

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 approved by
the Board of Trustees at the
March 17, 2012 Teleconference**

- Approved "Oasis of Serenity" as the theme for the 2013 ISO of SAA International Conference, and approved the logo for the 2013 ISO of SAA International Conference.
 - That the Board adopt & submit at the 2012 Delegate Conference a proposed business motion to set 2013 Conference priorities.
-

**The following actions were approved by
the Board of Trustees at the
April 21, 2012 Teleconference**

- Approved the proposed change in the travel reimbursement policy.
 - Approved the content of the Annual Report for the service year 2011-2012.
-

**The following actions were approved by
the Board of Trustees at the Vancouver, BC
Face-to-Face meetings held May 23 & 24, 2012**

- Change fiscal year from July 1st through June 30th to January 1st to December 31st.
- Approve the budget for the 2013 convention.
- Approve the first six months of the 2012-2103 budget. This would be from July 1, 2012 through December 31, 2012.
- Approve the content of the Report of the Annual Audit.
- Approved motion that the Board nominate to the Conference, for the position of At-Large Board member for the service year 2012-2013: Jim L. of Birmingham, AL.
- Approved motion that the Board nominate to the Conference, for the position of At-Large Literature Committee member for the service year 2012-2013: Carol Ann R. of Houston, TX; Les J. of San Francisco, CA; Steve W. of Bloomington, IN.

**The following actions were approved by
the Delegates at the 2012 Conference held in
Vancouver BC, May 25 & 26, 2012**

- Elected as an At-Large Member to the Board of Trustees: Jim L., Birmingham, AL. Also, elected as At-Large Members to the Literature Committee were: Steve W., Bloomington, IN; Les J., San Francisco, CA; Carol Ann R., Houston, TX.
- That the ISO of SAA Bylaws be amended as follows: Articles II, III and V; all references described as "convention" be changed to "conference"; Article IV, all references except for the ones found in Sections 6 and 7 described as "convention" be changed to "conference". Further, that Article IV, Section 6 shall be changed to read, "The Board shall fix the date of an annual Conference and Convention to be held at least once in each calendar year, and notify each registered SAA group of the time and location(s) thereof at least 90 days in advance, and publish the same in any SAA sponsored periodical. At the International Conference the Board shall make available an annual report to the the members detailing the status of the corporation and the SAA Fellowship, as well as the activities of the Board over the past year." Section 7 is amended to read, "The annual meeting of the Board shall occur during the international SAA Conference." The remainder of Section 7 to remain unchanged.
- That a Section 12 be added to Article III that states, "The Conference is empowered to establish committees, henceforth referred to as 'Conference Committees or Conference Standing Committees'. Such committees will include, at a minimum, the following elected positions on the committee; a Chair, Vice-Chair and Recording Secretary, all of whom may be elected at the caucus used to form the committee. Further, that such committees are empowered to conduct electronic meetings and voting procedures in the process of conducting committee business.
- That the 2012 Conference endorse the ongoing work of the ISO Structure Committee and the Conference Charter Committee in proposing a new structure for the ISO, and, further, that the Conference approve a change of its special rules of order to allow the 2013 Conference to commit its schedule of new business primarily to consideration of proposed business items arising from the work of these two committees.
- That ISO provide the AA Big Book and Twelve and Twelve free to prisoners.
- That the ISO Conference recommend that members of the fellowship speaking on behalf of SAA in the public media observe strict anonymity, meaning that they not show their faces or allow use of their full names, as stated in Tradition Eleven.

Notes from the ISO Literature Committee

The 2011-2012 service years ended on a positive note with the approval of the Third Edition of the Green Book. This was a major accomplishment by itself. Also, the Literature Committee Handbook was given the final “nod” by the Literature Committee. The Literature Committee Handbook is an important document referenced by LitCom members and it couldn't have been approved at a better time since there are several new members who could use a good reference document.

So, what is happening in the Literature Committee Now?

While there are many pamphlets, booklets and recordings available for purchase from the ISO web site or from the office in Houston, there are many more pieces of literature and projects that are in different stages of development and are rarely seen by many members of the fellowship. Some examples are the creation of our own meditation book, a pamphlet focusing on retaining women in the fellowship, a pamphlet for GLBT members of the fellowship, a pamphlet for the sexual offender, a pamphlet centered on the newcomer looking for a sponsor, translations of SAA literature to other languages and audio recordings being made of existing documents.

As well, there are a number of service-based pieces of literature such as a speaker training manual and a public information workbook. The list here is by no means complete.

If there is one thing I can appreciate over this next year, it is the opportunity to work on some of these special projects and to work with a group of talented members of our fellowship. For me, it is a wonderful and challenging way to continue down the path of “one day at a time”.

Chris J.

Literature Committee Chair

Electronic Formats Available!

SAA e-Book

The ISO is pleased to announce the availability of the SAA Green Book, *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, in downloadable electronic format.

The eBook can be purchased from the ISO office, or online from the SAA Store at www.saa-store.org/book/.

After online purchase is complete, you will receive an e-mail with a link to download a zip file that contains both the mobi (Kindle) and ePUB (Nook) versions of the book. One of these formats can be read on most e-readers available today.

Special thanks go out to an anonymous member of the fellowship who took the time to create the eBook version. Such generous help from volunteer members enhances the capacity of the ISO to support member groups in carrying the SAA message of recovery to sex addicts everywhere.

mp3 Audio Downloads

The ISO is pleased to announce the availability of mp3 format downloads of our convention workshop and speaker recordings.

The files are in mp3 format, which may be played on almost any portable music device or computer.

Currently, the mp3 files are available for convention years 2004 through 2011, and can be purchased from the SAA store at www.saa-store.org/audio.

We will be uploading the remaining past convention years as we get them formatted.

