We were budgeted to have a surplus of \$28,769. This was an increase in surplus of \$829.

Individual donations exceeded the budget by \$219 and group donations exceeded the budget by \$3,615. The Bay Area again exceeded expectations by raising \$20,542 at their "Giving Thanks" event. We received additional donations from the "Freedom from Addition Week" fundraiser, raising the total to \$9,290.

Our sales for the SAA Green Book were \$1,789 under budget, and are \$2,868 under budget for the current budget year. Our sales of the SAA Green Book through our book distributor (HCI) remain steady. Since January we have sold an average of 120 books per month through HCI.

Our pamphlets and booklets sales were under their budget by \$542, but are still \$2,678 over budget for the current budget year.

Our product inventory is valued at \$53,794. This is an increase of \$13,656 in inventory value from last month. The increase is due to the purchase and receipt of 5,000 SAA Green Books.

In taking a look at how we are doing against our current year budget, which runs from July 1, 2009 to June 30, 2010, we have done very well. In the first five months of our budget year:

- Sales exceeded the budget by \$1,465.
- Donations exceeded the budget by \$16,831.
- Expenses were under budget by \$1,592.

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 of Operations
director@saa-iso.org

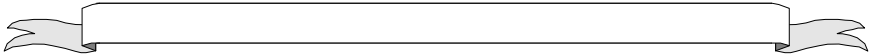
[Editor's Note: The ideas expressed in the literature section of The Outer Circle reflect the opinions of the authors of those articles, and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the ISO or of the SAA fellowship as a whole.]

From the Editor

by Mike L.,

Literature Editor, *The Outer Circle*

Greetings, all. When you read these words, we will have only recently passed through the holiday season of 2009. I am writing this article from the other end of the holiday season, just a couple of days before Thanksgiving. The last couple of weeks have been interesting. I chose to cancel a vacation that had been in the planning stages for some time because I felt the need to stay here and help a couple of folks who were in a position of needing some help. It's all good, though. I changed my plane reservation to go instead over the holidays to visit my brother whom I haven't seen in eleven years.



*I have come up with the topic for the
September/October issue ...*

“Growing in Maturity,”

*which may well be a more positive way of
saying “removing our character defects.”*

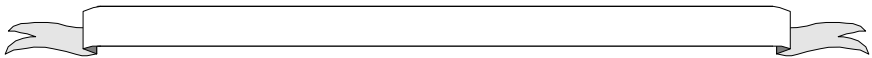


Of course, being an addict, I gave up my original plans only after leaving claw marks all over them. And the journey did not stop there. I have had to start learning a couple of lessons about being unselfish and the like, and the operative word here is “start”; and those lessons are not always easy for me.

So from this experience, I have come up with the topic for the September/October issue; that seems like such a long way off to me, and I know it's closer than I think. Anyway, the topic of “Growing in Maturity,” which may well be a more positive way of saying “removing our character defects.” As much as I would love to say that all I needed to do was get recovery from sexual addiction, that was really just the beginning of a process that will no

doubt last me the rest of my life. For me, the process has been like peeling the layers of an onion: I remove one layer of skin to take a closer look at it and there is another layer of skin beneath. I would like to hear some of your specific experiences around growing in maturity.

The response to our campaign to have articles in each issue relating to a particular topic has been most gratifying. Well over half the articles in this issue relate to a topic, and I am especially pleased that we have articles on the first two Steps and the First Two Traditions. I think it has been a very long time since we have been able to present completely new articles on the steps and traditions "related" to the months of the year of the publication. So if the upcoming topics don't grab you, please consider writing an article on the steps or traditions carrying the same numbers as the months of the year on the cover of the issue. I have been receiving a lot of articles of late and to be fair all I can do is to submit the articles in the order I get them; one way to ensure that your article receives priority is to submit an article on one of the proposed topics for the issue.



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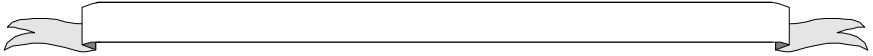
I hope that you will agree with me that we have a fine batch of articles in this issue. I'm still blessed with the amount of quality of articles I am receiving. And, along with this increase, I am getting more and more requests from our authors for feedback. Please consider sending a letter to the editor containing your reaction to a piece you have read in *The Outer Circle*.

You can submit your articles, either as a Word or WordPerfect document or as email text to toc@saa-recovery.org. If you prefer, you can send them to me c/o ISO of SAA, P.O. Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270-0949.

