

The Outer Circle

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

PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270

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The Following actions were taken by the Board of Trustees at the June 19, 2010 Teleconference:

- Motion approved that “the Board allow the use of the SAA medallion logo on the Inter-Fellowship Forum (IFF) website.”
- Motion approved to “rename the Board’s Conference Charter Committee to the Conference Business Procedures Committee.” (Amendment approved to strike ‘Conference Business Procedures Committee’ and to insert ‘2011 Conference Committee’)
- Motion approved to “instruct the Teen Outreach Sub-committee to suggest a new name reflecting the target age range.”

Are You Planning to Attend the Convention in Canada in 2012?

If you are planning to attend the convention in Canada in 2012, please be aware that Canada has strict laws on people with past criminal histories entering the country.

Depending on the nature of the crime, whether it is a misdemeanor or a felony (by Canadian standards, which are sometimes different than U.S. standards), and how long ago the offense took place, it can take up 18 months to get permission to enter the country and will involve a nonrefundable fee for processing the application which in the case of felonies can be quite steep.

More information about the requirements is available at:
http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1082.html.

We hosted a workshop on this subject at the recent convention and a **CD of the workshop is available** from the ISO office.

North Dakota Fall Roundup October 23, 2010

The Northern Tier Intergroup of SAA is sponsoring the 6th Annual Fall Roundup in Fargo, ND, on Saturday afternoon, October 23, 2010. The program features four speakers, dinner, and fellowship time. For additional information, contact Dave S at 701-730-5308 or Ted J at 701-238-1910.

For more announcements of upcoming SAA events, go to:
<http://saa-recovery.org/NewsAndEvents/>

Literature Committee News

SAA pamphlets now available to read online!

The International Service Organization of SAA is pleased to announce the availability of SAA pamphlets on the SAA website (saa-recovery.org). The pamphlets may be found by following the "SAA literature" sub-tab from the Home page. Also available online are the pamphlets in Spanish and the "Pathway to Recovery" pamphlet in French.

This milestone has been accomplished by the combined efforts of the ISO Literature Committee, the ISO office, and the ISO Board of Trustees and its committees, specifically the Online Presence Committee and the International Development Committee. We believe that ready access to SAA literature online will greatly enhance the capacity of member groups and individual members of the fellowship to carry the SAA message of recovery more effectively and more efficiently.

As before, the printed pamphlets are available for purchase from the ISO – either through the online SAA Store or by telephone or postal mail from the ISO office. Don't forget to ask about our volume discount.

This development is a good example of how the ISO is working to support members of the fellowship and member groups. As you benefit from having access to the SAA pamphlets online, please remember that the ISO is totally dependent on financial support from members, member groups, and intergroups to offer and maintain this type of service for the fellowship. If you appreciate what the ISO does for you, please consider making a tax-deductible contribution today.

"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.

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 on next page). 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 Approved 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 e-mail to:

meditation@saa-recovery.org

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

Meditation Writing Tele-Workshops

All those interested in contributing to the Meditation Book are invited to attend one or more tele-workshops. We will go over the guidelines and process for submission; there will be ample time for writing, and time for sharing as well. Please consider joining us for this unique service opportunity!

All workshops are the 4th Sunday of the month at 5:00 p.m. Central Time and last until 6:30 p.m.:

Sunday September 26
Sunday October 24
Sunday November 28
Sunday December 26

To register, call the ISO at 1-800-477-8191,
or send an e-mail to:

meditation@saa-recovery.org

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 e-mailed 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*.

New Project: History of SAA

The ISO Literature Committee is pleased to announce plans for a new project to compile and document the history of the founding and development of SAA. The research and initial writing will be done by a long-time member of the fellowship, who has graciously volunteered to spearhead this project.

Questions about the project and information or anecdotes for possible inclusion in this volume can be sent by postal mail to the ISO office, or e-mailed to:

litcom@saa-litcom.org

ISO Literature Committee Relationships and Responsibilities

Jim L.

In response to many questions during the past six years, the following essay is offered to clarify the relationships among the ISO Literature Committee, the fellowship of SAA, and the various components of the ISO, as I have come to understand and appreciate them while serving on the Literature Committee. An overview of ISO Literature Committee responsibilities is also presented.

From my perspective, SAA is a fellowship of individual members subscribing to the concept that the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous can serve as an appropriate and adequate template for achieving recovery from sex addiction. The fellowship exists globally without organizational structure and without local, regional, or national identities. Its defining characteristic is its unity of purpose, and, as a result, it has no boundaries. The fellowship has no governance, and it has no formal structure. Groups exist solely to facilitate the purpose of the fellowship on the local level. Intergroups exist solely to facilitate the purpose of groups within a defined city or region.

The SAA program (as distinguished from the fellowship) is defined by the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of SAA, as modified with permission from Alcoholics Anonymous. As members of the fellowship, we commit to work the Twelve-Step program in pursuit of recovery. In addition, we choose to apply the Twelve Traditions in our dealings with one another, assuring the integrity, well-being, and longevity of the fellowship, which is essential to be effective in carrying our message of hope to the addict who still suffers.

With a view toward meeting common needs and achieving certain efficiencies of scale, the ISO of SAA, Inc. was created by the fellowship to provide an organizational structure that could coordinate communications and activities among local groups and serve as a centralized resource in support of the fellowship. In doing so, the ISO became the legal entity -- a not-for-profit corporation -- that conducts business on behalf of the fellowship.

The components of the ISO -- delegates to the Conference (members of the corporation), a Board of Trustees, and a Literature Committee, all three of which are elected by local groups or regional caucuses -- derive their respective responsibilities from the Bylaws of the ISO of SAA. The ISO office supports all three components and operates under the direction of the Board of Trustees. The Board and Literature Committee are specifically directed in the Bylaws to turn to God, as its members understand God, for guidance and to seek to be faithful to the Twelve Steps and Twelve Tra-

ditions of SAA and the Twelve Concepts of World Service of AA.