Compulsive Sexual Avoidance

The ISO is pleased to announce approval
of a new piece of SAA literature:

“Recovery from Compulsive Sexual Avoidance A Return to Intimacy”

is now available online at the ISO website:

www.saa-store.org

Thank you to all who put so much hard work into producing
this new addition to SAA literature!

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 at the bottom of the 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. ***Please note that we have found that using "I" rather than "we" in the body of the meditation makes for a stronger meditation message.***

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 a maximum of 275 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>
<i>Recovery from Compulsive Sexual Avoidance</i>	

Meditation Book Vision Statement

(approved by the Literature Committee)

“The SAA Meditation Book carries the message of recovery by collecting into one volume diverse voices of the SAA Fellowship to serve as a resource for meditation and prayer for the addict in recovery and the sex addict who still suffers.”

Send your meditation, contact information, and signed release form to the ISO.

(release form is located on the last page of this newsletter)

Please send a digital copy of your submission (attached as .doc, .docx, .rtf, .txt, or in the body of the email) to [**meditation@saa-recovery.org**](mailto:meditation@saa-recovery.org).

Include complete contact information and, if possible, a signed scanned release. All submitters must send a release form – one per author - before submissions can be considered.

You can also send your meditation, contact information, and signed release by postal mail to: ISO, PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270.

If at all possible, please send your submission in digital form. We will, of course, consider all submissions. You will be sent a 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 each month at 5:00 p.m. Central Time and last until 6:30 p.m.

Sunday, June 24
Sunday, July 22
Sunday, August 26
Sunday, September 23
Sunday, October 28
Sunday, November 25

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).

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*.

Audio Version of SAA Green Book Now Available for the Visually Impaired

The National Library Service has recently produced an audio version of our SAA Green Book (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*). This audio book was produced by the government and is not available for sale by or use by the ISO of SAA, Inc. However, those who qualify for eligibility under the government guidelines may receive the SAA audio book from the National Library Service.

The website address for the National Library Service is:

www.loc.gov/nls/

***If you know of someone who could benefit from this service,
please let them know about this exciting development!***

7th Tradition Committee

LifeLine Partners...

MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

So you have found some sobriety and you have worked the steps, what now? Of course, go to meetings regularly, stop isolating, and continue working the steps.

Anything else? Avoid self-absorbed behavior, and give back by working the 12th step in some way every day.

If your life (occupied with family, career, and other obligations) is to the point that you just don't have enough time for as much 12th step work as you would like, you can still MAKE A DIFFERENCE by becoming a *LifeLine Partner*.

A regular automatic *LifeLine Partner* contribution will assure that you really can MAKE A DIFFERENCE by providing the ISO of SAA with the funds needed to carry out its mission of aiding groups to carry the SAA message of recovery to still-suffering sex addicts.

Approximately 180 SAA members currently give through *LifeLine Partners*. With an estimated membership of over 13,000 people in SAA, this means that the number of those giving would only need to increase to 10% of our membership for us to easily reach our goal of increasing donations from \$7,000/month to \$20,000/month. Then we could not only continue all of our current ISO outreach activities, but funds would also be available for other ways to carry our message that we cannot currently afford.

Through *LifeLine Partners*, you really can MAKE A DIFFERENCE... and It's a good feeling!

If you are interested in signing up to be a *LifeLine Partner*, just call the ISO Office at 800-477-8191, and they will get you started.

Or, you can sign up online at: <https://saa-recovery.org/LifeLinePartner/>

We thank you for your support!

7th Tradition Committee

Men's Outreach Committee

The Men's Outreach focus group met at the Vancouver convention on Saturday afternoon. The meeting was mostly devoted to a question-and-answer session about various topics related to men's outreach, such as the contact list, the new Dear Will column in *The Outer Circle*, and so forth.

We had our first teleconference of the year the third Sunday of June, and we are gearing up for another year of work. Among the topics under consideration were new questions for the Dear Will column, another general article about men's outreach for *The Outer Circle*, a page on the SAA website, and possibly putting together a pamphlet.

One of the subpages for the projected men's outreach page on the website is the challenges that prevent men from joining SAA. For example, men may have a difficult time determining when they have crossed the line into addiction because of the view that many cultures have concerning sexuality, and men's sexuality in particular. This is one of the reasons why it is important that SAA maintain an outreach to men who may be questioning their behaviors.

If you are interested in being part of men's outreach, please get in touch with the ISO at 800-477-8191 to be added to the list. We currently meet the third Sunday of the month at 4pm central time, and the meeting day and time is up for discussion at our next meeting. We hope to see you at our next meeting.

Young Adult Outreach Committee

Young adults in recovery between the ages of eighteen and thirty are invited to share their story of addiction and recovery in a one- to-three-minute audio file. The audio may be used at a later date in an outreach effort designed for other young adults who are just discovering that they have a problem and are seeking a solution.

Please email your file to: genoutreach.ya@saa-recovery.org

Not sure what to record? Imagine a young adult newcomer just sat next to you in your home meeting. What would you want to tell them?

- What life was like before?
- How you got into the rooms?
- What life is like now?

Your contribution to this important work is much appreciated.

