

# 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 February 19, 2011 Teleconference:**

- Motion approved that the Board propose the delegate agenda be changed to revise the annual report format; Up to sixty minutes will be allocated for the reports from the Board of Trustees, the Literature Committee, the office, and the Conference Charter Committee; The ISO office report will include the financial, budget, and audit reports; Up to fifteen minutes will then be allotted for the Board to report on previous delegate resolutions.
  - Motion approved that Board propose the delegate agenda be changed to eliminate approval of the Annual Report by the delegates.
  - Motion approved that Board propose the delegate agenda be changed to eliminate the full presentation and delegate approval of the annual budget. An overview of the budget will be given as part of the ISO Office report.
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## **The Following actions were taken by the Board of Trustees at the March 19, 2011 Teleconference:**

- Motion approved that the Board approve the [attached] succession plan for the Director of Operations.
- Motion approved that the Table of Contents, Introduction and Chapter One of Sex Addicts Anonymous (the "SAA Green Book") be permanently posted to the ISO Outreach Web Site ([saa-recovery.org](http://saa-recovery.org)) in a viewable format not able to be downloaded, changed, printed or copied except as allowed by the ISO of SAA, Inc.
- Motion approved that the Board approve the sale of our International Convention workshops and speaker's CDs in an MP3 format at a cost of \$3.95 for an individual MP3 download or at a cost of \$49.95 for the download of a complete set; A set is defined as all the CD's created for a single convention.

## 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](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1082.html)**

We hosted a workshop on this subject at the 2010 convention and a ***CD of the workshop is available*** from the ISO office.

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## 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](http://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. What we're looking for is your experience, your strength, your hope, and your voice.

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](mailto:meditation@saa-recovery.org)**

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

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## **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, 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](mailto: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](http://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](mailto: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*.

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## 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](mailto:info@saa-recovery.org)**

## **Inter-Fellowship Relations Committee Report**

Our focus has been to create a tri-fold pamphlet that would share the purpose of the Inter-Fellowship Relations Committee, its history with the InterFellowshipFourm, and with reference to guides for S-groups and COSA. The latter format will be question and answer. We wanted to create a pamphlet that would make the fellowship aware and use our guidelines for working with other S-groups. Those guidelines are on our website; however, we wanted something in the fellowships' hands for ready reference.

At present, our pamphlet has been reviewed by the ISO board's policy committee and the fellowship committee. They have made recommendations that we will consider implementing and than re-submit our pamphlet.

Francie E., Chair  
Doug C., Board Liaison

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## **Author's Group Request for Sponsorship Articles**

Greetings:

In past years, the SAA newsletter ran a column on Sponsorship in which a number of good articles were printed. Recently, the Author's Group made an effort to collate these articles and when we did so, we found that there were good articles on sponsoring people through the first four steps, and that no articles on the later steps had been printed.

We need your experiences in sponsoring people.

Our fellowship has some unique experiences and unique challenges. For example, we have the challenge of hearing a Step Five in a "mandatory reporting state". We have experiences with sponsoring people in prison. We have experiences with people with multiple addictions, multiple personalities, and those who come into our program who really need a different program. We have the challenges of people who ask us to sponsor them, but our addictions would mesh. One challenge many groups face is finding people who would be open to being a sponsor. How do you determine when a sponsee is ready to sponsor and what do you do to push him or her into it?

Please write up your experiences and submit them to *The Outer Circle*. Please focus on one aspect of recovery such as one step. We could use

articles on sponsoring Steps Five through Twelve. If you have had a special experience with a sponsee, please write that up.

Our fellowship grows as we share our experience, strength, and hope. We all look forward to seeing what you can do to share your experiences in this area.

Dave R

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## **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 of Convention week

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!**

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## ***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](mailto: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!**

