

The Outer Circle

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

PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270

Volume 5, Issue 2

March - April 2011



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The Following actions were taken by the Board of Trustees at the December 18, 2010 Teleconference:

- Motion approved that the deadline for submission of delegate motions to be published on the SAA website prior to the 2011 Conference be changed to March 31, 2011.
- Motion approved that the ISO adopts the new proposed policy (presented to board) for the use of its email database.
- Motion approved that the Board approves the compensation plan for the meditation book editor to read as follows: \$115 per page for 366 daily entries plus up to a maximum of 34 pages of ancillary features to include a foreword, front and back covers, and index and cross referencing system, not to exceed 400 pages to be paid as follows: 5% of total for 400 pages be paid upon signing of contract, 5% of total for 400 pages be paid upon completion of book, 90% of total for each submission or other page upon approval by the LitCom.

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 to eighteen 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.

The Following actions were taken by the Board of Trustees at the January 22, 2011 Teleconference:

- Motion approved that the Board approves the proposed 2012 ISO of SAA International Convention theme "Silver Linings" and the accompanying logo.
- Motion approved that the Board recommend the following business procedures for the 2011 Conference: a) Motions defeated in the initial vote by a simple majority will receive no further consideration; b) Motions approved in the initial vote by a simple majority but less than a two-thirds majority will be reconsidered by four one-minute speeches for the minority (negative) followed by one two-minute response for the affirmative by the proponent of the motion or his/her designee, after which a second and final vote will determine the question by a simple majority; c) Motions approved in the initial vote by a two-thirds majority (substantial unanimity) will receive no further consideration.
- Motion approved that the 2011 delegate meeting start at 8 am and include orientation for all delegates on the first day.
- Motion approved that the Guidelines for International Service for Board and LitCom members and for Conference delegates as revised by the ISO Literature Committee be adopted.

Report from ISO Literature Committee

March 2011

The ISO Literature Committee is making significant progress on numerous projects designed to help members groups carry their message to the addict who still suffers. The LitCom meets monthly by teleconference in order to address the growing workload stemming from the growth of the fellowship and its service committees.

Most Literature Committee projects are delegated to specific Work Groups, chaired by LitCom members, which meet regularly by teleconference. In recent months, some of the activities of the LitCom include:

- The Meditation Book Work Group is working with the Editor, Don S. of California, and the ISO office staff, to implement literature review and tracking systems for the 400+ meditations already received. Meditation submissions are still being accepted, and fellowship members are welcomed to contribute. Monthly Meditation Writing Tele-workshops are held to help interested members compose and submit their experience for our new book. Please call the ISO office for call-in information to participate in these workshops.
- The Green Book Work Group is continuing its systematic review of the SAA Green Book, utilizing feedback from the fellowship. The ISO office has implemented an online literature review system as part of the new service website which is being developed.
- The Literature Committee Handbook Work Group is nearing completion of its revision of this detailed explanation of procedures and guidelines relating to SAA literature. This handbook will be available to fellowship members and service committees interested in developing new literature to meet the needs of our growing fellowship.
- At the request of the International Development Committee, LitCom members completed a Spanish translation of Green Book Survey, with additional questions designed to gather information on cultural factors which may impact the growth of the membership in Spanish-speaking communities. This is intended in part, to assist IDC in formulation of strategies for more effectively carrying the SAA message to these communities
- Work Groups continue to develop or review pamphlets concerning sex offenders, sponsorship, compulsive sexual avoidance, women's issues, and other needs of the fellowship. A number of issues have also been

commended to the LitCom by the ISO Board, resulting in review and recommendations. LitCom representatives also work closely with the website committee, the Information Systems and Online Presence Committee, which continues to update and improve content and design of the ISO websites.

Members of the ISO Literature Committee remain grateful for the continued support of the ISO Board, its service committees and the members of the fellowship. As always, any inquiries and suggestions are welcomed.

In fellowship,
John R.
Chair, ISO Literature Committee

SAA pamphlets available to read online!

The International Service Organization of SAA is pleased to announce the availability of SAA pamphlets on the SAA website (www.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.

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

| | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| <i>Sex Addicts Anonymous (SAA Book)</i> | <i>Abstinence</i> |
| <i>Abstinence and Boundaries in SAA</i> | <i>The Bubble</i> |
| <i>First Step to Recovery</i> | <i>Writing to Prisoners</i> |
| <i>Getting Started in Sex Addicts Anonymous</i> | <i>Group Guide</i> |
| <i>Sex Addicts Anonymous (SAA Pamphlet)</i> | <i>Intergroup Guide</i> |
| <i>Sexual Sobriety and the Internet</i> | <i>Three Circles</i> |
| <i>A Special Welcome to the Woman Newcomer</i> | <i>Tools of Recovery</i> |

**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, March 27
Sunday, April 24
Sunday, May 22
Sunday, June 26
Sunday, July 24

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*.