Young Adult Outreach Committee Chair

ISO Income/Expense Summary

As of May 31, 2012

	May 12	Monthly Avg	Jul '11-May 12
Income			
Sales	17,633.47	15,284.99	168,134.94
Shipping & Handling	1,544.25	1,399.70	15,396.69
Donations	22,508.43	23,307.29	256,380.20
Interest Earned	24.18	28.98	318.81
Other Income	0.00	82.97	912.67
Convention Income	24,567.81	4,628.71	50,915.81
Delegate Meeting Income	3,595.00	502.73	5,530.00
Total Income	69,873.14	45,235.37	497,589.12
Cost of Goods Sold			
Total COGS	6,262.27	7,078.07	77,858.78
Gross Profit	63,610.87	38,157.30	419,730.34
Expense			
Wages	19,668.20	18,615.46	204,770.11
Benefits	4,068.37	3,728.58	41,014.39
Payroll Taxes	1,508.98	1,521.06	16,731.70
Payroll Expenses	21.64	20.10	221.07
Insurance	323.86	321.45	3,535.92
Financial Charges	1,420.41	996.28	10,959.08
Communications	826.44	770.11	8,471.26
Occupancy Expenses	1,289.51	1,407.02	15,477.25
Office Expenses	1,091.07	821.61	9,037.70
The Outer Circle	2,154.60	1,315.02	14,465.27
Professional Fees	0.00	421.82	4,640.00
Depreciation	175.00	175.00	1,925.00
Bad Debts/Refunds	44.27	121.63	1,337.91
Translating/Literature Projects	0.00	90.91	1,000.00
Travel-Related Expenses	3,547.94	2,867.00	31,536.98
Board/Committee Expenses	1,036.04	1,211.63	13,327.89
Convention Expenses	5,252.16	666.77	7,334.48
Delegate Meeting Expenses	434.01	40.19	442.11
Total Expense	42,862.50	35,111.65	386,228.12
Net Income	20,748.37	3,045.66	33,502.22

Financial Results for May 2012

In the month of May we showed a surplus of \$20,748.37. We had budgeted for a surplus of \$21,891.70.

Our sales revenue for the SAA Green Book exceeded our estimate by \$53.50 for May and has exceeded our estimate by \$1,615.17 for the current service year.

Our pamphlet and booklet sales exceeded our estimate by \$2,279.25 for May and have exceeded our estimate by \$3,124.08 for the current service year. Our bronze medallions exceeded our estimate by \$91.44 in May and have exceeded our estimate by \$3,176.01 for the current service year. Our Chips were below our estimate by \$66.00 in May and are below our estimate by \$869.76 for the current service year.

Our total sales for May were below our estimate by \$1,122.53.

Individual donations exceeded our estimate by \$2,659.85 for May and have exceeded our estimate by \$2,038.81 for the current service year. Group donations exceeded our estimate by \$3,088.58 for May but are below our estimate by \$4,558.61 for the current service year.

Our product inventory is valued at \$32,443.06.

Our expenses exceeded our estimate by \$4,264.20 in May.

Summary of the current service year: (July 1, 2011 to May 31, 2012)

- Sales are below our estimate by \$18,181.08
- Donations are below our estimate by \$2,519.80
- Expenses have exceeded our budget estimate by \$10,137.27
- Net surplus is below our budget estimate by \$27,411.93

Our operational reserve amount is \$131,921.00 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


[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.

A couple of mornings ago, my clock radio came on with a story of how people these days are tending away from taking vacations. It said that oftentimes a lot of the fun of the vacation is the anticipation of it, and that shortly after the vacation was over a lot of the benefits of having taken it in the first place had largely disappeared.



*The topic for the March/April 2013
Outer Circle is
"spiritual experiences."*



I must have not gotten that memo, as I am just the opposite. I often dread actually leaving on vacation because I am so focused on the things I have to get done before departing. On the other hand, the benefits I get from a vacation often stay with me for months, and thinking back on the good times I had especially helps me get through those first few days of sorting through all the stuff that has piled up on my desk.

Having said all that, I must admit that I was really looking forward to this trip to Vancouver. I've learned to travel lightly over the years and so packing at least was one less thing I had to dread. Also, I had some intuition that this particular convention, called "Silver Linings," was going to be something special, and I was right. I can only recall two or three conventions since 1995 that I enjoyed more than this one. A lot of that extra enjoyment was due to the wonderful job that the convention planning committee did in putting this one together, and a lot of it was due to the beauty of the city where it took place, especially since the much-predicted rain failed to materialize. "Silver Linings," indeed.

One memo I did fail to get was the one the convention committee sent out on the Tuesday before the convention. I was leaving that evening, since I

had work to do before the delegate conference got started on Friday, and so I didn't see the committee's suggestions for answering the inevitable questions I would get going through customs. "Why are you here?" "What kind of convention?" Fortunately, in my case, the customs officer was happy with "a twelve-step convention," an answer that was probably less good than "a personal growth convention" and "a spiritually based convention," the answers suggested by the convention committee.

I do always take time to see a little bit of the city while at these events and Vancouver had plenty to offer. I'll never forget the wonderful Minoru Park near the hotel with its tame ducks, geese (one came up to me and sat down about two feet from me while I was resting on a bench), rabbits, and black squirrels. Thanks to Vancouver's excellent public transportation system, I had a chance to visit Gastown, a laid-back area in the north part of the city, with a nice view of the water. Walking around the area, I was astonished to see a shop that blatantly advertised Cuban cigars, before I remembered that I wasn't in the United States. I also visited the Vancouver Art Gallery (seeing the local museum is just about "de rigueur" for me on these trips) as well as the beautiful Dr. Sun Yat-sen Classical Chinese Gardens, one of several enticing field trips that the convention committee offered.

And the food was of a very high standard as well. A particular favorite of mine was a vegetarian Chinese restaurant near the hotel. I first went with three women who were surprised that a man would want to go to a vegetarian restaurant. Ironically, my second trip was with a group of eight or nine men (and one woman). I wish I had made time to visit there more.

Oh, and there was a convention in Vancouver, too. The convention itself was also a wonderful experience which offered plenty of opportunities to renew old acquaintances. The delegate conference before the convention was only the second time in memory that we finished all of the delegate business before its conclusion. Among other highlights:

- The most enthusiastic group of attendees to the men's outreach workshop that I have experienced;
- A chance to hear close to a dozen truly moving meditations that were written from scratch in about thirty minutes at the meditation writing workshop;
- The high quality of the food served at the delegate luncheon and the banquets, including some very appetizing vegan options (I did slip from being purely vegan with the delicious desserts);
- A pair of wonderful speakers at the Saturday night banquet, including a funny and truly inspirational talk by the COSA speaker; not to minimize the efforts of the SAA speaker who, despite his additional duties as the convention chair, found the time to put together a heartfelt and touching talk;

- And, perhaps best of all, the chance to participate in what may well have been the first Spanish-language SAA meeting ever to take place in Canada.