I'm going to keep my words brief this issue in order to allow more room for our wonderful authors to speak for themselves. I hope you have a great 2010 and I look forward to talking with you again next issue.

The Day I Found “The Bubble” by Cameron S.

It was lunchtime on a hot summer day in southeast Louisiana when I discovered the meaning of “the bubble.” I had been in the program for about two years. I remember receiving a pamphlet describing the bubble, but I had trouble putting its meaning together in my mind. On that hot day I was engaged in what was then normal middle-circle behavior. I was taking what I call a “mini-cruise” detour on my way to do some legitimate business at a nearby retail establishment. I saw something, or better someone, and decided to take a closer look. After yet another gas-guzzling, time-consuming, mini-cruise letdown I decided that I could still complete my lunchtime errand and make it back to the office in time. The only problem was that I had totally forgotten what errand had taken me from the office.



The “bubble” for me is that secret, seemingly safe, place that I create for myself; that realm of existence that I “blow up” and enter physically, mentally, and spiritually whenever I want to avoid feeling, thinking or doing that which is difficult in my life.



I forgot what I was doing, where I was, or where I was going. It took several seconds to remind myself by replaying the tape of the moments before I left the office. “Oh, yeah, that’s right,” I recall saying, and proceeded to complete my errand.

Much to my amazement I had discovered the concept of the bubble. The “bubble” for me is that secret, seemingly safe, place that I create for myself; that realm of existence that I “blow up” and enter physically, mentally, and spiritually whenever I want to avoid feeling, thinking or doing that which is difficult in my life. The bubble is my addiction cycle, particularly the preoccupation, ritualization and sexual compulsivity that after repeated occurrences over a span of twenty-five years had rendered my life unmanageable. The bubble became my attempt at self-protection, avoidance and hiding from the reality and complexity of life.

I blew up my bubble whenever fear, anger, greed, shame and feelings of vulnerability dominated my emotions. Not being one in possession of the skills necessary to cope with the verity and complexity of my emotional state, I sought solace within the walls of the bubble. Difficult tasks also led to my entrance into the bubble. Something as simple as making a program call gave rise to my need for the bubble. As for my thought life, anytime I had to make a difficult decision or couldn't figure out the future, the possibility of "bubble life" loomed.

I can't remember exactly what I was feeling that day in my car, but I am sure that some form of stress, anxiety or frustration accompanied me on my lunchtime journey. What I do remember was my losing track of time and place, my focus being shifted from running an important errand to running a few disappointing times around the block. I had totally disconnected from reality. I couldn't even remember why I had left the office to run a simple errand. That disconnect, that dissociation from reality, was what I had come to realize is the bubble.

I also realized that a few extra trips around the block in my car were not the only times that this dissociation had occurred. I had similar separation experiences while acting out on the internet or stalking some unsuspecting woman in a store. My cruising, surfing and stalking put me in another world; one where I got to make the rules, and the walls of the bubble promised to keep me safe.

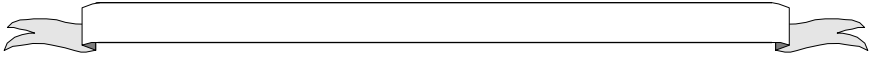
My having come to understand the bubble on that hot Louisiana afternoon has also given new meaning to my recovery. I see now the link between my additive cycle and the corresponding disconnection with reality. I see the need to stand guard over the present, ever vigilant against the possibility of allowing some stray thought, task or emotion to set the stage for my wanting to retreat into the fake walls of the bubble. I see the need to guard my heart by being grateful for what is now, forgiving for what has passed, and trusting for what is to come. It took a while, but I found the meaning of the bubble.

What the First Step Means to Me

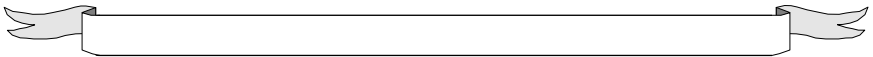
by Phillip M.

Thanks for sending my first issue of *The Outer Circle*. I look forward to reading and sharing future issues. I'm a two-time felony sex offender. This is my first time in prison; I'm in a unit whose majority population is sex offenders.

I believe my sex addiction started at age eight when I acted out with a girl who was twelve years older than I. I was hooked and began to engage in a variety of acting-out behaviors, which I continued for the next forty-plus years. I was arrested—for the fourth time—in November 2003.