## ISO Income/Expense Summary As of March 31, 2011

	March 2011	Monthly Avg	July 2010 - March 2011
<b>Income</b>			
<b>Sales</b>	20,746.12	16,712.96	150,416.62
<b>Shipping &amp; Handling</b>	1,786.50	1,485.34	13,368.02
<b>Donations</b>	15,376.59	23,496.49	211,468.38
<b>Delegate Meeting Registration</b>	400.00	55.56	500.00
<b>Interest Earned</b>	36.87	35.00	314.97
<b>Other Income</b>	50.00	64.12	577.04
<b>Convention Revenue</b>	23,206.10	3,865.65	34,790.87
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>61,602.18</b>	<b>45,715.10</b>	<b>411,435.90</b>
<b>Cost of Goods Sold</b>	9,800.12	8,184.84	73,663.54
<b>Gross Profit</b>	<b>51,802.06</b>	<b>37,530.26</b>	<b>337,772.36</b>
<b>Expense</b>			
<b>Wages</b>	17,463.49	17,687.80	159,190.17
<b>Insurance</b>	307.04	310.02	2,790.17
<b>Payroll Taxes</b>	1,427.08	1,408.96	12,680.66
<b>Employee Benefits (Not Wages)</b>	3,771.80	3,694.73	33,252.61
<b>Business Travel Related</b>	3,205.84	1,768.60	15,917.40
<b>Office Postage</b>	4.98	59.77	537.95
<b>Communications</b>	473.36	530.38	4,773.45
<b>Professional Fees</b>	0.00	422.22	3,800.00
<b>Office Expense</b>	561.20	912.78	8,215.01
<b>Occupancy Expenses</b>	1,371.25	1,542.95	13,886.58
<b>Board/Committee Expense</b>	1,378.37	1,341.46	12,073.13
<b>The Outer Circle</b>	2,798.51	1,509.70	13,587.26
<b>Financial Charges</b>	1,355.08	1,333.01	11,997.12
<b>Bad Debts/Refunds</b>	0.00	60.92	548.29
<b>Delegate Meeting</b>	2.20	69.02	621.19
<b>Convention Expenses</b>	162.58	286.77	2,580.92
<b>Depreciation</b>	175.00	175.00	1,575.00
<b>Payroll Expenses</b>	19.99	17.24	155.16
<b>Reconciliation Discrepancies</b>	0.00	-28.93	-260.36
<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>34,477.77</b>	<b>33,102.41</b>	<b>297,921.71</b>
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>17,324.29</b>	<b>4,427.85</b>	<b>39,850.65</b>

## Financial Results for March 2011

In the month of March we had a surplus of \$17,324.29. We had budgeted for a surplus of \$16,398.00. We exceeded our estimate by \$926.29.

Our sales for the SAA Green Book exceeded our estimate by \$292.27.

Our pamphlet and booklet sales exceeded our estimate by \$1,316.67. Our bronze medallions exceeded our estimate by \$1,272.00 and our chips exceeded our estimate by \$356.00.

Our total sales for March exceeded our estimate by \$4,331.12.

Individual donations were below our estimate by \$348.81, and group donations were over our estimate by \$106.40, and total donations were below our estimate by \$242.41.

Our product inventory is valued at \$56,736.43.

Our expenses were over our estimate by \$2,638.77.

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

- Sales have exceeded our budget estimate by \$2,681.62
- Donations have exceeded our budget estimate by \$9,897.38
- Expenses have exceeded our budget estimate by \$12,027.71
- Net surplus is below our budget estimate by \$238.35

Our new operational reserve amount is \$123,808 and is fully funded. This is the estimated amount necessary 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\*\*](mailto: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.*]

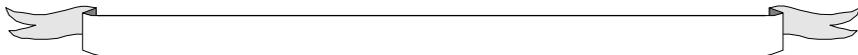
## From the Editor

by Mike L.

Needless to say, since this is the May/June issue of *The Outer Circle*, the convention is right around the corner. I'm very much looking forward to meeting up with folks I haven't seen since the last convention and maybe even longer. I'm especially looking forward to this convention as this past year has been a time of some real changes for me, probably more wide-ranging changes than I have experienced in a twelve-month period between SAA conventions, and not all of them easy changes either. So it's going to be a chance to return to some of the old and familiar and just get a chance to enjoy the love and fellowship that is such a feature of SAA. And speaking of love and fellowship, the topic article this month, dealing with "gratitude," has an interesting story behind it.



*The topic for  
January/February 2012  
is the slogan  
"Easy Does It."*



A few months ago I received an article called "Stuart and I," an article that I very much enjoyed, especially since I am such a fan of the film referred to in the article, a film which, similar to the experience of the author of the piece, I first became aware of at an SAA convention. It seemed to me to be so appropriate for publication in the May/June issue of *The Outer Circle* that, instead of following my standard policy of "first in, first out," I set the piece aside in one of those subfolders under "My Computer" on, well, my computer, with the idea of publishing it the following May/June issue. Normally things that go into a subfolder on my desktop sort of disappear from my consciousness as well, but this article touched me so much that I actually remembered it (at least once I suddenly realized that I had an unexpected page and a half to fill). And it was about gratitude, to boot, right when I needed an article on gratitude! And so I'm pleased to present

it in this issue, and I hope you enjoy it as much as I do.

“Stuart and I” reminded me in a big way of how different my life is today than it would have been had I not found recovery. And sometimes I need that reminder, because I can easily take recovery for granted. Sex addiction was a very lonely business for me, and I can especially remember those holidays that I spent alone because that was the kind of life I had forged for myself, a life that was not conducive to having people to spend the holidays with. How different a life it was than the life shown at the end of the film that is the subject of “Stuart and I.” And how easy it would be for me to return to that life if I just forgot the “simple but not easy” things I have learned through the SAA program.