History of SAA Project

The ISO Literature Committee is working on a 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:

info@saa-recovery.org

Women's Outreach Subcommittee

This has been an exciting and challenging year for our committee, which is composed of interested women and men sex addicts. The WOSC reaches out to all women with a desire to stop addictive sexual behaviors and helps them to make contact with other SAA women. The WOSC (women) Trusted Servants facilitate this process by maintaining the SAA Women's Outreach List. For more information, e-mail: grace@saa-recovery.org

Also, *this year we will sponsor the first International SAA Women's Retreat* on March 18-20, 2011, at the Historical COD Ranch, in Oracle, Arizona. In addition, the WOSC will have a Women's Outreach Room at the 2011 ISO of SAA Convention, and will host a SAA Women's Welcome Reception on Thursday. If you are interested in participating on this committee, or for information, questions or suggestions, e-mail:

genoutreach.wosc@saa-iso.org

Prisoner Outreach Subcommittee

The Prisoner Outreach Committee brings hope and understanding to the still suffering sex addicts behind bars. Our primary focus is to respond to those suffering addicts who are currently incarcerated and writing to us seeking help from prison. We are always in need of letter writers. If you think you might want to take on this 12 step work and share your "experience, strength, and hope" please contact us through the ISO. The committee has also proposed a workshop for the next Conference to explain the process of this important 12 step work and answer any questions attendees may have. If you are planning to be at the convention we look forward to seeing you there!

The committee also receives requests from prisoners who are interested in starting SAA meetings in the prison that they are in, and are inquiring about support in the process. This is a task that is often logistically difficult for the committee to accomplish. For this we feel we should rely on the local meeting groups in the area of the prison in question. Many groups have been carrying the message into prisons for years. Our committee would like to hear from these groups explaining how they established these meetings so we can pass the information on to other groups or individuals who are trying to get started. The committee has also proposed a convention workshop on identifying ways of setting up meetings in prison. We are excited to invite those people currently going into prisons to assist with meetings to sit on a pane and share their experience with others that are interested in doing this as well. Again please contact us through the ISO if you have experience in this area and could be of service in this way. In the spirit of service, Prisoner Outreach Committee.

SAA WOMEN AT CONVENTION
PLEASE JOIN US FOR THE
SAA WOMEN'S WELCOME RECEPTION

at the "Reach for the Heavens in 2011" Convention!

*Arrange your flights! Let's get the convention
started out with fellowship and connection.*

Date: Thursday, May 26, 2011

Place: Women's Outreach Room at the
Convention Hotel

Time: 7pm – 9pm Central

Who: All SAA women members
and women newcomers

**Reception is sponsored by the Women's Outreach Subcommittee.
We hope to see you there!**

And calling all SAA Women Members...

Do you feel called to offer service at the 2011 Convention,
but aren't sure how?

Here's an idea! Volunteer to help staff the 2011 Women's Outreach Table in the registration area and/or the Women's Outreach Room at the Convention Hotel. *Women are needed to help serve as greeters to welcome women in the registration area, as well as in the Women's Outreach room.* Two-hour shifts will be available starting at 7pm Thursday evening through Monday afternoon (not including sleeping hours).

If you're interested in volunteering for the Women's Outreach Table, the Women's Outreach Room or for the convention in other ways, email your first name, day(s)/times you're available, and contact information to:

judyg.1@sbcglobal.net

Or call the ISO at 1-800-477-8191 or 713-869-4902.

We encourage all forms of service as a vital tool of sobriety!

SAA WOMEN'S RETREAT
Be part of the first International
SAA Women's Retreat!

When:: March 18-20, 2011

Where: COD Ranch near Tucson, AZ

Who: All SAA Women Members and Newcomers

Price: \$250 includes registration, lodging and meals

For further information, go to:

http://saa-soaz.org/events/saa_events.shtml

or call Elizabeth N. at 520-205-0108

ISO Income/Expense Summary

As of January 31, 2011

| | Jan'11 | Monthly Avg | Jul'10-Jan'11 |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Income | | | |
| Sales | 16,711.65 | 16,385.55 | 114,698.87 |
| Shipping & Handling | 1,664.00 | 1,481.44 | 10,370.07 |
| Donations | 18,048.27 | 23,897.37 | 167,281.56 |
| Interest Earned | 33.74 | 35.07 | 245.50 |
| Convention Revenue | 1,612.00 | 1,148.79 | 8,041.52 |
| Total Income | 38,069.66 | 42,948.22 | 300,637.52 |
| Cost of Goods Sold | 8,141.20 | 8,117.28 | 56,820.99 |
| Gross Profit | 29,928.46 | 34,830.93 | 243,816.53 |
| Expense | | | |
| Wages | 17,601.61 | 17,616.93 | 123,318.53 |
| Insurance | 363.96 | 310.88 | 2,176.17 |
| Payroll Taxes | 1,483.83 | 1,379.77 | 9,658.41 |
| Employee Benefits (Not Wages) | 3,625.55 | 3,689.47 | 25,826.26 |
| Business Travel Related | 7,701.22 | 1,611.43 | 11,280.02 |
| Office Postage | 14.13 | 75.11 | 525.76 |
| Communications | 503.40 | 541.69 | 3,791.86 |
| Professional Fees | 2,300.00 | 542.86 | 3,800.00 |
| Office Expense | 739.27 | 900.24 | 6,301.68 |
| Occupancy Expenses | 1,288.88 | 1,411.88 | 9,883.13 |
| Board/Committee Expense | 1,341.65 | 1,350.78 | 9,455.47 |
| The Outer Circle | 2,169.13 | 1,540.02 | 10,780.17 |
| Financial Charges | 1,410.11 | 1,304.55 | 9,131.82 |
| Bad Debts/Refunds | 0.00 | 70.86 | 495.99 |
| DELEGATE MEETING | 5.28 | 88.36 | 618.55 |
| CONVENTION EXPENSES | 3.22 | 345.13 | 2,415.90 |
| Depreciation | 175.00 | 175.00 | 1,225.00 |
| Payroll Expenses | 16.00 | 16.45 | 115.18 |
| Reconciliation Discrepancies | 0.00 | -37.19 | -260.36 |
| Total Expense | 40,742.24 | 32,934.22 | 230,539.54 |
| Net Income | -10,813.78 | 1,896.71 | 13,276.99 |

In the month of January our budget showed a deficit of \$10,813.78. We had budgeted for a deficit of \$5,486. The increased deficit of \$5,327.78 was due in part to the added expense of the Face-to-Face meeting of \$4,141.22 and the first payment to our Meditation Book Editor of \$2,300.

Our sales for the soft cover of our SAA Green Book were over our estimate by \$254.25.

Our pamphlet and booklet sales were below our estimate by \$424.03. Our bronze medallions were over our estimate by \$768.00 and our chips were over our estimate by \$249.75.

Our total sales for January were over our estimate by \$296.65.

Individual donations were below our estimate by \$1,278.67 and group donations exceeded our estimate \$1,207.94.

Our product inventory is valued at \$55,512.28.

Our expenses were over our estimate by \$5,919.24.

A summary of the current service year (July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2011):

- Sales are below estimate by \$206.13
- Donations have exceeded the budget by \$9,948.56
- Expenses have exceeded the budget by \$6,817.54
- Net surplus has exceeded the budget by \$1,589.99

Our new operational reserve amount is \$123,808 and is fully funded. 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.

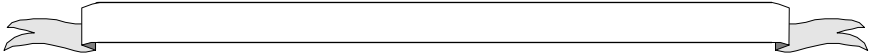
In Your Service,
Joe H.
Director of Operations
director@saa-iso.org

[*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.*]

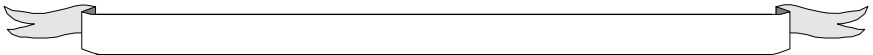
From the Editor

by Mike L.

If you're reading these words, I hope you're doing well. We are well into 2011 by now, which means that the annual convention is just around the corner. I hope that you are planning to attend.



*I have chosen “attraction,
not promotion” as the topic for the
November/December issue.*



I really can't say how happy I am with the articles I am receiving these days for *The Outer Circle*. Our suggested topics each issue are generating responses, and I'm especially glad that we are getting a variety of articles on the Steps and the Traditions, which are, after all, the foundation of our program.

As has been the case of late, I'm very happy with the group of articles we have in this issue of *The Outer Circle*. We actually have two articles on Step Three, one more serious in tone, and one a little bit lighter.

Near the end of the first chapter of the SAA Green Book, “our addiction,” I read the statement “For all of us now in recovery, there came a time when we realized that we simply could not keep on living as before.” After having stepped away from the SAA program and having gone through a particularly humiliating experience—doing it my way once more—I remember telling myself, “This has got to stop.” And I got myself back into the SAA program. So I think it's clear that “not living as before” refers to the addiction. However, it can just as easily relate to other areas of my life as well. In other words, I don't simply have an addiction problem; I have, to coin a phrase, a living problem as well.

For example, I've been thinking lately of how I can play certain games with myself. If I say something harsh to somebody and then keep replaying that situation in my head so as to rationalize and justify what I said and to

convince myself that I was in the right, it's almost definite that was in the wrong. Similarly, if there is something that I want from Higher Power, I can jump at the first indication I get from somebody that that is indeed Higher Power's will for me.

These are old behaviors that can easily lead me back to the addiction. It is just as important that my Higher Power and I work together to rid myself of them as it is that we work together to rid myself of the addiction itself. In the second example above, I try to make a conscious effort, when I really want something, to look for more than one indication that it is something that Higher Power wants me to have. And the more I want something, the more indications I look for.

In that regard, I think of a particular expression I've heard, that I may be the only SAA Green Book that some people will ever see. If I am engaging in questionable behaviors, even if they have no direct bearing on the addiction or even the circles, those behaviors are going to come out sideways and affect my serenity and my means of relating to others.