The function assigned to the Literature Committee in the Bylaws of the ISO of SAA is to provide "supervisory authority over the content of all ISO publications." On at least two occasions in the past, the Board of Trustees has been called on to review that charge, the latest of which (2006) clarified the scope of the Literature Committee to encompass all publications intended for continuing use (including websites, audio recordings, and documents generated by the ISO office staff). As part of its role, the Literature Committee also advises and supports the Board and the office staff in protecting the assets of the corporation, important among which are ISO publications, as well as the distinctive trademarks and copyrights owned by the corporation.

It is also important to note what is not under the supervisory authority of the Literature Committee -- namely, documents, treatises, pamphlets, booklets, books, or other materials that are not published by the ISO. Also, the Literature Committee is expressly prohibited from entering into contracts or authorizing the expenditure of ISO funds, both of which are responsibilities of the Board of Trustees.

Literature Committee authority begins when a request is made by an individual, a group, an intergroup, or a Board committee to publish a particular piece of work as SAA literature. The formal process of consideration, which will be explained in detail in the new Literature Committee Handbook (to be published this year), begins with an initial review that evaluates whether the piece meets the established guidelines for SAA literature. Initial consideration is also given to the intended audience, the writing style and content appropriate for that particular audience, and the intended use of the piece, as well as the mode of distribution (print, website, internal use, public sale, etc.). If the piece fails initial review, it is returned to the author with an explanation of why it was rejected. The author is then free to re-work and resubmit the piece or to pursue a different course of action.

A piece that passes initial review, then undergoes more in-depth review of content, style, language, and grammar, which may take a few weeks for short pieces intended for limited distribution or may take several months or longer for larger, more complex works. Upon approval by the LitCom, the piece is then published by the ISO and made available to its intended audience as SAA literature.

After a period of feedback from the fellowship-at-large (typically two years or longer), the LitCom, at its sole discretion, may present the piece or an edited version of it for Conference approval at an annual meeting of the delegates. While Conference approval does not necessarily reflect fellowship-wide consensus, it does confer the endorsement of a larger body of concerned members acting as trusted servants.

The ISO Literature Committee is accountable to the delegates. Recommendations by the delegates are given high priority in the planning and implementation of Literature Committee projects. In addition, any decision of the Literature Committee can be overruled by a majority vote of the delegates, meeting at an annual Conference or by special ballot at the request of the Board.

In conclusion, the ISO Literature Committee takes very seriously its responsibility to serve as the gatekeeper for SAA literature. The Committee holds as its highest priority assuring the integrity of the SAA message and promoting recovery and unity within the fellowship through publication of high quality literature. We have learned that these goals are best reached in an environment of open and honest communication between the members of the fellowship and the ISO Literature Committee.

Contact the ISO Literature Committee
by postal mail through the ISO office, or by e-mail at:

litcom@saa-litcom.org

Outreach Committee Reports

“Our voluntary efforts are essential to the success of the fellowship and the recovery of every sex addict who is a part of it.”

(Sex Addicts Anonymous, Chapter 5 “Our Purpose – Service”, pg. 75)

General Outreach Committee

This umbrella committee was established by the ISO Board of Trustees in 2006, and consists of numerous subcommittees, which are designed to address specific areas of outreach for the SAA fellowship:

- Public Information subcommittee
- Teen Outreach subcommittee
- Men’s Outreach subcommittee
- Young Adult Outreach subcommittee
- GLBT Outreach subcommittee
- Compulsive Sexual Avoidance Outreach group
- Women’s Outreach Subcommittee

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

For information, questions or suggestions, e-mail:

genoutreach.glbt@saa-recovery.org

Public Information Subcommittee

The Public Information Subcommittee works to create documents and processes to carry the SAA message of recovery through the Twelve Steps, to the addict who still suffers. Recent Projects include:

- Development of an SAA Speakers Bureau and Training workshops
- Development of an SAA Speakers Manual, to establish standards, policies and procedures for the SAA Speakers Bureau to accurately present the SAA message to outside organizations and media.
- Establishing a process to respond to media requests
- Producing a draft revision of the Anonymity Letter
- Development of a Public Information Work Book

For information, questions or suggestions, e-mail:

genoutreach.pi@saa-recovery.org

Teen Outreach Subcommittee

The Teen Outreach Subcommittee works to create tools and materials to support addicts from age thirteen to seventeen in finding recovery. Supporting teen sex addicts is a complex and sensitive issue. It is our task to do everything possible to make our program available to anyone who wants help, according to our Third Tradition. This subcommittee is currently developing a set of guidelines for carrying the SAA message of recovery to teen sex addicts, and is developing informative pamphlets describing some options for the SAA fellowship in helping teen sex addicts.

For information, questions or suggestions, e-mail:

genoutreach.teen@saa-recovery.org

Men's Outreach Subcommittee

The Men's Outreach Subcommittee is tasked with reaching sex addicts who do not have the ability to attend a meeting in their immediate vicinity. A Men's Contact list has been established for the purpose of contacting others for support and/or sponsorship. It has been and continues to be an effective tool for supporting those who wish to recover but lack local support.

The Men's Outreach Subcommittee has recently written and submitted an article to the Outer Circle describing the benefits of being a remote sponsor and requesting volunteers. Men's Outreach is also trying to identify those people on the Men's Contact list who would wish to participate in Prison Outreach. This subcommittee is seeking members to actively participate in service. Please consider including Men's Outreach in your service activities. Women and transgender persons are most welcome to participate on this subcommittee.

For information, questions or suggestions, e-mail:

genoutreach.men@saa-recovery.org

Young Adult Outreach Subcommittee

This subcommittee's focus is on carrying the SAA message to young adults aged eighteen to thirty-nine, with a current emphasis on college students. College-age adults are being exposed to the dangers of sexual addiction at a rate that seemed impossible just a few years ago. Pornography and dating services are available to anyone with the touch of a keyboard. "Sexting" (sex texting) is also becoming rampant among young adults. Up until now, in our fellowship, there has been little focus on carrying a message that specifically targets the college-age population. The goal of the Young Adult Outreach Subcommittee is to explore and develop ways to effectively reach out to those young adults who need to hear the message of recovery that SAA has to offer. Activities include touching base with the teleconference intergroup about setting up a conference for young adults and contacting health centers at universities about adding information on their websites mentioning that they have literature for sexual addic-

tion and compulsive sexual behavior.