This month’s topic suggestion relates to the January/February issue and the start of a new year, that time of year when so many are making new year’s resolutions. I know that, speaking for me, when I make a resolution I expect absolute perfection of myself in carrying it out. The slightest deviance from what I have resolved to do means that I have to throw the whole resolution out the window and wait and start over again next year. Anyway, with that in mind, the topic for January/February 2012 is the slogan “Easy Does It.” What are your experiences and especially successes with going easy on yourself? I want to hear about them if for no other reason they may help me (and I hope others as well).

Well, it’s time to close for now. I’m looking forward to seeing those of you at the convention who are able to make it. And for those who cannot, I hope you will partake of the love and fellowship of your local groups, the way Stuart did (sometimes needing a little persuasion), and your telephone groups as well.

## Stuart and I

by James M.

The blessings I receive at SAA conventions sometimes come in very unexpected places and times. I remember a few years back talking to a young man who felt confused and lonely in the midst of the many people, and walking away from that conversation feeling that I had been the one who really received the help. Then there was the time that the presence of a particular man at the convention gave me the opportunity to do a part of my amends that I had so far only been able to do by letter, because I could not contact many of the people I had hurt over the years. These were easily opportunities for gratitude for me.

One of the biggest occasions for gratitude, even though I didn't recognize it at the time, came for me at the 1998 convention in Hampton, Virginia. I had started in recovery in 1991, and really started getting serious about it roughly a year into the program. The last few years in recovery had been very good ones for me, and I, without realizing it, had started to become complacent. So complacent, in fact, that I walked into a relationship that came very close to destroying me. I remember looking in the mirror one day and noticing that I was really starting to look bad without understanding why, never making the connection between my life situation and my physical appearance. That relationship blew up in my face in 1998, just a few weeks before the convention. Even though that loss was ultimately one of the best things that could have ever happened to me, I was left feeling completely devastated. I was convinced that I would never start to feel better, at least not any time in the next twenty years.

I really did not want to attend that convention. I wanted to stay home in case the phone call I was hoping to receive came through while I was away. Nevertheless, I made the dreaded decision to go ahead and attend the convention for what were rather mundane reasons. I had offered to lead a couple of workshops, and I had folks counting on me to share the costs of the hotel room, so off to Hampton I went. And of course, the first thing I did after getting off the tiny plane from the last leg of the trip into Hampton was to call and check the answering machine for the message I knew had to be there, but was not.

I pretty much kept to myself during a lot of the convention. I spent time walking around the area, hanging out at a nearby coffee shop, and basically just doing my best to stay away from everybody. Even though I knew a lot of people there from my groups at home and from previous conventions, I was convinced that I was the lowest of the low and certainly had nothing to offer anybody. I somehow managed to get through my workshops, only to disappear from public view again once each of them was over.

I did attend the Saturday night banquet and heard the announcement of the various post-banquet events to take place later in the evening, including a film about a man named Stuart. My first inclination was to go back to my room and go to sleep, and I feared that some of my roommates might be there and I might have to be sociable. So after giving the matter some thought, I decided that going to watch this film I had heard mentioned at the banquet might be the best solution; it was supposed to be funny and I was certainly in need of a few laughs, although not optimistic that I would even be able to manage a smile. But I knew I could find myself a spot in a corner of the room, not have to talk to anybody, and, with any luck, my roommates would be asleep by the time I got back to the room.

I was a little bit late for the film, so I missed the only, rather risqué, joke about sex addiction near the beginning of it. I settled in, wondering if I could stay focused on what I was watching, or if I would spend the whole evening thinking about my problems. I did manage to stay connected to what was happening onscreen, and I surprised myself by even cracking a smile a couple of times. I found myself wondering how I had managed not to know anything about this film, which had such an obvious recovery basis to it.

I was particularly touched by the ending of the film, with Stuart's reminder that nobody has fun like people in recovery do, and especially when his formerly addicted brother showed up in Chicago, looking to rekindle his relationship with the brother from whom he had formerly been estranged. I left the screening feeling not a lot better, but certainly a little bit better; definitely better than I had felt at any time in the two preceding days. I was far from feeling anything approaching gratitude but I could tell myself that I felt a little better.

I would like to be able to say at this point that that Saturday night turned everything around for me, and that I had a great time the rest of the weekend. I did not. I went back to isolating, to hanging around the coffee shop, and to counting the hours until I could get back on that little plane for the first leg of the trip out of Hampton. Before leaving, I did express my gratitude to the employees at the coffee shop for being so pleasant the entire weekend, probably the only shred of true gratitude I openly expressed the whole time I was there.

Back at home, I began fighting my natural inclination to and hide out at home, away from everybody I knew, similar to what Stuart did at a couple of points in the film; instead, I began going to meetings again, something that I had started to let slide during the time of the relationship. Not just SAA meetings, but also other meetings that dealt with some of the issues that I now knew required my work. I began slowly to get interested in life again.