Accordingly, I serve as a means of "attraction, not promotion" for others who may observe the way I go about my daily life. And so I have chosen "attraction, not promotion" as the topic for the November/December issue. What have I done to attract others to the SAA program, or to encourage them to stay in the program once they are here? In other words, do I demonstrate things that others may want?

As I mentioned, the convention is coming up. I hope you are planning to come. Please also consider giving some of your time in volunteer service at the convention. There are numerous opportunities for service, be it serving as a temporary sponsor, working in the hospitality suite and so forth. These are all different kinds of Twelfth Step work.

Anyway, I think I will close for now. Please keep the great articles coming.

Lost Without Literature

by David F.

SAA literature has been amazingly important to me. Without it I'd still be lost.

I sit and write this from behind barbed wire fences. My sex addiction involves internet pornography. Similar to other addictions, it started with what seemed harmless, and progressed over a number of years until my actions landed me in prison. I'd say I'd be lost if it weren't for literature because, until I began reading sexual addiction recovery material, I didn't recognize and admit that I had a problem. Some reading this may ask how I could have not known I had a sexual addiction problem since it landed me in prison. Others may understand that river of lies known as denial. Yes, I knew I was wrong for committing my crime, but I never realized I actually had an addiction.

After almost eighteen months in prison I read my first self-help book; it dealt with online sexual addiction. It was then I realized and admitted to myself that I had an addiction, that I was powerless over it, and that my life had become quite unmanageable.

I'm fortunate for many things, one being that I now attend weekly SAA meetings. Many prisons don't make available that resource or the great self-help library that I have access to. I have been attending SAA meetings since January 2010 and I am glad to say that I am making progress. The ISO has been very supportive and has sent me various pamphlets and books; I also now have a temporary sponsor.

As I am in the process of forming a program for myself that will work once I am released, I further realize the importance of literature. I know I just can't eliminate bad thoughts and activities from my life, but I need to go further and replace them with good ones. Actions don't just happen, but rather they begin with thoughts. What better thing is there to fill my mind with than positive literature from SAA to keep me focused on recovery?

My three circles are part of my literature. It is even suggested in the SAA booklet "Tools of Recovery" that I write them on a wallet-sized card to carry with me. That same booklet also suggests that I carry pamphlets or books with me, especially when traveling.

Reading SAA literature has become a daily activity and an integral part of my program. I say "has become" because at first I thought that once I had read a particular pamphlet or book I was done with it. How wrong I was, and how glad I am to realize that that is not true. Not only do I learn or see something different when I continue to read these materials over and over, but I am inspired by them. I receive strength from them. Reading literature

daily reinforces the fact that I am now on the right path, and that I enjoy this path and who I am. The literature gives me hope and courage to continue each day.

I love the mediation book that deals with sexual addiction, and I look forward to the SAA meditation book. I can't get enough!

I'm so thankful for SAA, the program and the fellowship. I'm proud to say I'm a lifelong member, and that I never need to feel alone again. I look forward to my release one day, and to being active with SAA in as many opportunities as are available. My thanks to, ISO of SAA and to my temporary sponsor. I'm no longer lost; I'm alive and well!

What I Pray for... What I am Given

by Steve S.

When I pray for patience...
I am not given patience—
Rather, I am given opportunities
in which I can practice patience!

When I pray for serenity...
I am not given serenity—
Rather, I am provided with situations
in which to find my serenity!

When I pray for courage...
I am not given courage—
Rather, I am placed in circumstances
where courage is required!

And when I pray for wisdom...
It is not wisdom that I receive—
But rather, I am given opportunities
to make healthy choices and wise decisions!

Step Three—Beginning of Real Recovery

by Jim L

Each of the Twelve Steps is an important component of the SAA program, but real recovery for me began with Step Three. The decision to turn my will and my life over to the care of God as I understood God was the beginning of a process of surrender that, when culminated with Step Seven, became the *sine qua non* of my recovery.

In advance of Step Three, Step One began to prepare me for surrender, bringing to my attention that I was powerless and that my life was, indeed, unmanageable. Step Two reminded me that, in view of the mess I had made of my life, my only way out lay in a power greater than I. My only hope was to surrender to that power. The Third Step prayer from Alcoholics Anonymous (p 63) was particularly meaningful, as it expressed exactly the action required—surrender!

Although I had made a genuine decision to submit to God's will in Step Three, my surrender was not complete at that point. It was necessary to go through the process of discovery, confession, and preparation of Steps Four, Five, and Six, before I would fully understand what needed to be surrendered.

Thankfully, after the thorough preparation of Steps One through Six, Step Seven came relatively easy. I was in the right place to give over completely the powerlessness, the unmanageability of my life, and the whole raft of resentments, fears, and wrongs that I had shared with my sponsor. I was entirely ready to be free from the character defects that landed me in this predicament, I was ready to hand it all over to God. I was ready to surrender.