If you are interested in participating on this committee, or for information, questions or suggestions, e-mail:

genoutreach.ya@saa-recovery.org

GLBT Outreach Subcommittee

The GLBT Outreach Subcommittee is tasked with developing and providing outreach activities to sex addicts in the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender communities, as well as to current GLBT members within Sex Addicts Anonymous. SAA members of all genders and sexual orientations are invited to participate in developing methods to best carry the message of SAA recovery to sex addicts within these communities.

Since its establishment in early 2008, our members have responded to over 300 inquiries per year to our outreach e-mail address, providing information on SAA, as well as support and sponsorship. Recent projects include sponsoring a monthly public information announcement in a national GLBT newsmagazine and drafting pamphlets focusing on the needs of sex addicts in the GLBT communities.

For information, questions or suggestions, e-mail:

GLBT@saa-recovery.org

Compulsive Sexual Avoidance Outreach

“For some of us, the compulsive avoidance of sex and intimacy became a destructive pattern, dominating our thoughts and actions.”

(Sex Addicts Anonymous, pg. 6)

Members interested in participating in a service group to address this important issue are invited to join us. This group pursues outreach efforts including: providing outreach contacts for those struggling with compulsive sexual avoidance (or sexual anorexia) issues, and creating literature around recovery from compulsive sexual avoidance.

For information, questions or suggestions, e-mail:

genoutreach.avoidance@saa-iso.org

Women’s Outreach Subcommittee

Reaches out to all women with a desire to stop addictive sexual behaviors and help them find our Fellowship for recovery. The Women’s Outreach Committee is made up of men and women sex addicts from all over the world. Members meet regularly to discuss and implement ways to reach each other and maintain contact with each other. We also offer an e-mail list for women in recovery. If you are interested in participating on this committee, or for information, questions or suggestions, e-mail:

GenOutreach.WOSC@saa-iso.org

ISO Income/Expense Summary

As of June 30, 2010

	Jun'10	Monthly Avg	Jul'09-Jun'10
Income			
Sales	16,561.42	17,337.25	208,046.97
Shipping & Handling	1,474.51	1,476.47	17,717.58
Donations	15,070.04	21,828.20	261,938.45
Delegate Meeting Registration	0.00	681.21	8,174.50
Interest Earned	46.95	164.62	1,975.49
Other Income	25.50	2.13	25.50
Convention Revenue	50.00	5,895.78	70,749.35
Total Income	33,228.42	47,385.65	568,627.84
Cost of Goods Sold	8,910.72	8,581.69	102,980.32
Gross Profit	24,317.70	38,803.96	465,647.52
Expense			
Wages	20,589.95	16,164.04	193,968.53
Payroll Taxes	1,587.76	1,250.06	15,000.73
Payroll Expenses	13.44	4.01	48.16
Employee Benefits (Not Wages)	3,047.56	2,380.87	28,570.46
Insurance	277.41	262.33	3,147.98
Depreciation	175.00	166.67	2,000.00
Office Postage	51.19	47.83	573.93
Communications	570.39	468.18	5,618.21
Office Expense	413.01	782.12	9,385.38
Occupancy Expenses	1,460.29	1,540.60	18,487.24
Board/Committee Expense	3,041.69	1,642.38	19,708.53
The Outer Circle	1.66	1,242.03	14,904.36
Financial Charges	1,338.52	1,252.36	15,028.32
Bad Debts/Refunds	31.70	127.06	1,524.73
Translating/Literature Projects	0.00	97.54	1,170.48
BUSINESS TRAVEL-RELATED	16,115.91	2,156.69	25,880.28
DELEGATE MEETING	50.00	790.33	9,483.93
CONVENTION EXPENSES	326.29	4,268.98	51,227.78
Miscellaneous Expenses	0.00	107.21	1,286.57
Total Expense	49,091.77	34,751.30	417,015.60
Net Income	-24,774.07	4,052.66	48,631.92

Financial Results for June 2010

In June, we had a deficit of \$24,774, which was \$5,550 over budget. Our projected budget deficit was \$30,324. June ended our current service year. In July the new budget took effect.

In June, our sales for the SAA Green Book were \$1,434 under budget, and were \$4,408 under budget for the service year.

Our pamphlets and booklets sales were under budget by \$178 in June, and were \$4,977 over budget for the budget year. Two other significant sales areas during this service year were our bronze medallions, which were \$2,145 over budget and our chips, which were \$1,815 over budget. The sale of outside literature was under budget by \$2,498.

Our total sales for June were over budget by \$21.

Individual donations in June were under budget by \$1,232, and for the service year were under budget by \$5,488. Group donations in June exceeded budget by \$1,252, and for the service year exceeded the budget by \$33,027.

Our total donations for June exceeded the budget by \$20.

Our product inventory is valued at \$45,080.

In taking a look at how we did against for the service year of 2009-2010, which runs from July 1, 2009 to June 30, 2010, we have done very well.

- Sales exceeded the budget by \$9,566
- Donations exceeded the budget by \$27,538
- Expenses were under budget by \$16,763

Our operational reserve amount is fully funded at \$118,322. This is the estimated amount needed to run the office for four months and is reset each January. 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

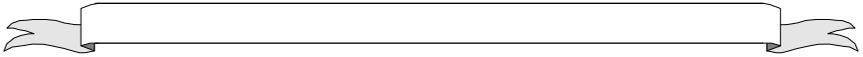
director@saa-iso.org

[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.]

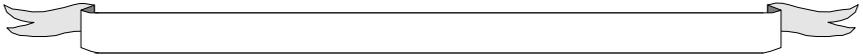
From the Editor

by Mike L.

I begin my comments this month with some very sad news: Ken S., a member of the ISO Board and a former Board Liaison to the Literature Committee, died the weekend of July 24-25. Ken was very active in his local groups, sponsored many, and also served a term as Board Chair.



I am going to propose "gratitude" as a topic for the May/June 2011 issue of The Outer Circle.



It was nostalgic for me to happen across Ken's name in the October/November 2000 issue of the newsletter while searching for a past article on Step Nine to accompany the articles on Steps Eight and Ten that we recently received. Ken was listed as the Board alternate and also as Board liaison to the Intergroup Communications committee for the 2000-2001 year. That he was Board alternate at the time indicates that he had been active the fellowship for some years before that.