One particular experience that was both recovery- and tourist-related took place aboard the public transportation system. I was wearing the t-shirt from the 1999 SAA convention, "Keystone to Freedom," which spells out the one-word principle that applies to each step. One young man I'll call C. saw my shirt and asked me "Are you a friend of Bill W.?" I told him I was. He, of course, turned out to be as well. We had a brief but enjoyable chat, before parting with my expressing my hope to C. that we might run into each other at a meeting one day.

I could go on and on, but I do have to do a little Outer Circle business in this article. I'll just conclude by saying that Vancouver is definitely on my list of places to visit a second time.

The topic for the March/April 2013 Outer Circle takes its inspiration from the animals I saw in Minoru Park. Seeing those animals and feeling one with them was truly a spiritual experience for me. It was one of those times that I really felt close to nature. So the topic for the March/April 2013 issue is "spiritual experiences." Spiritual experiences can take all kinds of forms. What kinds of spiritual experiences have you had, and how have they affected you?

Thank you for your support of The Outer Circle, and thanks to all of you who have contributed to it over the years. I look forward to spending a little more time with you in these pieces I write for each issue.

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 am fairly new to SAA and I have attended telemeetings for four or five months. I'm wondering why the women share their circles as they are checking in at the start of the meeting. To be honest, that part of the meeting makes me feel uncomfortable.

Uneasy

Dear Uneasy,

All meetings are autonomous and have the right to choose their desired format. It sounds as though these "accountability" meetings are not comfortable for you. Some women find sharing circles distressing, just as some women find mixed meetings awkward. That's why we have all kinds of meetings. Please feel free to try different meetings until you find ones that you feel comfortable in. That is the miracle of autonomy—different meetings have different formats so that each member can attend meetings that work for that member.

Members of the fellowship who attend accountability meetings find that sharing their circles allows newcomers to relate and know they are not alone; it helps bring our secrets into the light; and it is a practice of accountability. This has been a vital part of recovery for some.

I hope you find the right meetings to enhance your sobriety.

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 Eight

by John H.

“Made a list of all persons who we have harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.”

My Eighth Step amends list is vastly bigger than the addict I had become. This statement is true because the list of people I have harmed not only includes those who I directly harmed, but the entire state where I reside. My list is long because I'm incarcerated as a direct result of progressively acting out my sex addiction and committing a sex crime. I include the taxpayers on my list who bear the burden of my addiction and incarceration for a few more years.

Guilt from my acting out behavior was destroying me internally, but I didn't know how to start the amends process with those I had harmed. Then God, my higher power, sent me an inmate who introduced me to SAA. Once I started to work the program and my secret addiction was disclosed I was relieved to learn that I was not alone. There was hope for a positive future free from the insanity of addictive behavior.

The first part of Step Eight for me was to stop blaming others for my situation. When creating my list, I focused on what I had done and not what had been done to me. I was abducted by a man when I was nine years old, but my actions as an adult were not his fault; they were mine to own. Every person has his or her own story of traumatic life events. No one escapes the pains of life. It is how I react to them and what I learn from them that makes me stronger or brings me to addiction.

Once I accepted this fact, then I could honestly see how my actions had harmed others and how severe the damage had been. Not just the sex-related damage, but the other defects of character I had developed. The manipulation, the self-centeredness, the thinly veiled egotistical and arrogant attitude, all became a front to hide the scared hurting child inside that I had not dealt with. I learned all this from my Fourth Step inventory, which is where I got the first set of names to put on my list for amends.

God helped me along the way by keeping me focused on the task at hand. It was difficult at first to include some names without stressing on how I was going to make amends for the wrongs I had done. Initially, I felt that I had no right to even ask for the opportunity to make amends to my victim, the one I had hurt the most. But I put her on the list. With SAA's help, I was even able to include myself on my list. My behavior had hurt me as well.

Empathy entered my life and I wanted to do anything I could to make amends, and then some. Embracing my higher power and his will, I read, “If I have extorted anything I shall repay it four times over.” Then I moved on to Step Nine and took action to start making those amends. I dedicated

my life to helping educate inmates as an amends to all those I would otherwise never be able to repay. With regular inventories, I add any new people to my list that I have harmed. I have found inner freedom and peace in my life.

Thank God and thank you, SAA.

My Time Spent With Intimacy

by Josh S.

In a few weeks, I will have reached nine months in intimacy. I call my sobriety "*intimacy*" because when I am sober I am intimate with my girlfriend. When I am acting out I am not intimate, as I do not care for anything. I do not take care of myself. I do not share with others very well when I am acting out. I do not connect with people at a deep emotional level and instead connect with others by physical appearances.

Being intimate is something that has proven to take some getting used to. I am a sexual anorexic in recovery and there was a time in my addiction that I thought I could live without the touch of another human being. However, my bottoming out showed that I needed intimacy the same way a lost adventurer needs water in the desert.

I did abuse my girlfriend at the beginning of our relationship. I was still acting out and I wasn't done yet. Within six months I found recovery in Sex Addicts Anonymous. Things are very good between us today, but I know that I have a long way to go still yet. I find myself attempting to distance myself from her and from intimacy. At least I am aware of this pull now because before I didn't even know I was pulling away from her.

I am very grateful for the recovery I have today in SAA and I cherish the time spent in my outer circle. I don't wake up in the morning thinking that I have to battle another day, but I wake up thinking of my higher power. I want to spring out of bed in excitement now, even though I wake up at 5:00 am to get ready for work.

I am excited to see where the long journey of recovery will take me. I like seeing the progression in my life and I realize that intimacy is not an event. I do not simply think that "I have it now." I know that my intimacy is something that I must build over time and that only one brick can be set a day. I am building a tower that cannot fall because it took careful days to build. However, I agree with my fellow recovering sex addicts that the only place that one can add time to intimacy is in the present moment. Today is a special gift from my Higher Power, because today I haven't acted out.