Of course, the process did not end there. I still had to make amends to those I had wronged. But, having surrendered, I could tackle that daunting task with assurance that, with my sponsor's help and God's guidance, I could do so with forthrightness, honesty, and dignity. In addition, practicing Steps Ten, Eleven, and Twelve on a daily basis brought a clearer view of God's will, reminding me that surrender was a dynamic, ongoing process that I had to renew upon awakening every morning. Remarkably, my surrender was further buttressed by the acceptance and support of my sponsor and other fellow travelers. Surrender became a practical reality.

The miracle of genuine recovery that I enjoy today truly began with Step Three.

Processing by Dauna F.

I am writing this because I wanted to share with you my experience in working Step Three: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understood God.

While I found Step Three to be a powerful step that has served as a base for my entire recovery, it was also one of the most frightening steps. How could I possibly turn my will and life over to the care of God? This would require trust and belief. I just knew that this had to be a faulty or flawed concept in this program of recovery. Due to circumstances of my early life, I had not learned how to trust or to believe that anyone would care for me, or meet my needs. Why would I turn my life over to a stranger, even if that stranger was God?

I saw the Third Step not as a process, but as a blind leap of faith. An absolute one-time leap, without fear or doubt. It was overwhelming to me to even consider this concept. I believed that anything having to do with God or faith meant that it had to be perfect. I had always carried the idea of God being so highly removed that there was no way for me to approach Him. I could not understand how or why He would even care. I thought that I would be stuck here on Step Three until I could make that perfect leap without doubt or fear. This had me perplexed.

I started asking questions of other members in the fellowship what Step Three meant to them, and how they had worked through it. I wanted to know what benefits they saw in taking this step. Why couldn't I just skip this one until I was certain of what I was committing to? I spent considerable time discussing this with my sponsor and others in the program. They helped me to change my thinking just slightly. They helped me see Step Three as the starting point of really letting go and beginning to open myself to the support and guidance of my Higher Power and the fellowship. I began to realize it is a willingness on my part to surrender my will to the process of recovery laid out by the steps. In doing this, God would reveal what I needed to know to trust in Him. My part was simply to be willing and keep working the program.

My sponsor helped me see how I was still trying to control things. I wanted it my way, but my way had only brought my life to the point of insanity. I wanted all the answers laid out now. I wanted guarantees with no risks involved. My sponsor very patiently pointed out to me just how laughable that kind of thinking was, considering all the risks that I took in my addiction without considering the cost. After much debate and hesitation, I concluded that I did not need to know God's ways, his plans, or how he was going to work out this mess called my life. I had to give all that up and

get honest with myself once again. I was stalling. I had convinced myself that I needed things to happen in a certain way and in the right order for my recovery to be possible. My way and my willfulness was my first priority, but in truth I was delaying giving up the things I had used as my refuge and comfort throughout my life. The things that I knew I could count on always would be there for me, even with the knowledge that my behavior was destroying me.

Once I accepted this to be true of myself, I committed to being willing to submit to the process of recovery. I have worked the remaining Twelve Steps all my Steps without any more of my self-imposed hurdles. I have come to understand that Step Three is a choice that I make each day. Each day presents new challenges for me to face. It has made all the difference in the world for me to know that I am not alone in this process, and that I do not have to be perfect in the process. It's about learning who I am and who my higher power is. The development of a relationship takes time and effort. For me it has been accepting the reality of my life circumstances and being willing to let God direct me and help me through the challenges that I face.

Looking back I see how pivotal Step Three was for my recovery, and I am so thankful for the reality of the step. It has sustained my recovery's progress and my life continues to grow and improve. It is nice once and for all to sit in the passenger seat, enjoying the scenery while someone else is doing the driving. I can take things one day at a time, enjoying and appreciating what each moment brings, rather than chasing after the next addictive experience. I have discovered a new confidence, a new knowledge, and a renewed and reformed willingness, not my will, but his will for me; my will within my Higher Power's. Step Three; it really does work if I work it.

Working Step Three

by Rich B.

"[W]hy shouldn't we laugh? We have recovered, and have been given the power to help others." —*Alcoholics Anonymous, p.132*

Giving away what was freely given to me—working Step Three with a protégé—is fun.

For example, yesterday, over the phone, I was working with a new person, taking him through Steps One, Two, and Three. He was in New Jersey and I was in Montana. Suddenly he said, "Uh oh. A cop car is driving into the park. . . . Oh, hello, officer. . . . I am on the phone. . . . Oh, okay, the park is closed. Well, then, I'll be on my way. Thank you, officer."

I could hear him start his car and drive off. He found a quiet spot in a nearby residential neighborhood. I said, "How come you were in a park?" He said, "I have a wife and three kids. If I go home, my kids will be all over me. I have no privacy."

Minutes later, we reached the Third Step prayer. I said: "My first sponsor had me kneel down with him to say this prayer together. So I'm going to ask you to do the same, if you can." He said, "Give me a minute."

I heard grunting, followed by an out-of-breath voice: "Okay, whew . . . I'm . . . whew . . . ready."

I said, "What's going on?"