*I had tried to stop but never could.
Certainly I could slow down for a day or two,
but my acting out got progressively worse.*



After being in prison for a year, I started in SAA with a mail sponsor. I'm currently working Step Twelve. My sponsor is my mentor and friend. I had twenty-three people and a city on my Eighth Step list. I wrote fourteen Ninth Step letters after sending them to my sponsor for his input. Some day I'll read the letter I wrote to my second wife to her at her gravesite.

A few years ago I started going to meetings of another Twelve-Step program but substituting "sex" for the addiction referred to in that program. I shared that I had an addiction to sex and that I didn't need a store or a dealer because my supply was in my brain.

A few months ago I spoke to a religious ministry volunteer about starting an SAA meeting here. He's an admitted sex offender on parole who had tried to teach a class for sex offenders here but couldn't because of a training issue.

However, another volunteer stepped up. We started having meetings about a month ago. There are twelve of us coming to the meetings. I understand that we are the first prison in our state to have an SAA meeting. Fortunately, I already had my own copy of the Green Book, thanks to my sponsor.

At our second anniversary, I shared that the day before had been my fourth anniversary in SAA. That night a man asked me to be his sponsor. Being his sponsor will help me in doing my Twelfth Step work and I am honored. Here I share the message every chance I get.

Our group leader suggested that we do a formal First Step and share it with the group. He also suggested that we write what the First Step meant to us. I've included what I wrote with this article.

Step One

Luckily when I started Step One in SAA, I had done it previously in another Twelve-Step group addressing a different addiction. But I did it as though it were the first time anyway. I admitted I was powerless over my addictive sexual behavior. I had heard in meetings that "our best thinking got us here." That was so true.

I had tried to stop but never could. Certainly I could slow down for a day or two, but my acting out got progressively worse. I tried denial, rationalization and justification. But I was lying to myself long before I lied to my now-ex-wife and friends.

My life was totally unmanageable. I was doing illegal acts in public and private places. I was going places and hanging around with people I normally wouldn't have associated with. In my compulsive behavior, I wasted much time, rather than spending it productively.

It took coming to prison to realize that I was a sex addict. Before I thought I was just oversexed (another self-lie). By working this program with my sponsor, and now with this group, I see how powerless I was and how unmanageable my life really was.

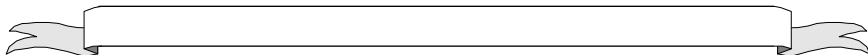
Every day before I get out of my bunk I pray the first three steps: I tell God I'm a sex addict, that I'm powerless over my addiction, and that my life is unmanageable. I tell God that I believe he can restore me to sanity. And I ask him to please take my will and my life into his hands. Finally, I ask him to please show me and teach me the way that will be pleasing to him. I also work the First Step several times a day here at my unit.

My Life Looking Down

by Cameron S.

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

Hello, my name is Cameron and I am a recovering sex addict. I gratefully submit for publication my first step towards becoming a “worthwhile person deserving of pride.” This is a significant step for me because for most of my life I have felt anything but worthy or proud. This deep-seated self-loathing and shame finds its source in a life of being emotionally abandoned and socially misdirected as a young child and teenager. In a desperate attempt to fulfill my deepest need to receive love, nurturing, acceptance, and understanding from the significant people in my life, I became addicted to compulsive sexual behavior. This addiction to dangerous and unhealthy sexual behavior ultimately destroyed me emotionally, robbed me of the ability to connect genuinely with others, and stunted my growth as a human being and more particularly as a man.



All of my sexual escapades were designed to achieve that all-elusive goal of finding a sex partner real or imagined, someone to meet my needs and fulfill my sexual fantasy.

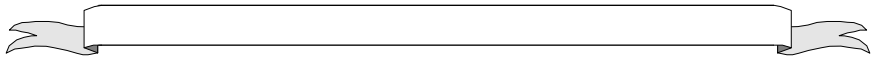


My addictive sexual behaviors and rituals include visual arousal through voyeurism, namely through internet pornography, paying for sex, and high-risk anonymous sex with prostitutes and escorts. A great deal of my time has been spent cruising (streets, stores and parking lots), surfing the internet and stalking (following women around in public places like stores, churches and shopping malls). Surfing, cruising and stalking. This is my sex addiction in a nutshell. All of my sexual escapades were designed to achieve that all-elusive goal of finding a sex partner real or imagined, someone to meet my needs and fulfill my sexual fantasy.

The fuel of my addiction is an arousal template centered on women's feet in high heels and stockings. To that end I have spent most of my adult life

“looking down.” Whether cruising, surfing or stalking I always sought arousal by first looking down. It didn’t really matter what a woman’s face looked like; if she was wearing the right thing from the ground to hips, she immediately became an object of my addictive fantasy and eventual masturbation.