Carrying the SAA Message Incognito in Prison

by Andy B.

During my twenty years of incarceration for a sex crime, I have had little tangible support in addressing the issues that caused me to commit my crimes. I had infrequent access to SAA meetings in my early years: four months of weekly meetings at a county jail; and a year of monthly meetings at my second unit. And I had access to sex offender therapy groups at my first two units, for a total of one and a quarter years. I attended all meetings and participated fully, but I did not experience much progress in letting go of the old addictive thoughts and actions.

I was transferred to a unit in 1996 with a high percentage of sex offenders, yet we never had access to SAA, sex offender therapy, or other groups to address our sexual dysfunctions. It is also difficult to find recovering sex addicts on the outside who are willing to try to overcome the challenges inherent in our culture and criminal justice system by helping facilitate meetings.

From the time I was incarcerated, I felt driven to do all I could to resolve the issues that brought me here. Most important, I surrendered to God and followed "good orderly direction," neither of which I did when I first attended SAA in the free world, from 1987 to 1992. I also never did a truly "fearless and thorough" moral inventory. So I jumped into the available AA and NA meetings, Substance Abuse Treatment Program (SATP) classes, and faith-based programs and fellowships, even though I wasn't addicted to alcohol or drugs. Fortunately, no one ever confronted me on this issue, or told me it was a requirement to participate. I kept my sharing "generic," as in "my lifestyle of sex, drugs, alcohol, and partying"

Even though I started my Step work in county jail, thanks to a generous AA member who came to visit me one-on-one for a few weeks, I didn't have access to a program or meeting that promoted working the Twelve Steps until I got to my second prison unit of assignment. At that time, they had a full-blown SATP, supplemented by AA and NA and SATP aftercare meetings, as often as two or three meetings per week. So we were able to address criminal and addiction issues up to six days a week, up until December 1995, when our governor, who was also an AA member, left office. I was, and still am, grateful that I had overcome my shame enough to benefit greatly from my non-stop participation in substance abuse meetings and programs.

I was grateful for the opportunity to join an AA-based Step study group which was hosted by a wise member of AA, and by one of our SATP counselors who was also an AA member. We few who applied ourselves diligently to studying and working all the Steps experienced the promised "spiritual awakening," and were compelled to carry the message of

recovery to fellow addicts and alcoholics seeking relief. Although I didn't get free from most of my sexual thoughts and acting out (alone only), I began the process of unburdening myself of the baggage I had carried all my life, and feeling increased compassion and understanding for myself and others. I was able to help others work their Steps and begin their process of getting free.

I gradually revealed myself as a sex offender and sex addict privately to those fellow seekers who showed themselves to be trustworthy, open-hearted, and non-judgmental; most also revealed themselves as sex offenders or sex addicts. It wasn't nearly as difficult or dangerous as I, in my shame, might have thought, but it did require me to work my own program and get free from most of the shame. It was mildly risky, but I had clearly learned the truth that "you're as sick as your secrets," and that I had to pass on the blessings of recovery and spirituality to others in order to maintain and increase my own freedom and spiritual health. Besides, as I addressed the causes of my addiction—including selfishness, self-centeredness, fear, resentment, secrecy, blame, irresponsibility, and a carnal-based identity—I naturally lost my sense of identification with my "old self" and its accompanying shame. So it has become ever easier to reveal my sordid past to folks who make a serious, heart-felt inquiry, knowing that it is a good opportunity to help others learn what I have learned about getting free from sex addiction and related issues.

I also utilized faith-based programs, groups, and fellowships, including our informal prayer and study sessions on the cellblocks, dorms and rec yards. I found those to be a good place to develop a spiritually-based bond and mutual support that could lead to confidential sharing of sexual and other issues. For example, on my cellblock I fellowship with a brother who zealously preaches and teaches Christianity; he has a very good heart and spiritual sensitivity. But he took over a year to admit to me that he had a past sex crime, something I suspect he had not shared with more than one or two others. It felt very good for him to do so with me, for it gave him an opportunity to lessen a burden he generally had kept to himself, and that had caused him quite a bit of trouble in the past.

Since God has blessed me with freedom from all manifestations of my sex addiction for almost three years now, I am much more apt to open up and share a message of recovery to anyone seeking relief from his suffering. I remain very active in our AA, NA, and faith-based meetings and classes, and I share a strong message of experience, strength, and hope every chance I get. I sometimes say, "I was out of control in several areas of my life, including sex," and tie it back into recovery: "When I let go and let God clean up my heart and mind, all areas of my life improved." Sometimes I state: "I've been free from masturbation (etc.) for almost three years now, and that is only possible through the grace of God and cooperation with His will." And, "Thanks to God, I feel quite complete and content today. I don't

need to connect with anybody else, sexually or romantically, and I don't need anyone else to 'complete me.'"

In these kinds of ways, I leave the door open to guys who want to discuss and resolve their sexual issues, and to show them that it's possible for them, too. Overall, shame and pride factors keep the huge majority of sex offenders, sex addicts, and others with heavy issues from asking for help. I regularly offer folks at AA and NA meetings the addresses of regional and intergroup offices where they live where they can request a sponsor or program pen-pal. And I pass on my copies of *The Outer Circle* by setting out each copy in the literature book case. Somebody always picks it up quickly, which indicates that there is a significant demand for SAA recovery literature, if we could only get the word out to more who are seeking help for their sex addiction.

As I was sharing last February about the great healing and cleansing power of God's Love to a faith-based fellowship, I took the big step of telling the audience that I was here for a sex crime. I did not call myself a "sex offender," as I've learned through experience that this negative identity label keeps me stuck in such behaviors and thoughts. I had spent several years developing good brotherly rapport with the many members of that community, so I knew that the risks were minimal, especially since I knew that many in there had also committed sex crimes. I got much good feedback for being so brave, and it empowered other sex offenders to "come out of the closet" with me, and to begin addressing their issues.