Many times I found myself taking three steps forward and two steps backward. Overall, I was improving. And even before I started truly feeling better, I looked in the mirror one day and saw that I was starting to look better, so my body knew how I was feeling sooner than my mind did. It took me roughly seven months before I really felt that my past situation was behind me; certainly a long time, and nowhere near as long as the twenty years that I had originally envisioned.

With the blessings and help of my Higher Power, I did a lot of work on myself during those seven months, and the first real work I did was to fight against my natural inclination on a Saturday night in Hampton, Virginia, when I made myself go and watch a film about a man named Stuart, whose commitment to his own recovery ultimately outweighed all the craziness that could have pulled him down. I will always be grateful for how much help I received and how much help I gave myself that night, even if I didn't have an inkling of it at the time. Certainly if I had stayed home that weekend and avoided the SAA convention, it would have been at least a while longer before I learned of the film. As it is, I normally watch it at least once a year, and I never fail to watch at least part of it each year that it is shown at the convention. Thank you, Stuart! You have my undying gratitude!

## Step Five: Holding Back Nothing

by Henry L.

At one time I attended a Saturday night twelve-step meeting of another program. The chair of the meeting had a significant amount of sobriety from the behavior addressed in that program. As time went on I moved on to other things on Saturday night.

Some months later I stopped by a recovery house on the way home from work and found the same person who had been chairing that meeting working behind the coffee bar. This could only mean, of course, that he was residing at the recovery house.

Given the amount of recovery he had, I was stunned, and asked him what had happened. He told me that there were three things he had left off of his Fifth Step and that they finally sent him back out. He had gotten a new sponsor from among the outsiders who came to the house and planned to do a complete Fifth Step with this new sponsor. I have not seen this man again since that time, so don't know if he ultimately remained sober.

I have talked to "retreads" in other recovery houses over the years with similar tales. Their story often takes the form of, "I wasn't serious the first/second/tenth time, and left things out." My response is, "You did the best you could at the time, and I'm glad you're trying again."

I got to thinking about these men when reading one sentence on page 39 of the SAA Green Book: "While we might wish to share our entire Fifth Step in one sitting, some of us may in fact need several meetings to complete the entire step." The surface interpretation I put on this sentence is that I might have so much on my Fourth Step that I might have to schedule several meetings in quick succession with my sponsor in order to get everything off of my chest.

However, I think the meaning is deeper. Perhaps there are things that I didn't include on my Fourth Step, while knowing they were there. My sponsor of course had no way of knowing that I had left them off. Thus, my reason for scheduling further meetings with my sponsor might be to have time to reflect on the healthiness of omitting these other things, or on whether there may actually be other things that I legitimately forgot at first. The extra meetings would then take the form of mini-fifth steps. Or the reason could be that stated in the *Alcoholics Anonymous Twelve and Twelve*: "It may turn out, however, that you'll choose someone else for the more difficult and deeper revelations." In this case, of course, more than one meeting would be a given.

I have opportunities to revisit all the steps as I continue the road to recovery. Still, these words in the SAA Green Book strongly remind me of how important it is to do a completely thorough and honest Fifth Step; the watchword here remains "progress, not perfection."

## Step Six

by Martha A.

Step Six tells us that we “were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.” For me, this was a leap in time from the completion of Step Five. In other words, I was fairly certain I was not already at the point of readiness just from completing my Fifth Step.

The SAA Green Book rescued me: “If we are fearful, we can gently and courageously allow ourselves to consider the possibility of surrendering our familiar defects, trusting that our Higher Power will not give us more than we can handle” (p. 40). “If we are fearful”? Without a doubt!

The central section of the quote is very rich. It begins by stating my attitude toward the task before me, “gently and courageously.” In some ways, these two words seem contradictory to each other. I was certainly courageous when acting out, taking risks that could have landed me in jail. Similarly, I had to be courageous from time to time just in order to extricate myself from particular situations. So I knew I was courageous. Now, “gentle” is another matter, at least when it came to being gentle with myself. This is something I am still learning.

“Consider the possibility”: If that isn’t being gentle, I don’t know what is. It reminds me of the expression “being willing to be willing to be willing,” a solid reminder that I really do start at the very beginning in tackling this step. Now I can begin to draw on my courageousness.

Finally it talks about “surrendering our familiar defects.” “Familiar” tells me that there are other defects that are not quite as familiar. From here I can start peeling off those layers of that onion, eventually reaching character defects that are less familiar, and even completely unfamiliar ones.

The final part of this quote, “trusting that our Higher Power will not give us more than we can handle,” is a reassurance that my Higher Power has blessed me for doing the Steps in order. I could not have taken Step Six without having taken five preceding Steps. If I had jumped from Step One to Step Six then I would have been daring my Higher Power to “give me more than I can handle.” But because I took the Steps in order from One to Six I already know that I am now at a point where I can handle what is asked of me in the Step.