He said, "I had to slide to the passenger side of the front seat, twist around and pull myself up so that I could kneel on the front seat."

I said, "You must be looking out the back window."

He said, "Yeah, I am. And you will be glad to know the coast is clear."

I knelt down on my icy back porch in Montana, and we said the Third Step prayer together.

After he had settled back into the driver's seat, I said, "When I said the Third Step prayer with my first sponsor, we were sitting at a picnic table in a public park in downtown Helena, Montana. My sponsor said, 'When the traffic dies down, let's kneel down and say the prayer together.' That's what we did, and I will never forget it."

He chuckled and said, "Well, I'll tell you one thing, Rich, I won't forget this."

Giving away what was freely given to me—working Step Three with a protégé—is fun.

Tradition Three

by Ed G.

"The only requirement for S.A.A. membership is a desire to stop addictive sexual behavior."

In the past I was a member of many fine organizations. For nearly every one of them, it was necessary to pay dues and take an oath of allegiance to the organization. It also laid upon me an obligation to serve in a variety of ways.

How simple our membership requirement is. It doesn't demand dues to belong. It doesn't demand an oath of allegiance. It doesn't demand an obligation to serve. All we have to do is recognize that we have a sexual problem and want to fix it.

The SAA program offers Twelve Steps that, if followed conscientiously, will lead us on the journey of recovery. But again, it doesn't demand that we take the steps even though we understand they will be an important aid in our growth as sexually responsible. But we also know that if we attend meetings regularly, we will get caught up in the friendship and love of kindred souls who ask nothing in return save the same friendship and love that they offered.

In addition, during faithful attendance, we will find a certain sense of enthusiasm when hearing the stories of successes along the recovery journey. These stories are told to give each person hope that sexual sobriety can be achieved. Over time it is not too difficult to get caught up in the stories and begin to want what others have. When that happens, the "desire to stop addictive sexual behavior" becomes our "paid in full" membership to an organization that understands where we're coming from.

In SAA, I have found a place where I am welcome with no strings attached. All it costs me is the time I put into the meetings and building on that "desire to stop addictive sexual behavior." Can membership be any simpler?

Dear Grace

Submitted by SAA Women's Outreach Subcommittee

Statement of Purpose for Dear Grace:

*To reach out to all women with a desire to stop addictive sexual behavior through this printed medium and share with the fellowship the types of questions the Grace e-mail receives. *Names have been changed to protect anonymity**

Dear Grace,

I have acted out with someone in my face to face group. What do I do? Is my meeting still safe to go to?

Can't Go Back

Dear Can't Go Back,

When a former acting out partner is present at a meeting, it can be very triggering and intimidating. Here are some suggestions from SAA members' experience:

If you are having difficulty staying sober, it might be helpful to attend a different for a period of time. You and your sponsor could work together to determine which meeting(s) and for how long. If another face-to-face meeting is not an option, telemeetings are available.

Some members have found it helpful to discuss the situation openly with both members and their sponsors present. For instance, you might work out a schedule where the two members do not attend the same meetings of the group in question. Other women have found it helpful to carefully choose their seats at a meeting. For example, you could choose to sit in a place at the meeting where you couldn't see the person who triggers you and to sit beside a support person who is aware of the situation.

Above all, remember that sobriety is the goal and being willing to go to any lengths to stay sober is of the utmost importance.

Grace

Disclaimer: we cannot guarantee that this advice will be equally applicable to every woman, although it is our hope that such will be the case.

– SAA Women's Outreach Subcommittee

Step Four and Self-Forgiveness

by Josh H.

"If we neglect this inventory, we risk being stuck in our old habits and mistaken beliefs, and our unexamined defects of character will eventually lead us to relapse." —*SAA Green Book*, p.32

I have heard it said that Steps One through Three are about my relationship with God, Steps Four through Seven are about my relationship with myself, and Steps Eight through Twelve are about my relationship with others. While there is a lot of truth in this easy generalization, the middle Steps have as much to do with my relationships with others as they have to do with my relationship with myself.

As I begin to look at my "unexamined defects of character," the text cautions me against remaining in my "old habits and mistaken beliefs." In my case, one of the biggest "old habits" that I faced for the first time when doing Step Four was my complete inability to forgive. I grew up in an environment where the expression "I'll forgive but I'll never forget" was common. This expression incredibly made perfect sense to me at the time. I accordingly became an expert at carrying grudges and having resentments.

To resent: it literally means "to feel something again." The "sent" part has to do with feelings, as in "sentient" or "sentimental." The "re" is the easy part; it means "again," as a glance at any dictionary will confirm.

I was an expert at resentment. For years, my way of responding to a slight, real or imagined, was to pull out all those old resentments and luxuriate in them once more, adding the most recent one to the list. Certainly I may have forgiven in a few isolated cases, and it is just as true that I never forgot, as I was taught. The "mistaken belief" connected to this "old habit" was that it was really not necessary for me to forgive, especially since I was always in the right anyway.