Ken was physically a large man, and yet his physical size was dwarfed by that of the role he played in SAA. I was aware of his other Board involvements, and so I was especially struck by the extent to which he continually participated in our LitCom teleconferences, even after he stepped down as LitCom liaison. While I didn't always agree with his thoughts, they were invariably well thought out and well expressed. Ken, you were a gift to the fellowship and you will be greatly missed.

My sadness at Ken's passing reminds me of one of the primary tools for dealing with adversity I have learned through my time in the SAA and other Twelve-Step fellowships, namely the gratitude list. And so I am going to propose "gratitude" as a topic for the May/June 2011 issue of *The Outer*

Circle. You may wish to present a gratitude list of your own to comment on, or to talk about the subject of gratitude in more general terms. Either way, the deadline for submission of articles on gratitude is March 5, 2011. Topics and deadlines for issues prior to May/June 2011 can be found on the last page of this issue.

One of the goals of the newsletter oversight committee is to receive more feedback from the fellowship on the articles in the publication. So I'm very pleased this issue to have gotten some such feedback, in our suggested format of a letter to the editor. If you read articles in *The Outer Circle* that assist your recovery or otherwise get your attention, please write and let us know. You can submit letters or articles by regular mail to ISO of SAA, P.O. Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270-0949, or you can send them electronically to toc@saa-recovery.org. Either way, they will find their way to me for future publication.

Have a blessed early fall and I look forward to speaking with you again next issue.

Letter to the Editor

Greetings, *Outer Circle*,

I'm writing in regards to your newsletter of the ISO of SAA, and how it has blessed me as a member. Truly, thinking back to the lost state of mind, actions, and out-of-control behavior until now, I realize it was a train wreck ready to happen in my life.

The article "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" in the May/June issue truly spoke of my heartfelt awakening from all the ups and downs I went through before reaching out for help from various Twelve Step and other programs within these walls since 1985. However, it is no easy walk, inside or out, if I don't have a made-up mindset to do it.

My days now take me on a new journey. It is knowing that the monster inside is dead and buried. And a new creature is risen, a new man, a new human nature. I can't escape my culture, but I don't have to be shaped by it.

I truly thank God for *The Outer Circle* and the unity of spirit in love and light through true wisdom in the outreach of many, wherever they may be.

In His Care,
Livingston Jr.

Growing in Maturity

by Gene P.

During my first abortive efforts at sobriety I failed to notice if anybody at meetings had long-term sobriety. Everybody had more experience than I did and seemed to understand the program much better than I did. My therapist sent me to the program; I didn't seek the program out. I wasn't ready for recovery.

My second (and current) effort at sobriety was far more focused and serious. I spent the time to find the right therapist (and it took several), I waited until I had "hit bottom" and was serious about succeeding. I found the right program – SAA (again having tried others) – and I kept asking people to sponsor me until I found someone who accepted; fortunately, he turned out to be a gem.

Just like the first time, I had frequent slips early on. The difference was that this time I had a plan; my therapist called it a sexual health plan, but it was really my three circles written out in depth on several pieces of paper. I also had a team – my therapist was a key member, as was my SAA group, an all-men's group therapy session meeting weekly, and my sponsor; the biggest difference was having my wife on the team. Bringing her on board was the toughest thing I've ever done in my life, but it made all the difference in the world. For one thing, failure was no longer an option. She had never caught me and she was devastated to learn of my repeated infidelities.

The difference between my first time in recovery and my second was like night and day. The first time I was interested in sobriety; the second time I was committed to recovery. Call it what you will; while my first effort was sophomoric, my second shot at sobriety was more like an adult.

Once I knew I was a sex addict and that I was preying on wounded souls, I knew that recovery was my only hope to salvage my life and possibly my marriage. It wasn't a matter of if, but rather when, I would embrace sobriety. It took me seven years to decide to try again.

Even before I disclosed to my wife, I was deadly serious – virtually never missing a meeting, therapy or group session. My recovery became the most important activity in my life. Telling my wife allowed me to stay committed and not hide my recovery activities the same way I hid my addiction.

Early on, I e-mailed my first sponsor a dozen or more times a day. He never complained. I had to leave a mixed group and find a men's only group. The presence of the women was creating too many issues for me. I

was making better decisions this time in recovery, especially as my mind cleared from the fog of my addiction. I refined my circles constantly and periodically I had to recite them in group.

Tonight I received my seven-year chip. My sponsor got his earlier this year. My life is a miracle. My wife is still with me and she regularly tells me she loves me and admires me for the work I've accomplished.

Early on, I had nobody at the meetings with long-term sobriety to look up to. I couldn't ask anybody what it was like. I read the back of the books first to see what life might someday be like. Now I have some idea. I feel an obligation when I'm at a meeting to convey what is possible, what the journey feels like and what is waiting down the road a bit.

Do I feel mature? Not when I think of the bad choices I've made in my life. But when I look back on the last seven years of hard work and progress, I must admit there is pride as I rub my chip tonight. I will hand it to my wife just before I turn out the light. I still feel like a work in progress.

Talking and Changing and Growing

by Peter W.

A famous psychoanalyst called psychoanalysis “the talking cure,” and one way to describe our journey to recovery in our SAA groups is that it is the process of “an interactive talking cure.” We express ourselves and we speak to one another, and together we construct new pathways towards maturity.

Traditionally, we tend to think of language as primarily descriptive—a “tool,” as some people say, for describing the world, one another, and the self. Recently, however, linguists have introduced the idea that language can also be performative. An extreme example is in a marriage ceremony when one says, “with this ring I thee wed.” It's no good saying after the event that I was just looking at the ring and describing it as a wedding ring; no, I'm married for better and for worse! The words perform the deed.

Taking off from this extreme situation, scholars have drawn attention to many other situations where language performs the action being talked about: for example, I swear, I promise, I guarantee, I accept your apology, I sentence you to death, I give you my word, etc.

Close to this idea that language can be performative is the notion that language can be transformative and constructive—that is to say, when I talk

about myself in certain contexts, I am not so much describing an image of myself as actually constructing a new view of myself for me and for others.