I continue to look for opportunities to transmit a message of hope to fellow sufferers. I've learned from twenty years of fellowshipping that very few substance addicts are free from symptoms of sex addiction and criminal sexual behavior. I've concluded that very little separates us from each other; we share the same basic desires, problems, background, and burdens. Thus, there is plenty on which to base a good, common bond with virtually any fellow human being/"struggler." In turn, all of us who have experienced significant recovery receive the chance to pass on the blessings of recovery to all sorts of different people with a wide variety of maladies. I continue to work with others to solve our numerous "common problems."

Dear Will

Submitted by SAA Men's Outreach Subcommittee

Dear Will,

I was caught acting out by my wife. It wasn't the first time and it was probably the straw that broke the camel's back. Out of desperation, I started going to SAA meetings because my life was a mess and starting to fall apart around me. By going, I thought I could find recovery and put back together what was beginning to fall apart. I have been going to meetings for about six months and working with a sponsor. Life at home is still difficult, though, and it looks like my wife is still going to leave me. I thought that my marriage could be saved by recovery, but it doesn't look that way. Could you please give me some advice as to what to do?

Facing Divorce

Dear FD,

I am happy that you have found the SAA fellowship. Please keep in mind that SAA is a "one day at a time" program, whereas it sounds to me as though you are living in the future.

On page 13 of the SAA Green Book, it says "We also get support to do the hard things that will help us find the freedom we seek. When faced alone, these tasks can seem overwhelming. But with others of like mind, we discover a new courage and a new faith." This quote talks about the benefits of being with others "of like mind." I have seen men in this program who came in enthusiastic about being in recovery, only to be sharing within a couple of months that their significant others were still planning to call it quits. With the support of others in the fellowship, they were able to accept their situation gracefully and move on.

The program of SAA helps me to see that my personal recovery must be top priority—at least for a time. Otherwise, I am worthless to others around me. Acceptance and forgiveness from others may or may not come in the short term—this is a consequence of my actions. And often, acceptance and forgiveness come later, as I demonstrate by our behavior that we have indeed achieved significant recovery.

Ultimately, my recovery is my responsibility, undertaken not to salvage a relationship or prevent a divorce, but to arrest an addiction that wreaked havoc on the relationship or marriage. My recovery is my priority, without which I will have no healthy relationships anyway.

Finally, FD, I hope that you have found some benefit in the SAA program

and will continue to work it. Please keep in mind the value of the Steps. Regardless of what happens in the legal status of your relationship with your wife, you will still have the opportunity to do what you can to heal that relationship. Step Nine will be of particular value in that regard, and also in building future relationships.

You are obviously walking a very difficult path right now, FD. My thoughts and prayers are with you as you continue.

—Will

Addiction is Distraction

by Barry M.

Addiction keeps me from being present. It keeps me from being in reality. When I was in active addiction and had a feeling or a thought I found disturbing, addiction was there to distract me from it. I could “check out” by using my drug of choice. Ultimately, however, the addiction could no longer shield me from the emptiness I felt or from the ruin I had created.

Now that I am in recovery, I no longer use my drug or act out. However, I may still feel checked out. Getting present and in reality is a practice that pays many dividends for the recovering addict. And when I do connect to reality, my spiritual condition improves.

The state of being checked out, or not fully present, is called dissociation. Dissociation is a defense mechanism one uses when he or she is no longer able to process stimulation. During intense traumatic situations, dissociation helps protect the victim from experiencing the full force of the event. It is neither inherently good nor bad. But when someone dissociates in ordinary situations, it becomes a problem. Distracted driving, for instance, kills thousands of people every year in the U.S. Distraction on the job causes thousands of accidents per year.

I have many ways to distract myself; I can turn to media, relationships, sex, games, fantasies, shopping, and eating. All of these things can be healthy when I don't use them to avoid dealing with difficult problems. To get started down the road to recovery, however, it is sometimes necessary to modify my relationships to these types of stimuli for a while until I learn to be present.

The key to being present is acceptance. I accept my feelings as they are right now. I accept my thoughts as they are right now. I accept my problems as they are right now. Acceptance does not imply approval. Perhaps I am in an abusive relationship. Acceptance does not mean I approve of being abused; it merely acknowledges the reality of our situation.

If I notice that I am always looking for distractions, I ask myself what I am avoiding. Only by dealing directly with the problems I wish to avoid will I learn to manage my life and my feelings responsibly. I need to ask for help in dealing with my problems. I need to talk about my problems and write about them until I have clarity about our reality. Addicts should not attempt to change themselves alone. They need help to change their reality safely and successfully.

I have found meditation to be a helpful tool for getting present. I use it to clear my mind when I have distracting thoughts. There are many kinds of meditation. One kind that works well for me is to count breaths. I sit cross-legged with a straight back and focus on my breathing. I count each breath up to ten. When I get to ten, I start again. If I lose count, I simply start counting again from one. If I can't get to ten, there is no judgment; I accept where I am. If I am distracted by thoughts, I imagine the thought is on a cloud and I watch it float past. I label it "thought." I don't respond to it in any way other than to notice it.

Being in reality is a spiritual condition. I used to believe that spirituality was a place elsewhere; I believed it existed on some sort of astral plane. I had imagined it as the ultimate distraction from the here and now. But once I got into recovery, I came to see spirituality as the gift of being present. To emphasize the point, I call it spiritreality. Steps Ten and Eleven remind me to take a daily inventory and to make conscious contact with my higher power so I can stay present. I still feel the pull towards distraction every day. But by practicing the Steps and tools such as meditation, I can bring myself back to the present.

Supposed to Be Prayer

by Spencer from Missouri

I am exactly who I am supposed to be,
And in the stage of recovery I am supposed to be,
In this moment,
 In this very moment.

