

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
December 15, 2012 Teleconference**

- Approved the LAX Marriott Contract for Hosting the 2014 International Convention.
 - Approved funding in the amount of \$6,000 plus expenses for the use of a professional facilitator, Sarah H., to work at the Board's January 2013 face-to-face meeting in Houston, TX. This amount covers facilitation services and any associated preparation activities for the full Friday (1/18) and Saturday (1/19) sessions as well as the briefer Sunday morning (1/20) session.
 - Approved the ISO of SAA Inc. Budget for 2013.
-

**The following actions were approved by
the Board of Trustees on January 19-20, 2013,
at the Face-to-Face meeting in Houston, TX**

- Approved the drafting of the four motions presented at the 2013 Houston face-to-face Board meeting by the ISO Structure Committee (ISO-S), to be resubmitted at the 2013 conference.
 - Approved that the 2013 Conference Delegate Meeting be extended to two days.
 - Approved that the luncheon arrangements for the 2013 Conference Delegate Meeting shall be box lunches.
-

Board Face-to-Face Report

The ISO's Board of Trustees, its Alternate Trustees, the Director of Operations, and some ISO staff members convened at the annual midyear face-to-face meeting in Houston from January 19 to January 21.

This year was unusual in that a paid professional facilitator was employed to aid the Board in a full review of the ISO's strategic priorities, some of its policies, and the impending consideration of its reorganization. Her engagement was made for an agreed-upon amount of six thousand dollars plus expenses. This fee, negotiated down from a substantially higher number, included her preparation time, conduct and facilitation of the weekend's activities, and extensive follow-up, continuing through to the time of this writing. The decision to use this facilitator came about as the result of the Director's experience working with her and her firm in a prior engagement. The Board Chair heard of this experience, contacted the facilitator, and became convinced through their conversation that

engagement with her firm would be a prudent and productive use of ISO resources. In December, at the behest of its Chair, the Board of Trustees agreed - with an opposing minority opinion - and an agreement was entered into with the facilitator's firm.

We began the weekend by following our normal practice of reading our basic documents: the Twelve Steps, the Twelve Traditions, the Twelve Concepts of World Service of AA, our Mission Statement, and our Code of Conduct. Our focus turned from that spiritual beginning to individual Board member objectives for the time spent together. This revealed a variety of hopes and concerns regarding the state of the Board, the ISO, and the weekend's intended purpose. One of the most powerful expressions of concern was the possibility that the Board would be productive during the weekend, but not be willing or able to follow through with the eventual agreed-upon conclusions and action items. The most significant positive statement was that the Board and the ISO were both at a turning point and that this weekend would be the springboard into a more effective and productive service organization.

There were also expressions of concern regarding the use of a professional facilitator and the associated cost. These were addressed by the facilitator and the Board Chair to the partial, but not the total, satisfaction of those in attendance.

We conducted the equivalent of an operating business inventory of ourselves, identifying several areas of both strength and weakness. Our strengths included our openness to dissent, diversity of opinion and participation, members' commitment to service, humility, courage in making tough - sometimes controversial - decisions, good Board attendance and work ethic, and a willingness to lead the ISO during a complex, transitional time in its history. Some of our challenges included a tendency to micromanage details, lagging follow-through in some matters, taking ourselves a little too seriously, rehashing issues already decided, and not being open-minded on certain issues. One of the most intriguing negatives was our lack of clear definition of the idea of "substantial unanimity", which led to extensive discussion on the topic, and from which emerged a new way of looking at how the Board makes its decisions.

The ISO Structure (ISOS) Committee made a detailed presentation to the Board on the proposed changes to the structure and Bylaws of the ISO. Results of a survey circulated to the Board as homework prior to the weekend were reviewed and discussed. The Chair of the ISOS committee addressed questions and controversies of the committee's proposals that emerged from the survey. Some of these included the definition and maintenance of areas, selection criteria for area delegates, logistics of area meetings, and the size of the new conference. An evolving straw poll was taken of the attendees to gauge the level of support for four motions embodying the ISOS proposals. There was overall support for those motions, but some dissent was noted. The concerns were addressed

during the exercise and, eventually, the dissenting votes dwindled, but did not disappear.

Another exercise was undertaken to emulate and capture the concerns of those in the fellowship regarding the ISOS proposals. This exercise identified many possible objections of different natures including concerns about travel to area meetings, overreliance on a nominating committee, lack of communication about the ISOS big picture, and fear of being edged out of a smaller conference with fewer delegates. These objections were noted and are being factored into the overall ISOS plan.