In the AA preamble, we read that “our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened and what we are like now.” In the context of these wise words, I want to argue that our stories in recovery are about change, maturation, and the creation of new human beings as addicts in recovery.

Take, for example, the Fourth Step. The Fourth Step calls for “a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.” Now, an inventory is not merely a description, it is a work of discovery; and we do indeed find out all kinds of things about who we are when doing this Step, especially as it is followed by the Fifth Step. But more importantly, we notice that when we speak our Fourth and Fifth Steps out loud, we are speaking in a new context, compared with, say, talking about ourselves before we came into the group.

In actuality, when I do my Fourth and Fifth Steps as part of my recovery, I am speaking in the present about many of my past thoughts, feelings, and behaviors as a sex addict, and also I am now talking about my current sense of myself as a recovering sex addict. In this respect, I might say that these two Steps are not only works of discovery but also works of construction of a new sense of myself – and even of a new self – in the present of my recovery. That is to say, these two Steps (as is true of the interactive SAA program as a whole) are not just stories of someone I once was, but they are constructions and interpretations of someone I am in the process of becoming.

The path of the Twelve Steps leads me to the creation of a whole new self as a recovering sex addict. Each time I do a Step, talk to my sponsor, or join in the interactive conversation of the group, I am constructing, piece by piece, word by word, sentence by sentence my new being as a recovering sex addict, walking with others along the path to maturity.

Step Nine

by Ron G.

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

I'm Ron G., and I'm a sex addict. The Ninth Step was the most frightening and life-changing action I had ever taken. Of course, the first Eight Steps allowed me to change in many ways. They were necessary preparation for making meaningful amends. The Ninth Step for me though was *the* step. The action step. The step that showed I really was willing to do anything to recover. It was the work that went with faith.

At first I wanted to complete the step quickly, lightly, and painlessly. Fortunately, my sponsor helped me see that that wasn't possible for a meaningful Ninth Step. For the Eighth Step I had reluctantly made the list of all the people I had harmed. While I made the list, I tried not to think about actually making amends to them. I would have been tempted to skip a few people otherwise. Instead, I made a searching and complete list of people I had definitely harmed and even those people I possibly could have harmed with my addictive behavior. I didn't worry at the time about what the list would lead to.

With the list in hand, I began to meditate, pray, wonder, wish, anticipate, worry, ruminate, dream, and pray some more over every person I had harmed. At times I was certain I couldn't go through with it. Maybe my wife didn't need to hear everything I had done. Maybe I didn't need to include my parents; I didn't really harm *them*, did I? Did my brothers and sister really need or deserve amends? What about the person I had harmed at work? I didn't even know her name or where she lived. And besides, wouldn't I really be injuring them by trying to make amends? So what was the point of any of it? I had gotten sober, so why did I need to do the rest of that stuff?

All these doubts loomed large while I desperately and foolishly tried to maintain control of my life and everyone else's. Deep inside, however, I knew that eventually I would have to do it. Then there came a time that I realized I was stuck. I wasn't moving forward anymore. I wasn't growing. Stagnation for me is a dangerous thing. I stopped climbing and started slipping. It wasn't a big slip, of course (or so I thought), just a minor transgression with a sex plan that was obviously too strict (or so I thought). In addition, I also became dissatisfied with my relationships. I was in this Twelve-Step program and getting therapy, while all my wife was doing was tolerating my absences and going along with minor changes in my behavior. She wasn't growing! Surely that was the reason I didn't feel connected

or close to her. And what about my parents? If only they could believe in God like I did. If only they could admit they were dysfunctional and needed help. If only they could accept responsibility for what their poor parenting skills had caused me to do. I wanted some kind of real relationship with my siblings, but surely they weren't ready for that. And my sponsor, what did he want from me anyway? Why did he think I had a problem with humility? Wasn't I trying to be honest, open, and willing? He just didn't understand where I was coming from. If only everyone else did this or that or the other, I could have meaningful relationships with them.

Eventually, my unhappiness overcame my fear of making amends. I could no longer put it off. Half-measures were availing me nothing. The thing missing in my program and my life was the next step, making amends. With the thoughtful guidance of my sponsor, I began to try to trust God. I knew it was His will for me to be in SAA, so I had to believe that He would take care of me while I worked the Steps. Surely He would keep my marriage intact. He wouldn't let me be separated from my kids, would He? The people I loved wouldn't turn their backs on me, would they? I wouldn't lose my job, would I? My sponsor confronted me with the fact that, yes, God loved me and would make all things work for good if I was faithful; but maybe God's plan was different from my plan. Maybe it was God's will for me to be divorced and estranged from my family. If that was His will, then it would work out to be the best thing for me. I was foolishly praying that he would take care of me and give me what I wanted. I had to come to the point where I would be willing to accept anything and everything that God had planned for me. I had to be prepared to give up everything in order to be truly faithful and make meaningful amends.

My eyes were opened. I began to pray for the people for whom I was to make amends. I prayed that they would be able to be present and hear what I was saying. I prayed that they would have an open and accepting heart. I also prayed that having previously let my resentments go, I could be open, honest and humble. I prayed that I would be able to talk only about myself and expect nothing in return. God answered these prayers.

My wife was first. I was sick to my stomach the day I made amends to her. I had decided to leave nothing out. I wanted to be completely open and honest, leaving no hidden secrets that would keep me from being honest. I had everything written down so I would remember everything I needed to reveal.

I could see the pain and sadness on her face as we relived the nightmare that we had lived just a few short months before. I felt anxious, ashamed, and relieved at the same time. She said she was expecting worse. She had already suspected the things I had done and feared there would be more. Didn't she understand that I had been unfaithful to her throughout

my addicted diseased life? Didn't she believe I had done the sick and sub-human things I said I had done? She said she did, and she forgave me. Just like that. I was mystified. How was that possible? I spent the majority of my life believing I could never divulge these secrets to anyone.

Eventually I was able to tell the secrets to people in the program, but this was different. I felt I had so much to lose here. I had shown my wife who I really was, and she still loved me. I began to understand that with God all things were possible. Making amends to her removed a huge roadblock that was stifling our relationship. It has been a slow and inconsistent process since then. Certainly all of our problems weren't solved immediately. It was going to be a rocky ride, but at least we were finally on the right path.