God loves me right where I am,
And I am ok right where I am,
In this moment,
 In this very moment.

God accepts me just as I am,
And I make a decision to accept myself just as I am,
And I make a decision to accept others just as they are,
In this moment,
 In this very moment.

There is nothing I can do to make God love me more
Or accept me more in this moment.

I am in the season of life and season of nature I am supposed to be in;
I am in the state of heart and state of this nation that I am supposed to be in.
If I am sorrowful and of a heavy heart, it is as it should be;
If I am happy and full of hope, it is as it should be.

The year I was born, it was predestined before the ages.
The loves I gain, the loves I lose, the loves I have held so tightly, life was
 forced to pry them out of my desperate hands....it was meant to be.

The pain, heartache, failed love, resentments, and death....

The joy, forgiveness, recovery, and kind words.....

I had to go through it.

I choose to not fight or resist or change what is;

I choose to graciously surrender to the reality of what life has given me,

In this moment,

In this very moment.

This very moment is all I have;

This very moment is the length of my sobriety;

This very moment is the time to lay down my arms,

And refuse to fight this war against myself any longer.

I make a decision to walk into the River,

And let it carry me wherever it may,

And not fight its current in any way,

In this moment,

In this very moment.

The past is no mistake.

I am no mistake.

There are no mistakes.

Everything is exactly as it should be.....

In this moment,

In this very moment.

Loneliness

by William Y.

At one time I thought I knew what it meant to be alone, and now I realize I did not. It is Christmas Eve about 4:00 pm. I sit on my bunk in an eight-by-ten cell that I have to share with another inmate who is younger than me. Together we are lost to the freedom we once knew: a family with whom to laugh, share time, sit around the living room and talk, have a cup of coffee, or watch television. In prison one does not have these things.

I used to know what it was like to have a wife to come home and children to call my own. I had it all: a house, a wife, and children as well: two sons and one daughter, and almost a dozen grandchildren. Do I miss them? Yes, very much. I have written to them asking for forgiveness, but nobody ever writes back. It is as though someone has closed the door and does not want to open it. No mail, no phone calls, no visits. Other prisoners get visits, phone calls and mail. Even my cellie gets it all, and his crime is worse than mine. Yes, I have brothers and sisters. Even they have turned their backs on me. We used to write to each other but for some reason out of the clear blue they stopped.

I know a person whose children put him in a home because they did not want to care for him. That too is loneliness as well.

Since I have been in prison I have been able to see where in my life I went wrong and the mistakes I have made. I have tried to write to members of my family and tell them how wrong I was and ask for forgiveness and a chance to make amends for my wrongdoing. I have sent out many letters with no answer at all. In the Twelve Steps doesn't it say to make a list of those I have harmed, to make amends to them? Well, I have done just that.

There are only two people who write to me. One is my SAA-ISO outreach person, along with one other person who writes to me since SAA has come into my life. Thank you, SAA-ISO, for sending them to me.

The Stamina to Go the Distance

by Larry E.

I have been growing in recovery for more than five years now. It is not always easy. I recite the Serenity Prayer each morning and often throughout the day to restore the emotional equilibrium on which I rely to stay sober and focused on recovery. Starting several years ago, I added a tag line to the prayer:

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
The courage to change the things I can,
And the wisdom to know the difference,
And the stamina to go the distance.

Last night I witnessed two teams of young men playing a game. They battled each other like gladiators, fearless and fierce, challenging their opponents to ever-greater demonstrations of skill and courage. Up and down the field of play, they at times trudged as if through deep mud and at other times flew as if borne on the swift wings of Mercury. They sacrificed for and supported each other as brothers, focused on vanquishing their common foes. In the end, both teams exhausted and their members in varying degrees of pain, one team prevailed this night.

I thought about what their coaches might have said to them in the locker room after this match. I could hear the words in my head, spoken through tears and sweat. "Men, I am so proud of you. You never gave up. You never stopped giving everything you had." No doubt the coaches went on. Perhaps objectively their words were common, even clichéd. But the raw emotion behind them made them extraordinary.

For me recovery is this kind of game, albeit one on which my life depends. Opposing teams lodge in my brain, one side led by the voice of the active addict and the other side led by the voice of the recovering addict. Other voices ally themselves with one or the other of these foes. They struggle, locked in battle, triggered by experience and emotion like athletes motivated by the sound of a starter's gun or toss of a ball. At times on a pink cloud, the recovering addict floats over the fray. At other times turbulent storms mire the teams in muck.

One voice calls out often. It is the voice of toxic shame. This is not the sound of guilt or mere common shame reverberating from the realization that what I did was harmful to others and myself. That voice I can answer with an amends, living or otherwise. No, the voice of toxic shame is the one that says, "You are a bad person, forever unworthy and incapable of change, forgiveness or love."

The voice of toxic shame is what an athlete might hear when he throws an interception or drops an easy catch or misses a kick or receives a penalty repeatedly. As a recovering addict, I seem to drop the ball a lot. Sometimes my thoughts are impure. I am not always rigorously truthful. I have cravings. Maybe I slip and fall. I grow tired, question the value of my program, or feel like a victim.

But then I remember the Serenity Prayer. I am not always in control. I am making changes that I can to reduce suffering. Wisdom abides. I look at my eyes in the mirror and see that a light still burns behind them. That light illuminates the way for me and other recovering addicts with whom I share. I can almost hear the voice of my HP saying, "I am so proud of you."

When I grow tired, I remember that I am a marathon runner in a lifelong race. Along the way I take heart from all of those other recovering addicts with whom I race. When I need nourishment on the journey, I can drink of the serenity of the fellowship and glimpse the promise of grace that flows to all those with the stamina to go the distance.

Volunteer Services Needed

Want to be of service to the Fellowship that supports you?

Not sure where to get started?