So, I have drawn on those character qualities of gentleness and courageousness. Then I begin to look at the most obvious character defects, slowly becoming willing to look at the less obvious ones. I know my Higher Power is with me, blessing me on this journey.

## Tradition Five and SAA Meetings

by Michael D.

I was puzzled by the initial suggestion in SAA that I attend several different meetings before deciding if the program was for me. The only reason I could initially see for doing so was to comply with the suggestion of attending ninety meetings in ninety days, since no single group would meet enough times in ninety days for me to reach that goal. Because there were enough groups in my area to allow me actually to do the “ninety in ninety,” I went to other meetings. And I’m glad that I did.

I soon realized that the groups are indeed different, first of all in the area of attendance. While there were folks who came to different meetings during the week, others only came to one particular meeting. This in itself tended toward a different tone in the meetings.

Another difference was in the type of meetings. There were of course topic meetings and meetings based on readings, some from SAA literature, some not (with the increase in our own literature over the years, more literature-based meetings now use SAA literature exclusively). There were also First Step meetings and speaker meetings. In my early days, I failed to distinguish the two, not noticing that the former focused principally on the problem and the latter on the solution. Since I initially made the SAA group my higher power, speaker meetings were a blessing in that they gave me a chance to see what others’ Higher Power had done for them.

As I became more of a regular at meetings, long after my “ninety in ninety” had passed, I began to see more subtle distinctions in meetings. One meeting might, during the introductory readings, emphasize the need for anonymity by adding additional phrases, whereas the readings in another meeting might go more into depth as to what the donations would be used for. I gleaned that the distinctions were there to make the meetings safer for the attendees.

Looking at the meeting schedule, I saw that some meetings gave out more information about locations than others. I remember a group conscience where the subject was to request that the phone number of the church hosting the meeting no longer be listed in the schedule.

All of these differences can be summed up in the sentence on p. 85 of the SAA Green Book, “Each group needs to work out for itself how to use its time and resources to reach out to others.” Reading this sentence, I better understood the distinctions between the meetings. In a sense the differences are minor, all being SAA meetings. Yet they are significant enough that a newcomer attending several different meetings could well find one where he or she felt on a safer ground to get a sponsor, begin working the steps, and start on the process of recovery.

## Experience, Strength, and Hope in SAA

by Louis N.

I read in the section on Tradition Six in the SAA Green Book, "To ensure that our message will not take second place to any outside interest, Tradition Six puts healthy boundaries around our relationships with other groups and causes" (p. 86). When I was new in SAA and still struggling to understand the Traditions, I wondered how, after meetings, we could discuss things unrelated to sex addiction and SAA. I thought this was a violation of Tradition Six.

I was interpreting the Sixth Tradition overly broadly. The Tradition can indeed have an internal application, such as when a group promotes a retreat of another Twelve-Step fellowship. If it is not made clear that the retreat is being presented by a different fellowship, the newcomer could believe that the other fellowship and SAA are interconnected. In general, however, I now believe that Tradition Six relates much more fully to how our fellowship is perceived by the outside world, as opposed to how it is seen internally.

For example, that is why, when I receive a phone call asking for the name of a therapist, I decline to give names, even when I can provide the name of a member of the fellowship. The person going to such a therapist could easily confuse the therapist's message for that of SAA.

I see another example of this when I purchase non-SAA literature through the ISO office. There is some literature that is clearly related to a different twelve-step fellowship; even so, the literature carries a label that it is not SAA literature. In the case of other literature, the question is a little more squishy (to use the scientific term). I think of one book in particular that was the first book related to sex addiction that I had ever seen or purchased and that was considered for a long time to be the unofficial SAA big book; if it did not carry a similar label from the office, I could easily confuse it with SAA literature. Even the recordings of the workshops from the convention carry this label. Even closer to the point, just before the articles in the literature section of *The Outer Circle* begin, there is a reminder that they don't necessarily represent the ideas of the fellowship as a whole.

It is essential that we maintain the boundaries referred to in the quote from Tradition Six in the SAA Green Book. Just as there are people who are adamant that somebody's definition of "*my* program" not be confused with "*the* program," it is important that outside literature or discussions be kept clearly separate from the SAA message that we have developed over the years.

## 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:

How long will it take me to complete the Twelve Steps of SAA?

Impatient

Dear Impatient:

"There is no one correct or SAA-sanctioned way to complete the Twelve Steps. Most of us learned how to work the steps from our sponsors." (Sex Addicts Anonymous, pg. 21)

Our experience has shown that there is no perfect or correct timeline for working the Twelve Steps. The specific length of time varies greatly. What is important is that we are working the steps with our sponsor. Every individual's experience will be different and every sponsor's suggested guidelines are different. Allowing oneself the time and energy to experience as fully as possible the spiritual power and purpose of each step is a very valuable experience for many recovering addicts.