My siblings were next. I had similar positive experiences with them. It was certainly something new for them to see me humble, honest, and willing to take responsibility for my shortcomings. It allowed some healing and strengthening of our relationships. The doors are still open today.

I felt good about how my ninth step was going and didn't want to push things, so I planned on putting my parents off for a while. God had different plans. Somehow I found myself in a car with them, unable to escape for four hours. I resisted the opportunity stubbornly at first, but I soon found myself making amends. I talked openly with my parents for the first time ever. I found in them the capability of being real and honest. I had no idea they could share on that level. It was wonderful. They accepted me with all my defects of character, and even affirmed me. My father gave me his blessing by telling me what he really thought of me. That healing event has allowed me to accept them and love them without reservation.

Today I continue to work on my relationship with my parents. It is not a natural process by any means; it takes conscious effort on my part. But there is no doubt in my heart that the relationship I enjoy now with my parents is another miracle given to me by God through the program.

The Ninth Step was life-changing for me. Making amends wasn't a one-time deal, though. My growth is contingent on being humble and willing to make amends daily.

Step Ten

by Chris V.

"Some of us set aside a block of time weekly, monthly, or annually for a more thorough inventory." --*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, p. 52

When I originally reached Step Ten, I felt like I had, in a sense, "graduated" from SAA. (I have heard others speak of graduating after working the Twelfth Step, similar to the way they did after completing the twelfth grade, and I've always been more precocious than that.) I had gotten through the first eight steps and was diligently—for the most part—working the Ninth. So I started to feel in a sense that I could kick back a bit. Hadn't I finally made it to the "maintenance steps"? Besides, it hadn't been all that long since I had done the arduous work of Step Four. At the time, looking back over my life, I honestly felt that I had done as honest and thorough a job as I could. After completing the Step, I recalled some things that I had forgotten at the time I originally did the work and, at the suggestion of my sponsor, sat down with him later and went over these things.

Step Ten reads, "continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it," and I took those words pretty literally. So this was something like that "spell-as-you-go" function on an old word processing program I once had: I do the wrong, I make the amends, and I move on down the road. I think back to the time I snapped at somebody at work and caused her to cry. Walking back to my desk after that incident, I sensed that I had done wrong. And what *really* told me that I had done wrong was that I kept justifying to myself how I had done right. So, after a few hours of agonizing, I went back and apologized. Tenth Step completed for today.

I was doing a pretty good job of making amends as I went along, although, looking back, I was also monitoring my behavior so as to avoid the next dreaded amends, so in a sense I was only being "dry." Nevertheless, when my sponsor suggested a periodic inventory I balked. I didn't see what else there was to clean up. He reminded me of the struggles I had been through on my Fourth Step, how I remembered things later on and how I then went back to him and cleaned those up as well. In a sense, he pointed out, I was doing a preview of the Tenth Step by continuing to take my personal inventory, even after I had done the formal inventory.

I have always tried to remain open to my sponsors' suggestions, so I said I would give the periodic inventories a try. And I have. The quote from the Green Book at the beginning of this article speaks of doing inventories "weekly, monthly, or annually." I don't know that I have ever been quite that formal about it, and I have at least tried to do a couple of periodic inventories at different points during the year.

What are the gifts I have received from these inventories? At least three that I can think of:

First, as time has gone on and I have continued to work Steps Six and Seven, I have become aware of other character defects. It's sort of like peeling back the layers of an onion: I get something of a handle on certain character defects, I look again, and others that were also there all along have become evident to me. Accordingly, I've gained insight into how these "new" character defects have played a role in my behaviors, even before the work of Steps Four and Eight; so I have ended up with additional names to add to both of those steps (which means of course additions to Steps Five and Nine as well).

Second, it certainly seems as though my ability to remember things has improved since the time of that first Fourth Step. When I periodically look back through my life, I spend the bulk of the time on the months since my last inventory. I focus on the major people and events in my lives, and I recall things to which I gave little thought to at the time, and sometimes I am reminded of older events that predate even my original Fourth Step. Of course, part of my remarkable memory improvement is simply a matter of my brain not being befogged the way it was while I was still in my addiction.

And third, I have come to realize that, as the literature of another Twelve-Step program so admirably expresses it, I don't have to take all of my inventory in red ink, as I did when I did my Fourth Step. I have found that my shortcomings have become much more a matter of "occasionally" and I have become more aware of character strengths or at least character improvements.

So, I was wrong. I had not graduated from SAA when I reached my Tenth Step. And, once again, the founders of the SAA program and the programs that came before SAA and before Twelve-Step recovery in general had a better idea than I did as to what would help me stay sober and serene.

Spring

by Francie E.

Bush buds
bursting against the sky
cause springs
gratitude to rise
and spill
over on my cheeks,
for the winter
of my soul is over and
I, again
feel new life.

Clear deep-blue
sky studded with a
single blaze
of healing light
touches my
cheeks with warmth.

Only I,
who felt winter's icy cold shroud
fully fathom
the transformation within.

But I
am not alone.
I am
surrounded by others
who have
survived the freezing hell of isolation.

Together we
explore the meaningful moment of now,
letting go
of our control
breaking forth
with buds of serenity.
Thank God,
it's spring.

Is it “Constructive” ?? (A new slogan?)

By Ed W.

As we begin our journey in the program of recovery, many of us face numerous decisions regarding our boundaries, relationships, privacy, and countless other matters. I began to apply a simple benchmark to all decisions: “Is it Constructive?”

The opposite of constructive is destructive. With that in mind, I must always ask myself, “If I say/do/tell/act this way, will it help everyone involved, or be detrimental to someone (including myself)?” If I’m asked by friends or family about my going to meetings, how much should I tell them? Some will be supportive and pleased, while others may reject me completely, thus destroying the relationship. I see confessions or amends as something to be left until the Eighth Step whenever possible!

When forming my boundaries, my sponsor and I looked at each behavior and attitude with impartiality, evaluating the pros and cons for including such things in the inner circle or the middle circle, according to “The Three Circles” pamphlet from SAA. I guarded against rationalizing inappropriate behaviors, but was also flexible enough to provide myself, through the middle circle, a warning sign and some opportunity for successful sobriety. I knew that extremely narrow or rigid boundaries could result in my being unable to maintain any sobriety; thus I might just give up and quit the program stating, “This Program just doesn’t work! I go to many meetings, am working the Steps, but I just can’t stay sober.”