This proclivity to look down made it very difficult for me to look people in the eye, especially women. It was a source of much distraction and caused me to be very inattentive to anything or anyone, whether it be work, school, church, socializing, driving, anything. In any given situation my first reaction is to seek sexual stimulation by first looking down. Hence, I not only looked down at women’s feet in shoes, but I developed the habit of looking down on myself in shame.



I have come to accept and embrace the reality of both my addiction and my recovery. I have come to the end of myself and consequently I am finding myself.



My sexual history can be best described as an escalation of addictive-compulsive behavior with every major institutional and geographical change in my life. Beginning in junior high school, through college and graduate school, and finally in the world of work and ministry, my addictive habit of looking down took on a life its own. Cruising, surfing and stalking became the center of my universe and there was nothing I could do to arrest its grip on my life. Even bouncing around the country did not quell the direction of my sight and attitude. No matter where I lived, the Midwest, Southwest, or the Southeast, I could not escape, or stop, the escalating habit of looking down. My looking-down behavior ultimately exacted a costly toll on my life. In a three-year span, I lost my wife, my employment and my ministry.

Coming to SAA in June 2006 turned out to be the best decision I have ever made. After hitting bottom four times I find that my recovery has suddenly taken off. I am now living in the Pacific Northwest where I have found a healthy Twelve-Step community. After years of throwing myself the biggest pity party in world, I have come to accept and embrace the reality of both

my addiction and my recovery. I have come to the end of myself and consequently I am finding myself. There was nothing else to hide. The addictive cover has been removed. So I throw myself into my recovery and my Higher Power has propelled me towards sanity, serenity and selflessness at speeds that still boggle my imagination. I have completed the Twelve Steps and I continue to work them every day. I am devoted to service work, serving my fellow addicts through sponsorship, setting up new meetings in the area and just showing up to as many other meetings as I can.



*I have stepped outside myself for the first time
and I like what I find there.*

I live on purpose and with purpose.



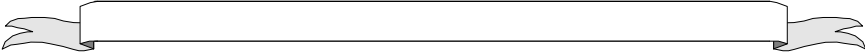
I have come full circle in my life. I find myself once again in that place of hopes, dreams and aspirations. I want to be and yet become. I have stepped outside myself for the first time and I like what I find there. I live on purpose and with purpose. As I look back I realize that three things have brought me to this point in my life: the unfailing love and grace of my higher power; the Twelve Steps of SAA; and a dogged determination to arrest and bring into compliance an addiction that has stolen so much from me and yet has given so much to me.

Like two ships that have passed in the night, I find myself destined towards the shores of recovery, toward health, sanity and wholeness, all the time being rocked in the wake of an addiction long since passed. Yet I journey on, hoping to one day gain sight of that shore upon which I know I will have total and complete restoration; a restoration to the pursuit of who I am meant to be. I journey on, living by new creeds, new thoughts, and new beliefs. Hence, "I press on to finish the work," "doing what I do," "one day at a time," "whatever it takes." No longer looking down in shame, but looking out in hope and finally looking up in faith.


A Higher Power of My Understanding

By Kasey S.

When I reached Step Two the second time around, I realized that I did not have a true understanding of God. I had blindly accepted the definition of God offered by my particular Christian denomination, and found it did not meet my needs or my understanding of a Higher Power. I came to believe that a God of my understanding could return me to sanity, but I did not know who that God was.



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The key to that understanding came when I asked, "If I'm insane, which I readily accepted, then what is 'sanity?'" I learned that sanity was a rational state of mind and that to be returned to it I had to be returned to it by a rational being that was God. This was the first aspect I attributed to the God of my understanding. God had a rational mind by which he judged everyone and everything; by which he always operated.

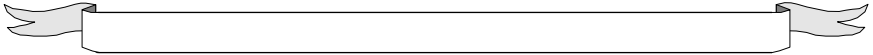
My concept of a God of my understanding, my Higher Power, has evolved over time. I have added many attributes to him. I see the God of my understanding as a rational, loving, and kind God who understands the human condition. This God is the universe: incredibly vast, extremely complex and diverse, and infinite.

The God of all the religions man has invented is much too small for me when I see God in these terms. Man's attempt to define God by theological doctrine seems to result in a limited understanding and a minute description of God. My Higher Power is universal, in and a part of all that I see, touch, and hear. My God is within me and within everything extant.

The question then arises, when God is so large, "How do I relate to such a boundless entity, being a finite individual myself?" This problem was recently answered for me.