The Board then came into session to consider a formal endorsement of the four ISOS proposals. A motion was made to approve the drafting of final versions of the four proposals, effectively an endorsement of those proposals. Following some discussion, and in line with the result of the straw poll exercise, the Board voted 8 to 1 in favor of that motion. Due to the consideration of the previously mentioned notion of "substantial unanimity," the votes of all present, except for the facilitator, were counted and substantial unanimity of the group conscience was achieved.

As business supplementing the ISOS endorsement, the Board also considered the question of officially extending the 2013 conference agenda to two full days. The motion to do this was adopted unanimously by a nine-to-zero vote. Another motion to change the lunch arrangements for the conference was also made in support of the extended 2013 conference agenda. This motion provided for a substitution of two days of box lunches for all conference attendees instead of the normal sit-down luncheon, and was also unanimously adopted. Again, all present were polled and substantial unanimity was achieved.

The question of the relationship of the Director to the Board was undertaken via another exercise designed to elicit functional boundaries of authority and responsibility between the two. Over the years, this has been an area of some confusion and, on occasion, controversy. The exercise produced a fairly large number of ISO functions expressed in terms of ownership: Board-owned, Director-owned, and shared. Board-owned items included budget approval, definition of global ISO policies, hiring and firing of the Director, creation of strategic initiatives, selecting convention and conference cities. Director-owned items included budget preparation, staff job descriptions and hiring, implementing office policies, pricing of ISO sales items, negotiation of contracts with outside vendors including hotels, actions to protect ISO intellectual property, supervision of ISO infrastructure. Examples of shared items were budget development, fundraising, developing office policies, business processes, volunteer recruitment, and populating committees.

A presentation was made to the Board on the current state of the LifeLine Partners program in relation to the overall ISO financial picture. Suggestions were offered and solicited for improving participation in the program.

The Board considered the renewal of the current Director's contract. As this is a "human resources" matter, the details of this discussion are not being published.

The Board also undertook the very timely and controversial question of the ISO's role in dealing with minors and the fellowship. An exercise comparing the pros, the cons, and the questions around this volatile issue was performed with the facilitator's help. The result was a mix of concerns regarding the Traditions (primary purpose, unity, meeting autonomy, membership open to all, etc.), legal and ethical responsibilities and liabilities, support for institutional settings, meeting listings, and more. The results of this exercise, which drew no final conclusions, are being forwarded to the Minors and the Fellowship (MATF) committee now working on a recommendation to the Board on this issue.

Strategic initiatives for the ISO were then taken up through yet another facilitated exercise designed to examine ISO objectives and needs, especially those related to outreach, from various perspectives. Among the types of activities considered were the following: translations of the ISO outreach website into French and other languages, audio versions of all literature, translations of literature, mailings to therapists, treatment centers, doctors, and universities, and other collaboration with the professional community. The exercise narrowed down the focus to the two most favored by the attendees.

Two major initiatives emerged from the group: creating a Public Service Announcement (PSA) appropriate for YouTube or other internet or general media outlets, and the upgrade of the existing Spanish language outreach website to the English website standard. These two proposals were then subjected to a detailed analysis using multiple perspectives to elicit facts, judgments, concerns, potential successes, and creative approaches to these items. The details that emerged from these analyses are too voluminous to communicate in this short article, but those present agreed that their pursuit was worthwhile.

Having identified follow-through as a particular challenge in our inventory at the beginning of the weekend, we pursued a strategy, with the facilitator's help, to build up an accountability structure based on both goal-oriented tasks / action items and process-oriented considerations. The main follow-up items were bylaws amendment authoring in support of the ISOS proposals, updates to the Board/Director division of responsibilities through the Director's job description and other avenues, continuing work on and participation in LifeLine Partners, ideas for creating a Public Service Announcement, transfer of data to the Minors and the Fellowship committee, pursuit of the upgrade of the Spanish language website, exploration of cultural outreach issues with the Board's Fellowship standing committee, and incorporation of the weekend's conclusions and conference-related business items into the 2013 Conference Committee's work.

We were unable due to the weekend's time constraints to address some

other items intended for discussion including meeting registration policies, Board Code of Conduct review, the relationship of the ISO and the body of the fellowship, and office infrastructure priorities. Most, if not all, of these will be addressed in subsequent Board or committee meetings.

We performed evaluations of the weekend's activities and the effectiveness of the facilitator. These evaluations were submitted and the results aggregated. They are still in process as of this writing.

The facilitator, who was involved in virtually every topic undertaken by the Board, introduced a number of techniques, through direct experience, for working through tough issues. It is expected that some of these will be used in future Board face-to-face meetings. Several of these methods may also be used at conference in 2013 to gain constructive feedback as well as a sense of Group Conscience from the body of delegates on the critical ISOS proposals that will be the center of the conference business agenda.