I had to let go of this belief to be able to continue with the Steps. And once, with God's help, I began to display the willingness to start forgiving others—not an easy process—I started to discover that at the bottom of all of the resentments I had carried for all those years was an even bigger inability to forgive myself. I never forgot any of the harms done me, and—more important still—I never forgot a single error I ever made. This inability led in turn to the items I addressed in the other two parts of my inventory: my fears, principally the fear that I would always be worthless, and my sexual inventory, much of which sprang principally from a belief that, being as worthless as I was, the only thing I had to offer others was the fleeting satisfaction of my sexual repertoire.

So one of the biggest gifts I got from doing my inventory and sharing it was to realize that not only could I forgive others, but they as well as God could in turn forgive me and—biggest of all—that I could begin to forgive myself. And it was this self-forgiveness that told me that there was hope for me in working the Sixth and Seventh Steps, and that I would be able to carry out the Eighth and Ninth Steps, since the amends I initially made to myself made it easier to make the others.

So, as I said originally, there is a lot of truth in the generalization that Steps Four through Seven are about my relationship with myself. In my case, I found that my improved relationship with myself led to an improved relationship with others and then, things coming full circle, back to an even more improved relationship with myself.

Dear Addict

by Kurt D.

Dear Addict,

You are a very powerful force and have used your force to try to make my life manageable. I can see how, at the time, choosing sex as your primary mechanism to get me high was the perfect choice: it gave me the illusion of control against women when I felt so helpless, afraid, and alone growing up in a house of females headed by a crazy mother from whom I never felt love but rather whose action left me feeling violated, though I didn't know why.

I am writing this letter to say goodbye. You have been my closest companion for over twenty-five years now. I know I have said goodbye before in the last ten years of time spent in twelve-Step fellowships, and so you might be hoping that I'll come back to you so you can "help" me some more, "comfort" me some more, "nurture" me some more. I have to put those words in quotes because they aren't reality. I believe that your intention was to save me from seemingly cruel and unbearable emotional pain and despair. But that was before, and this is now. The reality is that you are now the one thing that causes me the most pain and despair in my life. The costs of your "help" have become too high.

Addict, I now have four young children. The cost of keeping you in my life now includes taking away their Dad. Please see and understand that you will deprive these precious children of their Dad just as our Dad's addict deprived us of a Dad.

And so I tell you goodbye after the many years you have been with me. Thank you for saving me while I was young, alone, and saw no other alternatives. But I cannot and will not repay that by letting you kill me now. Goodbye.

You Mean I Struggle with Compulsive Sexual Avoidance?

by Valorie F.

I was attending my first week of meetings, very scared, but grateful to have found SAA. A member shared that she struggled with sexual anorexia. I knew right away that that was not *my* issue. I struggled with acting out. Sex was my drug, and I used it every chance I got. I had in my mind that sexual anorexia was the inability to ever be sexual. Well, I was partly correct, but I had a *lot* to learn.

At about six months sober, I attended the first sexual anorexia telemeeting. A woman shared her story. All I remember thinking was, “not something else I have to work on.” I had told one of the women who started the meeting that I would be there to support her. As this other woman told her story, I saw my life in almost every word. There were differences, but there were so many more similarities. I talked with my sponsor that week about this issue. Together we decided to continue working the steps on the acting out, and then we would address the acting in, or anorexia.

In time, I began working the steps around this part of my addiction, but I felt very much alone. I was never able to connect to the woman from that first meeting, because I truly didn’t know who she was. I couldn’t remember. I just remembered her story—and just knowing there was someone out there with a similar story gave me hope. I thought it would be really nice if there was some way to connect those of us struggling with this issue.

I found in working the First Step that my “acting in” or compulsive sexual avoidance had always been there. My acting in only took place in relationships, while my acting out was always outside any relationship. It was hard to define my abstinence around the acting in. The behaviors were not as obvious. Eventually, I was able to define my abstinence, and over time I have identified some new things. I struggle with perfectionism, and this part of my addiction requires me to let it go, because it is so hard to identify and define.

Eventually, I spoke to some folks at the convention in Oakland, and found all the information I needed to try to start an outreach committee to help other members of our fellowship, and hopefully feel a lot less alone. In the committee’s first meetings, I offered the idea that compulsive sexual avoidance was a much clearer terminology than sexual anorexia. The Compulsive Sexual Avoidance Outreach Subcommittee of General Outreach was eventually formed and work began. We are a small committee, but everyone works very hard to see that we help those who are still suffering.

Today, I still struggle with knowing what healthy sexuality is supposed to look like for me. There isn't a clear picture. I am learning, however, that a feeling of being driven or preoccupied is not a place I want to be. I am also learning that not being sexual because I choose to embrace celibacy is not the same as not being sexual out of fear of intimacy. If I am obsessed with having sex or with avoiding sex at all costs, I am in my addiction. If I am living life on life's terms, then not having sexual relations can be healthy for me. The gray area happens when I wonder if I am doing things to prevent a sexual situation from existing. I still don't have the answers, but I keep working and keep hoping that more people will get involved—those just starting, and those that have found freedom.