I know that today when I'm running toward a cliff, my Higher Power will either catch me when I fall or teach me to fly.



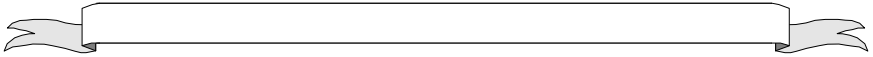
While reading a novel written in the 1950s about Rembrandt, I came across the line, "...when you love someone, you see the face of God," and I immediately recognized this as my answer. It is through the act of love that I relate to God. When I love all that surrounds me, I am relating to God; loving activates a relationship between God and me, and in that, I experience the Presence of God, my Higher Power.

As I reach out to another member of the Twelve-Step program, I am acting with love and therefore relating, not only to that member but also to my Higher Power. When I phone someone to check in or someone calls me, my Higher Power is there. My Higher Power and I are relating when I say to a member after a meeting, "I like what you said; it meant a lot to me." There are many things done that express loving kindness, and when I act with loving kindness, God and I relate. Even in the simplest gestures and acts of love, my Higher Power's existence is manifest.

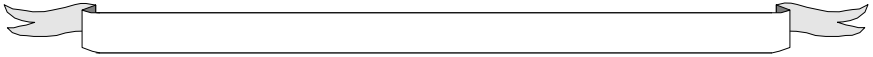
I know that today when I'm running toward a cliff, my Higher Power will either catch me when I fall or teach me to fly.

My Path to “HP” by David S.

The search for my concept of a Higher Power continues after nine years in the program. Like the recovery process itself, it's been a slow but ever-evolving journey. The only Higher Power I knew was myself and my addiction. If I ever had a belief in God, I long ago lost it and definitely turned against any religion.



One book that has served for me as a reference on sex addiction states “anything we surrender to becomes our God.” I have surrendered to the fact that the program does work when I work it.




When I was introduced to SAA, I felt I was lacking one of the requirements for recovery, and it was urgent that I find a Higher Power. I asked lots of questions of members who had a faith, and expressed concern about my lack of it. Those who have a genuine belief in God find it difficult to understand that some do not. For me it is not a decision to not believe, I just do not feel it. The concept of God feels like one more fantasy, a desirable illusion, a continuing quest for that perfect person. I need reality. I need touch.

I adopted one member's experience of claiming a specific tree as his Higher Power. I'd stand about three feet away, close my eyes, put my arms out, and fall against it. It did not move. It felt stronger and more powerful than me. It grounded me and helped me feel present—it helped me feel, and I would often cry. It was a beginning.

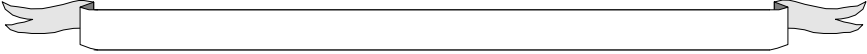
I also needed to feel embraced by my Higher Power. I purchased the softest woven throw I could find and named it “HP.” The first time I put it around my shoulders I wept. I continue to find comfort there.

When I exercised, I'd run with a space between myself and the edge of the road to allow room next to me for “HP my friend.” I would talk to him, many

times out loud, and try hard to feel a presence. I would ask to be given a real belief in the existence of a Higher Power. I wanted to believe.



I now know that I must have some power greater than myself in my life. I still do not have a belief in the proverbial God, but the urgency has lessened.



Taking the program's suggestion of "act as if," I pray often, even kneeling to express my fears, angers, wishes and gratitudes. But instead of actually turning anything over to the care of a Higher Power, I just try to let it go and accept the things I cannot change. I once questioned the aspect of phoniness and a group member asked if I felt better after praying. I admitted I did, and his response was "then why not do it?" I continue to do so but miss the comfort of believing there's really a Higher Power hearing me...and caring.

I now know that I must have some power greater than myself in my life. I still do not have a belief in the proverbial God, but the urgency has lessened. One book that has served for me as a reference on sex addiction states "anything we surrender to becomes our God." I have surrendered to the fact that the program does work when I work it. What I'm given through the words and actions of my group has "restored me to sanity," the same thing that the Second Step says a Higher Power will do. The program and my recovery itself strengthen and nurture me. I find the peace and comfort there that others find in their God—it has become my Higher Power!

Traditions One and Two: Our Common Welfare and the Group Conscience

by Jamie W.

Just as SAA's Steps direct us towards recovery, the Traditions guide our effectiveness in our relations with each other, especially at the group, inter-group, and general service level.

The Traditions help us participate effectively and serenely in service to each other and to the outside world. They are guidelines to improve our efforts to carry SAA's message to the still-suffering sex addict, and contribute to more harmonious working relations among my brothers and sisters in recovery.