In the program of SAA, I don’t necessarily have to eliminate every negative behavior the first week. I can tackle the three or four worst problems initially, leaving the remainder in the middle circle. It took me about five months to get out of the Bubble enough to discontinue sexually-oriented cable television programming. This enabled me to achieve success from my worst activities and slowly reprogram my thinking and outlook on sexuality. Now with over eight years in the program, not having those channels is not even an issue. I now even have being in the vicinity of any sexually-oriented business in my middle circle, to avoid stinkin’ thinkin’ from starting or being triggered to act out.

In dealing with family or marital issues, I have found applying “Is It Constructive” to be extremely important. Revelations to family members of hidden behaviors can be devastating and destroy relationships. Sometimes these relationships are never rebuilt or may take many years to recover. Such lost relationships can certainly be triggering in their own way. The addiction is very cunning, and will take any opportunity to regain a foothold in our lives. Also, the program will require time to break ingrained habits and behaviors that have developed over many years, yet a divorce can

occur even after much sobriety has developed. What a tragedy to lose a marriage once someone has turned his or her life around and developed sustainable sobriety.

I try to think "Is it Constructive?" before speaking. I lost a thirty-four year marriage, after five years of recovery and sobriety, because my wife had suffered so much pain and disappointment and I was still struggling with character defects; i.e., ego, grandiosity, and self-centeredness. She was emotionally traumatized by the betrayal and risks to which she had been subjected. It was just too late. She had already given up on the marriage, and was just seeking safety from disease or further emotional trauma. Some things are just really hard for family members and friends to understand, let alone maybe forgive. I have found being constructive to be a good benchmark to apply to all of my thoughts, comments, and actions.

I have also found that others react differently to a given situation. Some people wouldn't mind learning of a spouse surfing the internet for pornography, while others would be appalled and devastated. SAA states in the Green Book that each individual sets his or her own boundaries, and offers suggestions and counsel regarding informing someone about those boundaries or former addictive activities. Others who are affected by a partner's addiction can have varied reactions to that partner's addictive practices.

Sometimes so much hurt and damage has been done that the scars of betrayal just can't be forgiven. Only God will forgive me. In the meantime, I must find a way to forgive myself, and others may or may not be able to forgive me. The program only focuses on recovery for the addict. It does not function as marital counseling. Victims often struggle with forgiveness or acceptance towards a perpetrator. I may know I'm becoming well again, but the trust of others is probably shaken. Being in the program and actively working the Steps can lead one to seeking outside help through marriage counseling or therapy. I have found the counsel of my sponsor and others in the program to be invaluable when dealing with issues of amends and informing others of the addiction(s).

Progress Not Perfection

by Michael S.

Perfectionism is a thinking error that I share with others. All or nothing thinking has been a pervasive theme in my life. Time and time again in my recovery I would beat myself up for not achieving the saintly celibacy I expected of myself. I wanted to quit “cold turkey” after my incarceration. I got religion and expected never to act out compulsively again.

I had to learn not to beat myself up for slip-ups and to follow all the recovery clichés of Twelve Step programs. “One Day at a Time,” “Easy Does It,” “First Things First,” and so on. At first these phrases made little or no sense to me because I was still trying to be perfect.

As I beat my head against the proverbial brick wall, I finally tired myself out. I had an epiphany, the light clicked on, and I had the “Aha!” moment. Progress not perfection was the key.

It was there all along; I just had to accept and work with it. With the help of my support system and my higher power I celebrate my small victories as milestones on the road to recovery.

I fall short on occasion. Rather than dive head first back into fantasy and compulsion, I seek counsel of my higher power and support group; then I try again. I know all too well the cost of a serious relapse. However, I also know now that if I stumble, I have a way and a will to get back on my feet again.

With that I'll take another twenty-four.

We Are SAA

by David R.

The development of Sex Addicts Anonymous is similar to that of a child being raised. During SAA's beginnings, we needed guidance through principled primary care. We needed practical role modeling yet the freedom to discover who, what, how, and why SAA was to be essentially available for the still suffering sex addict.

The time has arrived for us as a fellowship to grow out of the childhood stage (relinquish any apparent ties to other Twelve-Step programs or other outside enterprises) and practice the principles that the steps and traditions set forth.

One sex addict helping another is the foundation of our fellowship. Today when a sex addict seeking relief from sex addiction walks into a Sex Addict's Anonymous meeting we can draw on our collective experiences that are reflected in our SAA literature.

In my groups, we begin with a reading called "our addiction," taken right out of the SAA Green Book, and we sense on a profound empathetic level that we can put this hideous disease into words for the first time. We then read "defining abstinence," taken out of the same text, which clarifies in the broadest of definitions our common desire. Next we read "our program," once again from the same source, and this reading assures us on how to recover. We read the traditions of SAA, which remind us as individuals and as groups that we are guaranteed a place to recover from the disease of sex addiction. Finally our reading of "how we live," taken from the Twelfth Step out of the SAA Green Book, reflects on the gift we can expect by working the twelve steps of SAA.

I was a sex addict who suffered in another fellowship for years. It was only when I found Sex Addicts Anonymous that I received the gift of our SAA literature, available at our meetings. I finally felt safe to reveal myself as a still suffering sex addict. My relief was now reflected in the principle of hope. When I walked into the rooms of Sex Addicts Anonymous, I finally found the empathy I needed, in the form of one sex addict working with another.

I believe that now as a fellowship we are working towards reflecting the traditions of SAA like never before. I feel hope for the fellowship of SAA just as I do for my personal recovery.

My hope is that in SAA's progress we reflect the twelve traditions through practice. I've learned that the Steps are a way to ensure my freedom from

addictive sexual behavior. Likewise, I find that the twelve traditions of SAA support the still suffering sex addict in having an SAA group where he or she can hear our fellowship's clear message. The SAA rooms are the one place offering this distinct message. Unity can be expressed and heard when we learn and share words like "acting out" and "inner circle behaviors," as well as "abstinence" and "outer circle behaviors." Universal language empowers SAA members and reflects the First Tradition.