As we work the steps, we find that we actually never "complete" them, as we continue to carry the message to others and practice these principles in all our lives.

In Service,

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

## Reflections on Recovery, Part One

by Karl W.

*[Editor' Note: these articles are the first in a series of brief reflections on recovery submitted by Karl W. to The Outer Circle. The pieces will continue for the next several issues.]*

### Honesty

Reading an article in *The Outer Circle* about honesty was very helpful to me in my recovery. I need to be honest around the behaviors in my middle circle and admit that these behaviors are harmful to my serenity and not good for me. If I am not honest around these behaviors, then it is only a matter of time before I am acting out in my inner circle, as the lies tend to get bigger and bigger.

I need to stay with honesty and do some praying and some connecting with my Higher Power around honesty. I need to be honest. So many lies in the past! I need to stop fighting and get rid of the intoxication and poison around me. I need to be honest and say "that is not good for my serenity." I need to be honest around my powerlessness. There is joy in admitting that I am powerless.

### Hitting Bottom Cracking Through Denial

I have realized that there was a dark place, and I hit it to break through denial. I was hurting myself and did not know where to turn. I realized that *I did not want the consequences, but wanted to continue the behavior.*

I have been more honest about things this past month and that has been helpful. Sometimes it feels like the addict is moving in again, but that has been more on the temporary side.

"Serenity now" means I can change for good. I always have a choice and can look to the light.

### Breathe

I breathe. I have fun—walking, running, talking, embracing life. I find myself. I enter my body, slowly, quickly. I am here. When selfish thoughts come, I laugh—"here again," I say. "Stay as long as you wish, but I might be busy with some other things." Joyful connections and writing my thoughts—sleepy boy in the morning. Move along. Move along to find the good stuff—to find the sweet air. To find freedom from suffering. God's Love—a big promise—what must I do to get this? "Breathing in, I am calm. Breathing out, I am calm. Breathing out, *I am.*"

I take refuge in the breath. I connect in the breath. Where are you, Fear? Where are you, Pride? Gone for a bit? Come back any time! I can make you some tea. Stay as long as you want. Thank you very much. Amen.

## Just Bring You

by Daron S.

"My name is Joe N." Joe No-Name.

"My name is Jane A." Jane Anonymous.

These are my heroes. And many more of the like. They fought for me to break the chains of my bondage, help bear my load, guide me to truth, and tell me "it's okay."

I don't really know or remember their names. I can't recall their faces. But I carry them in my heart. We barely know each other as traditional relationships go. But they changed my life—helped change me.

Those that I speak of are those who attended my SAA meetings in my home city back in 2006. Some were at my first meeting, and second, and third. Some I saw only once, others many times. But they are my heroes nonetheless. Their presence a light, a raft for a drowning man.

I had been lost in the dark closet of loneliness, fear, and secrecy. I was suicidal. I had no one to whom to turn because I made sure those in my life thought I had it all together.

I needed help, a way out, truth, a chance to speak truthfully and confess, and to know I'm not alone in this world. "I am not a monster. I am not weird. Am I?" From my very first meeting, I got that chance.

I sat amongst a group full of everyday Joes. Amen! Their presence spoke to me and my deeply wounded heart. For the first time I could get "it" off my chest. I could open the door to my closet, bear my soul. It was scary. But I did it! They didn't laugh. They didn't belittle. They didn't say what I had done was okay, but with a smile they said I would be okay just as those I've hurt could be too if we fight for the healing.

With their eyes they told me "I have been there." They may have even done the same things. By showing up they let me know that "We all have demons. You are no worse than the rest of us." With their passionate attention I was able to see that we would make it.

Their presence.

I've been sober for about five years now. The ones at my first meetings were my Higher Power that helped me to believe in the Highest Power.

So I would like to thank every person who has attended any meeting at any time. You may never know it but you are the silent warriors who mark the way for the lost and wounded. And I'd like to encourage you to continue to just show up. Someone out there needs you. I need you—even if it's just your presence.

Just bring you.

## Program Tools in a Nutshell

by Ed. W.

We are told “it works when you work it.” The reverse, “it won’t if you don’t,” also holds true. The program provides many tools for obtaining and maintaining long-term sobriety. Yet it is a “package” deal. Shortcuts and omissions doom me to slips and relapses. I get out of the program in direct proportion to how much willingness and effort that I invest. Truly, “half measures availed us nothing.” Following are some important components of the program:

1. Meetings: I can stay out of isolation and feeling sorry for myself. A “pity party” can lead me to rationalize seeking my “drug of choice” to medicate my feelings, pain, and loneliness. I can focus on getting caught instead of getting sober. Being able to discuss my pain and my feelings allows me to see the reality of my life and move past the pain, guilt and shame into a healthy lifestyle.