Born from experience, the Twelve Traditions are a study in what works as we conduct the work of SAA. In particular, Traditions One and Two are a foundation for my understanding of how to participate in SAA effectively.

SAA's first tradition states "our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon SAA unity."

This brings up the ideas of a "common welfare" and "SAA unity." Without these in place, there can be no personal recovery. Tradition One makes us aware that there IS something larger than the individual, and taking care of that "something larger" does come first. This is especially true for those of us who have a foothold in sobriety: we help maintain the lifeboat of SAA in order to reach those still in trouble. I am grateful that others put in the effort to hold a weekly meeting, offer me a solution, and publish literature to fuel my journey in recovery. All this SAAs before me developed so, when I was ready to get sober, it was ready for the taking.

What happens if we neglect our common welfare and sidestep issues related to our common welfare and SAA unity? Last year, one of the meetings I regularly attended closed down. At one point, over twenty people would show up weekly to share experience, strength and hope. But one individual's actions and comments continually undermined the group unity and its welfare, and this situation was not addressed effectively at the group level. Eventually, people stopped attending the group, and some stopped going to SAA altogether—including several newcomers who left with a bad experience of what SAA has to offer. Without the group welfare and unity, there was no personal recovery.

How else do we contribute to our common welfare? At the group level, we show up, set up, greet newcomers, and clean up, participate in group conscience meetings, and help carry SAA's message of recovery. Outside the

group is the general service level on which we communicate: we attend business meetings, intergroup meetings, and serve on committees to move SAA ever forward. All of these are ways we help maintain SAA for the still-suffering sex addict.

At my local intergroup, keeping “our common welfare” first helps us bridge strong differences of opinion and move forward with substantial agreement in our efforts to serve. When we focus on the solution and the effectiveness of our efforts, personal differences fade away and we unite in action.

SAA's common welfare requires sustained effort and communication. We work together face to face, online, via e-mail and phone. Tradition Two shows us how to communicate effectively: it states “for our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as expressed in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.”

In order for there to be a group conscience, we must gather and talk with each other. It means we have to meet and develop some common direction. Tradition Two means we don't have to be lone rangers, making our own decisions and isolating. It also suggests that a loving God is present when we gather. My God usually shows up in the form of other people, so I had better listen to my fellows.

Once a year, SAAs from all over the world gather at SAA's ISO convention to share their experience, strength, and hope. This is perhaps the best opportunity to take measure of the group conscience of SAA as a whole, and a lot of talking and communication takes place at the ISO convention.

Traditionally, Friday all day and Saturday morning are dedicated to the delegate meeting where delegates sent by registered SAA groups gather together and work on issues of our common welfare. This year, one underlying theme will be how we can improve the effectiveness of the delegate meeting. As SAA grows larger each year, the business of an informed group conscience requires better means of discussion, communication, and direction. Making the delegate meeting more productive contributes greatly to our efforts to carry SAA's message.

Recently, ISO sent out a mailing to prepare registered groups for the 2010 ISO convention. It is my hope that all SAA groups will consider participating, submit proposals regarding our fellowship, and find ways to contribute to this opportunity to advance our common welfare.

Prisoner Outreach

by Ed G.

Step 12: Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other sex addicts...

Believe me, it was an eye-opening experience to discover, through conviction, incarceration, and the available reading material while incarcerated, that there was a name for the way I was acting that put me in prison—sex addiction. I had told myself a number of times, even though I lived with a twelve-stepper, that I didn't understand how someone could be addicted to anything—let alone something as natural as sex. I just could not comprehend addiction of any sort. Now I know.

While in prison I came across some literature from SAA and learned what a “cunning, baffling, and powerful” addiction sex can become. Never in my wildest dreams would I have thought I could succumb to an addiction of any sort. How wrong I was; I quickly identified with Step One: “We admitted we were powerless over addictive sexual behavior—that our lives had become unmanageable.” With that revelation, I contacted SAA for more information. I soon had a sponsor who got me started on the Steps. It meant a lot to me to be able to “talk” to someone who had traveled a similar path.

And, no, it is not necessary to have been in prison to reach out to one who is. Even though I was taking the required prison Sex Offender Program, and found that a daunting experience, the Steps really made me think more introspectively about my life and how the addiction affected me and others. That led me to a deeper understanding of my behavior and provided a stronger path to follow for a lifetime of sexual sobriety—called recovery.