The principles of Tradition Seven are reflected in many ways, one of these being through money. In the spirit of this tradition, we practice responsibility, integrity, gratitude, anonymity, faith and freedom. We are "fully self-supporting" in many ways other than financially.

Yes, our fellowship has indeed "come of age."

Step Eight

by Phillip G.

"Putting our own name on the list helps to develop a sense of compassion for ourselves and encourages us to begin treating ourselves with care and respect." *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, p. 47

Doing the Eighth Step is very hard for me. I know I have done a horrible thing, and know I can never say "I'm sorry" enough. But making amends to others is not as frightening to me as forgiving myself. To say I am my own worst enemy is putting it mildly. I was asked once by a therapist why I am so mean to me. I didn't have an answer. Learning to forgive myself, to accept me as I am now, not wishing all the time to go back to being that person I was before, seems to be impossible at times. While intellectually I can accept who I am now, emotionally I refuse to believe that I could have ever acted so shamefully. The person I am when I act out is so completely opposite the image I have of myself in my mind that to accept that part of me scares me more than anything. But I must accept. Only then can I truly start to heal. Only then can I even contemplate going to the other people on my list and making true amends. Only by letting go of the past and embracing the now can I be worthy of forgiveness.

Before I can expect others to forgive me, I must be willing to forgive myself.

Pop In, Pop Out...

by Ray W.

I spent a lot of my life in the closet and brought that fact out to a woman I met at the university. We were in the same circle of friends and started going out. In the years following graduation we were married and moved out of her hometown. I thought that starting a family, working, and buying a house would satisfy me. Not long after our first son was born, I resumed giving myself over to addictive sexual urges.

Having lived in the closet most of the time, I only popped out of it in response to temptation. Of course, if I am only leaving the closet in order to act out, I am not really leaving the closet, even though I may think of it that way. I had been able to live my life this way for a long while and so I thought I had matters under control; eventually I realized that I wasn't in control, but rather was merely feeding an addiction. One reason it was difficult for me to come to this realization is that I had always thought of addiction as involving substances such as alcohol, drugs, or food.

I was never capable of leaving the closet in any sort of healthy way, but only in response to sexual temptations. As time went on, I started behaving in ways that I once thought were outside my interests. My tastes went further out from the normal as I began to view pornography. The more I put such images in my mind, the more I wanted to act them out. Nothing my wife and I did together came close physically or mentally to my fantasies. Acting out on my secret urges led to feelings of desperation, and I began to have sexual encounters outside of marriage. One of those encounters led to my being placed on probation. Still, the only thing that broke my addictive cycle was going to prison.

When I first arrived to prison, I was in a state of shock, and this initially prevented me from acting out. Under the tutelage of the chaplain and a counselor, I started pulling myself together. Sexual urges still came in my thoughts, but minus the compulsion to act them out. There was a prisoner who made persistent suggestions when we met in the state system. It did not take long for me to give into these temptations, and so I popped out and I acted out with him a couple of times.

Despite my double life, with my brief forays out of the closet, there have been many people who helped me out. Even while in prison I found out I had more help and support than I had thought. There are moments in which I want to pull my hair out. I prefer to struggle in this way as opposed to being obsessed out of my mind. I continue to slip out of the closet and give in to temptation; by the grace of God I prevail more often than not. Occasionally, situations I encounter tempt me and briefly pop me out.

I recently woke up in the wee hours of the morning and couldn't figure out

why. I was not in a state of desire. Some fantasies rushed in but I pushed them out. In the process of dressing, I noticed that one thought particularly stuck out – to get undressed and act out. After undressing completely, down to my shoes and socks, I gave in to the urge, and all I got out of it was the physical release. In my mind, acting out was going to bring feelings of happiness and satisfaction. In all the times such thinking snared me, I have never received true satisfaction, for I can never find it by succumbing to my addiction. Therefore, I keep reminding myself of that and working the steps as best I can. In compulsive acting out is a release out of which addiction can again grow. Since I am consciously choosing to live in a healthy manner these days, I have to remain vigilant so as not to give into temptations.

In the company of others there should be safety, but in public I sometimes see desires to act out pop up. I started doing things as a child that were conducive to my behaviors of acting out in public.

This particular form of acting out was a game and to some extent it remains that way. Unfortunately, I was very good at it, never got caught, and have not completely lost the false sense of thrill associated with giving in to this particular temptation. On a good day, my defenses kick in quickly and on a bad day I consider myself “out” for long enough to start backsliding and yield to temptations. Sometimes my mind tells me that it is okay for me to act out if nobody sees that I am doing it. A lot of my addictive behavior makes so much sense in my thoughts that I act out. In therapy, SAA literature, and associating with other addicts, I have learned how to behave appropriately.

The more I think I am in control without relying on God, the less it takes to bring out the worst. The other day I literally walked into somebody from the period of my strongest addiction. After only moments in his presence, everything I learned about avoidance and stopping fled out of my head. Before this encounter I was almost cocky about being able to handle myself. Seconds later, what I needed popped in as I cried out to God. In overcoming the situation this time, I knew to rely on God.

There are always going to be things which pop me in and out of sexual temptation and addiction. In family and friends there is support, and out of commitment there is strength. Life cannot be lived apart from hurdles. In art, literature, music and other meaningful activities I find acceptable outs. Every day is made up of moments and I thank God that I have more good than bad. In striving to succeed I find out what I am made of.

E-mail Addresses

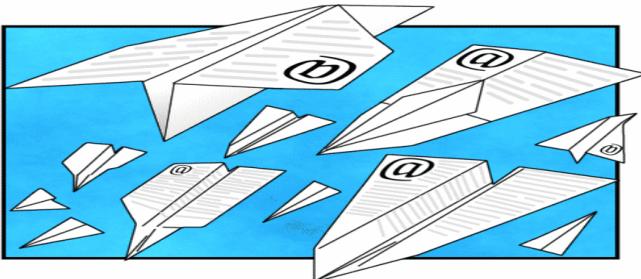
The following is a list of Board E-mail addresses and the LitCom e-mail addresses for the various regions, and the ISO staff E-mail addresses. The Board, LitCom, and the staff are always happy to hear from the fellowship.

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

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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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