2. Phone calls: I can stay in contact with others daily so that I stay out of isolation and can seek help when a crisis occurs.

3. The SAA Green Book: A comprehensive guide for sobriety and recovery. This book is the core document of the program. It also contains forty-six stories from members who have experienced the pain of addiction and the joy of recovery.

4. Other SAA literature: Writings addressing specific issues of recovery, providing a common terminology for communication and understanding in the fellowship.

5. The Twelve Steps of SAA: Most members who have achieved consistent, long-term sobriety have worked the Steps with a Sponsor. Our group has experimented with four different workbooks, before settling on the one we found to be the most thorough.

6. The slogans: The Slogans are extremely useful tools for maintaining daily sobriety. The advice and guidance that they provide are very wise. The Slogans provide pithy advice in an objective manner.

7. Avoiding pitfalls: That is, avoiding previous acting-out locations and partners, conditions (health, stress, family conflict) that developed prior to acting out, and rituals that are repeated prior to acting out. I identify circumstances that commonly occur just prior to acting out, and I try to see circumstances developing which would necessitate my redirecting my activities and focus.

8. Other recovery materials: The Tenth, Eleventh, and Twelfth Steps are guides to the necessity of continued study and growth in the program. Once sobriety is achieved and I’m no longer living in the Bubble, I can ad-

dress other issues. A therapist may assist in this difficult journey. Changing the learned behaviors from my childhood and early years is a very difficult and slow process, but greatly contributes to long-term sobriety and true serenity.

9. Sponsorship: I originally thought that sponsorship was an obligation to repay others for the benefits of the Program. I quickly realized that each time that I sponsored a newcomer, I was actually reworking the Steps. I was attending three meetings a week and meeting with four newcomers each week. By working in the program daily, I found myself continually reinforced by the Program. I was staying out of the Bubble for longer periods of time and the intensity of the attacks by the addiction was lessening.

10. Beginning to live in the Outer Circle: It's hard to be in the outer circle and the inner circle at the same time. The slogan "Act as if" is very powerful. Habits are developed and ingrained over many years. I can't retrain myself overnight. I can change first the behavior, then the motivations. My groups, my program, and my Higher Power can enable me to change my lifestyle of addiction to a lifestyle of enriched living.

These tools are necessary for me to repel thoughts, circumstances, temptations, memories, stress, and all the other "triggers" that I constantly face. The more I work the Steps and surrender to the Program by using these tools, the greater the chance I will not eventually fall prey to the insidious power of the addiction.

## My Recovery Funnel

by Larry E.

I conceive of my recovery as a funnel that gives the traditional “three circles” of SAA a three-dimensional quality.

There is a broad, level field around the outside atop my funnel. This is my outer circle, which is filled with all of those behaviors that reinforce my recovery and a healthy life. Those behaviors include joining friends to play and sing music, writing poems and sharing them, and exercising daily with joy rather than with the compulsivity of my addict years, attending SAA meetings and sponsoring others in need, attending twelve-step Buddhist meetings, meditating, praying, and reading a lot of recovery literature. I practice setting and reinforcing healthy boundaries. I endeavor to be aware, to reflect and to pause before speaking or acting. I work on loving, blessing and forgiving myself and others, especially people whom I resent or envy.

These behaviors also include many activities with my wife such as taking out our travel trailer out to recharge our intimacy in nature. They include lots of little things: appropriate touch, holding hands, kissing her goodbye, acknowledging her when she comes home, listening to her intently and quietly; speaking honestly, and supporting her with chores and challenges.

The number of activities in my outer circle grows with recovery, now four years long. When I stay in my outer circle, there is no pull toward unhealthy behaviors. But I am not perfect, at least not yet.

Life offers many circumstances and temptations that threaten my sobriety; these are in my middle circle. This part of the funnel is a checkerboard of solid ground on which I can stand, with empty holes through which I can fall and slide down the sloping edges of the funnel toward my inner circle. I stay on solid ground when I exercise wisdom. But wisdom can be hard to distinguish from delusion. So I have defined markers to help me with the boundaries.

I try to make the markers clear and objective, not allowing for delusion. If I work at home, work more than forty hours a week, stay late or go in early, I am at risk. If I do not attend at least three twelve-step meetings per week, do not attend therapy or arrive late, do not meditate or exercise daily, do not socialize in a healthy way with friends or do not play music each week, I am at risk. I am alert to acting out if I watch more than two hours of television a day (three on weekend days). My feelings often are keys. I am more vulnerable if I do not express my true feelings or I am being reactive, compulsive, righteous, perfectionist, defensive, bored or blaming.

I can't state every potential trigger objectively. For instance I know that I am more at risk if I am doing work that I do not like. But it can be hard for

me to distinguish between work I like and the benefits of work (e.g., money). I know that I am more at risk if I isolate. But it can be hard to distinguish between taking healthy personal time and isolating. Even taking what seems like healthy time, such as practicing music, can lead to compulsive behavior from which I eventually seek distraction, such as fantasy or provocative images on the internet. I do my best.