Through the program I have learned much and I know why I feel the Twelfth Step is so important. What I have learned needs to be shared. And that is why what we have learned along the way to our own recovery needs to be shared with those still suffering, particularly in a prison environment where they may not have the opportunity to gather with kindred souls as in an SAA meeting. Having received guidance on how to live with my addiction through sexual sobriety by living the Twelve Steps, becoming a prisoner sponsor is my way to “pay back” for the benefits I have received and a way to “pay it forward” by guiding others to the same awareness and hope that I have obtained.

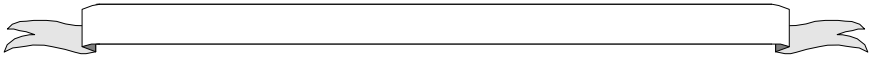
Therefore, I challenge each of you to consider becoming an inmate sponsor by contacting ISO of SAA or your regional prisoner outreach coordinator. It can be a rewarding experience for both the sponsee and the sponsor.

Truth in My Recovery

by Larry

Steps One and Four through Seven involve revealing truth to ourselves, our higher power and others. Revealing personal truth was not important to me for the first fifty-three years of my life. All I cared about was survival.

Survival did not require truth. I thought it required acquisition. So I set about to acquire money and to give up everything else. I gave up my life-long dream to be an architect, because I found out that architects do not make a lot of money.



*The truth is that I am an addict in recovery.
And I am blessed. It is a paradox.*



I gave up my wedding vows, relying on pornography as a substitute for the intimacy of an honest relationship, because that way I acquired more sex. And I gave up truth about that to avoid consequences.

Throughout thirty years of marriage and professional practice, I acquired power, status, money and things. I did such a good job of hiding the truth, lying to my wife, family, friends, clients and total strangers, that I began to delude myself. I believed my own propaganda. I lied whenever it was necessary and often when it wasn't.

My addictive behavior escalated over time. Eventually I was spending many hours every day compulsively acting out sexually, abusing drugs, violating the law and engaging in behaviors that put my wife and me at risk of disease and death.

Lying to myself, I thought I was in control. But I hated myself. I hated waking up in the morning. I wanted to die. Survival was not enough. As I have read elsewhere, I was at the end of my rope, and all that was left was the knot.

I started attending SAA meetings, but I could not live a rigorously honest life yet. So I gave up SAA and went back to the addiction. Things kept

getting worse. I gave up more and more of my time, energy and peace of mind to act out. I was about to lose my marriage and career, everything I had worked for. I was ready to give up my life.

Ironically I was saved when I got arrested for possessing child pornography. This cracked my psyche wide open. I became willing to give up control and put myself in the hands of a higher power. My therapist and my wife brought me to an in-patient facility, where I learned about my addiction and how to give it up. I attended an SAA meeting every day.

I came home and continued to attend SAA meetings almost every day. I got a sponsor and started working the Steps. I accepted responsibility for the consequences of my behavior, went to jail and was suspended from my profession. I gave up working for eighteen months to practice a living amends and rigorous honesty.

I am now two years into a five-year term of probation. I attend therapy and SAA meetings often. Slowly and with the help of my higher power, my wife, friends, family and therapists, I have given up lying. I have acquired a spirituality that, unlike all of the acquisitions of my past, I cannot see or touch or smell. But it is a heck of a lot more gratifying, and it is there for me always.

Being honest and present in the moment and practicing a conscious relationship with my higher power have restored joy to my life. I have the fellowship of my peers in the program and many friends, whose support is a consistent anchor in rough seas. I am thankful that I am working again and that soon I can rejoin my profession.

And I am grateful for a wife who stands with me and with whom I have grown in respect, empathy and intimacy. We are celebrating our thirty-fifth wedding anniversary, something I did not believe possible three years ago. It is no storybook relationship of prince and princess, but we are looking forward to a future together one day at a time.

I know the truth. As it says in the Green Book chapter on tools, more progress in recovery will come only from consistent hard work and accepting the anger and grief that precedes or accompanies change and the consequences of acting out.

The truth is that I am an addict in recovery. And I am blessed. It is a paradox. If I continue in the program—and there is no doubt in my mind that I will do so for the rest of my life—I will continue to be an addict in recovery. There is pain in that. But there also is redemption. SAA gives me the tools and the structure to remain rigorously honest. The truth is that I do not need anything more than that to experience joy again.

Giving Thanks

by Joanne B.

Four years ago, I moved from my tiny SAA fellowship where I had found sobriety, to a large fellowship in another city. A month later, I was whisked off by total strangers – soon to be close friends – to attend my first Giving Thanks. It was a blast! The host, had started Giving Thanks several years before as a way to bring the fellowship closer together, and now it had become a highlight of the year for us, where we were able to see everyone and catch up and enjoy each other's company and support ISO in the process.