Contact the ISO!

or go to www.saa-iso.org/

and select "Volunteer" to fill out a volunteer form.

The Last Skeleton

by Z.D.

My name is Z.D., and I am a sex addict. I learned early in life how to use pornography as a tool for pleasure. I spent years of abusing my God-given privilege of sexuality, always mistaking lust for love. I became involved sexually with a woman who later became my wife. She found out about my addiction to all things pornographic one day when she searched my wallet; she found a collage of explicit material that I had carefully prepared to satisfy myself anywhere at any time. After an argument, she finally said she didn't care about my acting out but that she wanted me to be open with her. My addiction then went into overdrive.

We had a daughter in 1998. Early on, I started getting curious and one thing led to another. I began abusing my daughter sexually by touching, and that turned into more and different abuse. I was working the Steps of another fellowship at the time and I have stayed clean. Finally I got up the nerve to tell my sponsor, and he told me simply, "Don't do that anymore." I was both relieved that he didn't turn me in or shoot me and discouraged at his lack of understanding.

After struggling, I found myself acting out again. This made my addiction even stronger. Every time I looked at pornography or acted out in any way, the addiction grew. Eventually I was confronted by my wife after my daughter told her quite jokingly that I had touched her while I was "asleep." I denied it and the subject was dropped. A couple of months later my daughter was at church and passed a note to a friend about my behavior, and it ended up in the sheriff's hands.

The sheriff took our daughter away and said there were allegations of abuse. I was devastated but lied again to my wife. After a month or so, when she asked me straight out if I had been molesting our daughter, something inside me couldn't perpetuate the lie any longer. I confessed. That is the most devastating thing that ever happened in our marriage. Immediately thereafter I found SAA. I went to a meeting and spilled my heart out.

I wrote a short First Step and decided to share it at my second meeting. There was a crushing pressure in my throat as the addict wanted me to shut up and stuff the pain back down. I decided that this was it, all or nothing. I felt safe and just ignored the overwhelming suppression of the addiction. I struggled to confess to this group of people. I didn't even know about the nature of my wrongs that had brought me to the SAA fellowship.

After I read the step to the group and caught my breath and wiped the tears, they applauded. Wow. What a freeing and life affirming time that

was. The last skeleton was out. I had begun my journey through the SAA program. I am forever grateful to the men at those groups.

I was sentenced to sixty-eight months. After I was in prison about nine months, God provided me with a great sponsor through the ISO; I have been sexually sober from all inner circle behaviors for thirty-four months. I am very grateful my family has stood behind me despite all the pain I have caused. Thank You SAA, and thank you, God, for helping me to expose and bind the last skeleton, my tempter, my tormentor, my pleasure, my pain, my bliss, my burden, my addiction.

I am on the Fourth Step and have grown up a lot. I also have a lot more to learn. With the help of God and my sponsor I can become the man my family needs.

Thank you and sincerely yours,

Z.D.

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.

Writing a Meditation

by Les J.

I was half-asleep during a lecture given on the subject of trees and landscape. The talk seemed full of abstruse concepts, but then the speaker started telling an anecdote about his experience. I perked up and suddenly felt engaged and connected. We all have different learning styles. This reflects my ability to grasp a concrete idea more easily than a conceptual one.

What a writer of a meditation will usually do is to take an inspiring sentence or sentences from the approved literature and then expound on it. (Various specifications for meditation submissions are given on the ISO website. As of this writing we happen to be a bit short on quotes from Step Six and the Traditions.) I have a practice of highlighting passages in the Green book that I particularly relate to. This is a ready source of quotes.

The natural tendency is to wax eloquent on the many lessons of our hard-won wisdom. We each have experiences, both good and bad, from which we have developed rules by which to live—some of which need to be revised in recovery. But instead of a grand vision laden with these gems, consider something smaller, humbler, and yet possibly more valuable to the fellowship. I am talking about your history. A small part of it, that is. But something that has a big meaning for you.

Our editor has suggested the approach of starting with a story and then finding a quote later. This way you are more likely to be talking about your own experience. The more important events of your recovery are food for thought. We are asking people to write in the first person singular as opposed to the first person plural. That means using I-statements. In other words, “I did this and I felt that,” rather than “we did this and we felt that.” There is no guarantee that your writing will come from your heart instead of your head, but the grammar can serve as a guide. There may be exceptions. If you were speaking about your upbringing you might say, “We children were rarely given what we needed from our parents.” Here you are probably talking about your own family. Or perhaps, “though we newcomers are welcomed warmly, I still felt anxious and out of my body when I first walked in.” Keep in mind that our editor will take pains to keep your voice intact if any changes need to be made.

I personally have written nearly one meditation a month for the last few years. I use the monthly teleworkshop, which occurs on the last Sunday of the month as a vehicle for writing them. I like the structure of knowing when and with whom I am going to do something, as well as checking in with people I know and like. Sometimes a workshop is given at various SAA retreats and always at the annual convention.

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.

Great Lakes Board Member and Alternate: BoardGL@saa-recovery.org
Intermountain Board Member and Alternate: BoardIM@saa-recovery.org
North Central Board Member and Alternate: BoardNC@saa-recovery.org
Northeast Board Member and Alternate: BoardNE@saa-recovery.org
North Pacific Board Member and Alternate: BoardNP@saa-recovery.org
South Central Board Member and Alternate: BoardSC@saa-recovery.org
Southeast Board Member and Alternate: BoardSE@saa-recovery.org
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“Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to other sex addicts...” Step Twelve

First: Write from your experience, strength, and hope. Others may need to hear exactly what you have to say. Suggested Topics are listed below.

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Submission Deadlines & Suggested Topics		
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Nov-Dec 2012	Sep 5, 2012	Steps & Traditions 11 & 12, and “ <i>The Home Group</i> ”
Jan-Feb 2013	Nov 5, 2012	Steps & Traditions 1 & 2, and “ <i>Friendship within SAA</i> ”
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