If I slip through a hole in my middle circle, it typically does not lead me directly to act out. The space beneath the holes is not empty. Rather it is filled with "spiritual charges" that can shoot me back to the middle or even the outer circle. These spiritual charges are the kinetic energy of my recovery. They are the result of neurons interacting on the new pathways my brain is forming in recovery; pathways from the emotions and memories centered in the limbic system to the frontal cortex, where I can pause, reflect and redirect my behavior and speech in healthy ways. So, even when I slip, I can restore my sobriety without falling into the pit of addictive and destructive behaviors.

The walls of the funnel are not smooth. As I experience more recovery, recovery over time builds up a residue of positively charged matter that slows my descent toward acting out. The surface of my funnel walls interrupts my downward progress, sending me back up or inward into the spiritual charges. Although I could act out any day, my experience is the longer I am healthy, the more likely I will remain so.

The inner circle, a black hole and a gravity sink, represents acting-out behaviors from which I must refrain: masturbation, cybersex, hard-core pornography, adult venues, objectification, sexual fantasy and drug abuse. I lose my sobriety through these behaviors. Moreover, because of the effects of gravity, I will likely be pulled deeper into the funnel.

With intervention I might escape. But the last time that happened, the consequences were severe. I lost my practice of twenty-five years, my professional license, and tens of thousands of dollars. I was convicted of a felony, went to jail, and was required to register as a sex offender for the rest of my life. I lost the respect of many friends and peers. I almost lost my marriage. Ironically this trail of tears saved my life and was an incredible blessing. I have no interest in acting out again. And for me now, a funnel is only something I use for motor oil.

## **Nine Years Learning the Program, Eight Months Sober: From a Prisoner's Point of View**

by Joe R.

I'm a prisoner locked up for twelve years for my sexual acting out, with more time to go. This was my Higher Power's way of answering my prayer to stop my behavior; it took me another three years to learn that there was such a thing as a twelve-step program for sexual addiction. I found this out purely by accident. I had been writing to places for psychological help since I couldn't get any help in the state system. In reply to one of the letters I sent out, I got a list of the names and addresses of four different twelve-step programs. I wrote to these programs and started getting books and literature about the programs in response.

As a child in the sixties I had what is now known as ADHD, and I was a bed wetter. I was never as good as my older brother to whom I looked up. It seemed to me that I was never good enough. No matter how hard I tried, I couldn't do anything right. I really felt worthless until the time I was five years old when I started acting out with the girl down the street and two of my female cousins. I could get them to do anything and in this I found that I could have some control in my life. I got caught acting out many times and would get smacked or sent in the house, and the girl would get sent home. Because of these punishments, I knew that what I was doing was wrong, but it made me feel good so I kept doing it.

We moved away when I was seven; two years later my father died of cancer. I only found comfort by fighting and by acting out with the girl upstairs. I acted out with one of my friends' little brothers. I didn't care what we did as long as I was in control. After this I acted out with other kids. I felt powerful and better about myself by making other kids do what I said.

At eleven and a half my mother sent me to live at a group home because I was always fighting and otherwise in trouble and she couldn't control me any more. At this home I was sexually abused by other kids; before long there were about twelve of us who acted out together all the time. These other kids taught me new behaviors that I practiced every night. Since I felt I was being neglected by my family, acting out with these other boys was the only kind of affection I was getting; I thought it was love. Later I found that I could be in control of what we did and with whom we did it, so now I got back to experiencing the control I had when I was younger and the love I felt I needed. This went on for four years and when I left the home, I continued to do this with other kids.

Most people, not knowing the truth of the situation, thought I was a great guy for looking out for and teaching children. After about twenty years, one of my victims told me he didn't believe in God any more. When I asked him

why, he said, "If there were a God he wouldn't be letting these things happen to me." That is when I really saw the harm I was doing and I started praying to God to help me. Still, I couldn't stop, and things got worse until I got locked up. At that point I swore I never to do those things again; I didn't realize just how hard that would be.

After finding SAA, three years after being locked up, and starting to write to members, I started to understand that I wasn't alone. I was feeling better about myself but still couldn't stop acting out with myself while fantasizing about the past. It was another eight years before I really stopped fantasizing about the past. It has now been eight months since I have acted out with myself at all, and this is the longest I have ever gone since I was eleven.

I've had my ups and downs with God, but I know now that he is always with me. I know that he led me to SAA so my brothers in recovery could help me. Being in prison and not being able to go to meetings is hard; but I have found that if I stick with it, in the long run it pays off.

My recovery started with me. Once I started reading literature and writing to SAA members, I was on my way to recovery. I can be in recovery even in prison.

## 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](mailto:OOCChair@saa-recovery.org)

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