This year, my original little fellowship having grown, about ten members came to the convention. Afterwards everyone was on fire to be more involved and raise money for ISO. So we started talking about how to put on the city's first Giving Thanks. Since I had all the inside scoop, I was able to pass on the details: pick a date, find a house, get some chips and dip and drinks, and invite everyone to come.

The following letter tells the results:

October 24, 2009

To: ISO of SAA, Inc.
Joe H., Director of Operations
cc: Eric M., Chair, ISO Board of Trustees
P.O. Box 70949
Houston, TX 77270

Hello Joe,

We are grateful to report the results of our "First Annual Giving Thanks Fellowship Event" which took place with tremendous success on October 17th. One of our group members graciously volunteered his home to host this event, and approx. forty to fifty members and their partners attended.

First, many services opportunities were created during the months of planning preceding this event. These provided many great learning and growing experiences, as group members responded to these service needs with grace and dignity. Many subjects were covered and discussed, including: Primary Purpose, Twelve Traditions, locations, members attending, focus on fundraising, money and outside issues. One main purpose of this event was to build "service muscle," to create and increase our service experience and infrastructure, which we hope will allow our groups to plan and sponsor future events, such as workshops and retreats. We believe progress was made in accomplishing this goal.

Second, much fellowship, fun and food took place in the planning and at the night of the event. Members donated funds and provided a huge

range of food, and other members prepared a gigantic paella, the classic Spanish rice-and-seafood dish. A couple of group members spoke briefly about the ISO and service needs of the fellowship. Old friendships were renewed and new ones were made.

Third, we are grateful for the generous contributions of many group members. At the event, a "silent auction" was hosted, for which many beautiful items were donated, including artwork, jewelry, professional services, gift baskets, concert tickets and more. Over \$1000 was raised by the auction items, and additional contributions from group members, brought the total donations to our goal of \$2009. We are seeing so much spiritual growth in our members and groups, and we're glad their expressions of this growth, can assist the ISO in carrying the SAA message of recovery.

The attached schedule details the checks and cash (in form of cashier's check) which were received. We are awaiting a final couple of "checks in the mail," and will forward the entire package to you via registered mail this week.

And finally, we very much appreciate the guidance of the ISO and ISO office, in sharing your experience, as well as the published guidelines on the SAA website. The examples and motivations which our group members experienced at the convention, and our members learning of the "Giving Thanks" activities in other cities around the country, were primary motivating factors encouraging our groups to undertake such an effort ourselves. We look forward to sponsoring many more service-oriented SAA events in the future.

In fellowship,
John R., Secretary

To Joanne and Giving Thanks leaders:

Thank you for carrying the message through Giving Thanks. What a wonderful journey you've illuminated for us in your email which I will share with our Giving Thanks team here. I imagine they will be as moved as I am.

Your objective, "to build service muscle, to create and increase our service experience and infrastructure," is just wonderful. Without service it seems a fellowship stagnates; without the service infrastructure, it seems fellowships struggle to carry the message beyond their core meetings.

To grow in order to reach the thousands who appear to need our fellowships, we must push beyond our fears and our limits. May the seeds you are planting for your fellowship grow beyond any vision you and others may have for them.

Sincerely,
Lowell S.

E-mail Addresses

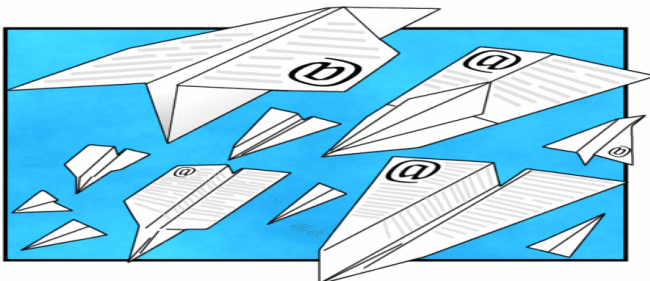
The following is a list of Board E-mail addresses and the LitCom e-mail addresses for the various regions, and the ISO staff E-mail addresses. The Board, LitCom, and the staff are always happy to hear from the fellowship.

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

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The Outer Circle Editor: toc@saa-recovery.org

The ISO of SAA Board of Trustees has established an e-mail box which may be used to register comments, positive or negative, from the fellowship about the ISO staff. OOCchair@SAA-Recovery.org



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