Spiders and Recovery

by Jeremy G.

Last night, I was watching a spider make a web through the heavy wire screen in our dorm. As I watched, I thought about the reason the spider made a web night after night. The spider must do this to survive. If the spider failed to build a web just one night, it might not have the strength to make a web and thus die from starvation.

This is kind of like our recovery program. We must weave our web to catch us when we are about to act out. Each strand of the web that attaches to something is our connection to a person. Each cross-member is either part of our program or is good advice our support team gave us at one time or another.

All one must do is grab a cross-member and slide over to a strand to keep from falling. However, if we do fall like the spider we have a lifeline which is the loving arms of our sponsor to fall back on and get off our back and onto our feet.

The knowledge we gain from our group is the complete web of life. If we do not consult the web or cut all of our connecting lines, the web falls and thus do we.

After I watched the spider make its web I read Step Nine out of the SAA Green Book. One day soon I will have to explain to my son why I could not be there for his childhood. Once I read this step over again I found out that I have been making amends to others in a wrong manner. In fact I do believe I've caused more pain by explaining what I did and what I am doing to make it right. I want my son to know that I am changing my ways to reflect the guidance of my Higher Power, whom I know as God Almighty, maker of Heaven and Earth.

Tradition Four

by Ed G.

“Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups on S.A.A. as a whole.”

“No single type of meeting can meet the needs of every sex addict,” says the SAA Green Book on p. 83, in the section on Tradition Four. Just as each sex addict has his or her own story that differs from another, our meetings can also be structured along those same similarities. What first guides our meeting format (yes, there are suggested formats) is the group conscience—what would be beneficial to the most members? It is most desirable that the meeting not leave any doubt as to its purpose. That it is an SAA meeting under the general guidelines of the ISO of SAA should be the first and foremost consideration.

There are no officers as found in service or fraternal organizations. There are trusted servants who guide the meeting and provide important services to keep the group on track and viable. Anyone may serve as a trusted servant simply by volunteering when a need exists. Distractions such as election of officers and what do with collected funds are eliminated as all members have an equal share in the success of the group and the road to recovery of its members. Funds collected are for the sole purpose of covering the group’s immediate needs: rent, SAA publications, and perhaps refreshments. If sufficient funds are available, donations to the ISO of SAA are acceptable and encouraged. Donations to groups outside the SAA framework are prohibited lest members and others feel there is a relationship tying our group to an outside group thereby nullifying the important aspect of anonymity.

The purpose of SAA meetings is not to champion other causes. To do so violates the Traditions and takes away from our purpose of being a group of people seeking recovery from sex addiction, the one issue that folks inside an SAA meeting room can most easily agree on. To inject ideas not relevant to that purpose can cause disruption and lead members to think we are aligning ourselves to some outside group or cause. Of course, members can certainly feel free to belong to other organizations, while keeping in mind that the primary purpose of any SAA meeting they might attend is to gain sexual sobriety. And each person may act on that sole purpose at his or her own pace. Following that simple suggestion will indeed prevent causing relationships problems for the group, other groups in the region, and SAA as a whole.

Inside In, Inside Out

by Allan B. and Wharton S.

Sponsor/sponsee relationships are a bit of a mystery. Some of us find a match right away which works, while others stub the toes of our souls on a string of incompatibilities. Potential mentors wait patiently for the student to appear, while students anxiously await, fearing that they will never find the guide they need.

One problem that affects finding a good sponsor/sponsee match is geography. Some examples are: a sponsee lives in a small town in the middle of nowhere; a new meeting starts in an area without significant recovery and there is no one to guide individuals through the steps; a person realizes that he or she is a sex addict and lives in an area without a meeting; or a new member fears that his or her sexual orientation or addiction, if it were to become known, will be a disaster. Similarly, persons experienced in recovery sometimes find that they have no one in their area who is interested in connecting with them: the teacher is ready, but the student doesn't appear.

Fortunately for both sponsors and sponsees, the Men's Outreach Subcommittee maintains a list of men who want either to be a sponsee or a sponsor. Long-distance sponsorship has its own rewards: reaching out to someone who has been looking for help and hasn't been able to find it locally; meeting individuals from different parts of the country, the continent, or the world; realizing that this addiction knows no bounds and that individuals on every continent who suffer from this disease are the same as those who suffer in the "home country." While the languages change, the behaviors are the same.

We come to know that we are not alone; no matter where we travel or whom we call, there is someone who understands what we are going through and where we have been. When we connect with an individual in another country or a distant state to work the steps and we have a spiritual experience, we truly know we are part of something transcendent, something that links us all together in a fellowship of love and caring.

If you wish to be a part of the Men's Outreach Subcommittee, click on the email address at the SAA webpage, or send an email directly to:

men4saa@saa-recovery.org

You will receive back material on how to participate. So sign up! Eschew limitations! Find a match in recovery!

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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