The weekend was hard work and taxed many members of the Board and other attendees. We were, as a group, productive, contentious, hopeful, energetic, biased, open-minded, worried, and united. This Board, which will remain largely intact in the coming years, came to know itself - both strengths and limitations - in a way that likely will have a positive effect on the ISO and the fellowship it serves for years to come.

We, the Board of Trustees, extend our thanks to all of you - staff, volunteers, member groups, and individual members of the fellowship of SAA - for your support of our organization and the Board's activities. As the fellowship itself continues to grow and demand more of its service organizations, it is important that we at the ISO continue to invest in the people and groups that make things happen, deal with difficult decisions, and lead the ISO into uncharted territory. Capable, committed volunteers working as a team make a huge difference in the daily operations at the ISO as well as the long-term plans through which we must maintain continuity and functionality in the coming years. Our decisions to meet face-to-face during the year, tackle tough - sometimes uncomfortable - issues, and this year to use a professional facilitator are part of that commitment and responsibility to the fellowship, to the ISO as a service organization, and to ourselves as a developing Board.

We invite you to let us know how we're doing, to let us know your groups' needs for service, and to join us in our work as you are willing and able. And we look forward to seeing many of you at upcoming 2013 conference, as we move through the extensive body of proposed changes to the ISO's structure. Until then, we wish you the best in your lives and your recovery.

—Eric M.
Board Chair

Why a Conference Charter?

The Conference Charter Committee (CCC) has been working for almost three years on a draft Charter for the ISO Conference. One of the questions frequently asked by members of the fellowship who are not familiar with the purpose and structure of the International Service Organization (ISO) is, "Why do we need a Conference Charter?"

The question is a good one.

More than fifty years ago, the chair of the Board of Trustees of Alcoholics Anonymous answered the same question in an address to the AA General Service Conference (AA Service Manual, 2012-2013 Edition, p. S20). He said, among other things, "We need it [the Conference] to ensure that changes within AA come only as a response to the needs and the wants of all AA, and not of any few."

In a similar spirit, a fundamental reason for having a Conference Charter within the ISO is "to ensure that the Conference fairly, equitably, and adequately represents the fellowship it serves." (Purpose of the Charter, draft ISO Conference Charter).

Toward this end, the draft Charter identifies the three primary purposes of the ISO Conference:

1. To serve as spiritual guardian of international services and of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of SAA;
2. To serve SAA member groups by helping them carry their message of recovery to the sex addict who still suffers;
3. To bring the group conscience of member groups on issues of concern to the fellowship to the attention of the ISO.

The ISO Conference is the effective voice of the fellowship within the ISO. It is practically speaking the interface between the ISO and the member groups that make up the fellowship at large. It is the conduit through which the needs of the fellowship can be communicated to the ISO, allowing the ISO to serve the member groups more effectively.

The CCC believes that, in order to achieve those purposes, participation by a broad cross-section of members of the fellowship is crucial in shaping our future and fulfilling the primary purpose of our groups, as stated in Tradition Five, namely "to carry its message to the addict who still suffers."

What can you do?

Here are ways you can participate in this important service opportunity:

- Read the draft Charter. It is posted on the SAA service website. The ISO office can provide the information you will need to access the documents.

- The CCC takes your input seriously. Send your comments or questions to info@saa-recovery.org.
- Discuss the draft Charter in your local groups and intergroups.
- Send a delegate to the upcoming 2013 Conference, where open discussion of the draft Charter will be held.

Your input is important. Since the ISO was established and exists to serve the fellowship, input from the fellowship is crucial for ensuring that the needs of the fellowship are being met. The CCC urges you to participate in the process of helping us fine tune the draft Charter.

ISO Structure Committee *Finalizing proposals for the Conference*

Articles in previous issues of *The Outer Circle* have discussed the activity, findings, and recommendations of the ISO Structure Committee (ISO-S). All of the recommendations are intended to take advantage of opportunities for improvement that were identified during the two-year study period. Each recommendation is designed to enhance the capacity of the ISO to fulfill its mission – to serve member groups by helping them carry their message of recovery to the addict who still suffers.

In preparation for the annual meeting of the Conference, the ISO-S is finalizing four specific proposals. Two will require amendments to the ISO Bylaws. Two will be regular business motions.

The first Bylaws amendment proposes changing the size, composition, and method of election of the ISO Board of Trustees and the ISO Literature Committee. The Board would be limited to a maximum size of fourteen Trustees. The Literature Committee would be limited to a maximum yet to be determined.

All Trustees and Literature Committee members would be elected by the Conference delegates from the fellowship-at-large. A nominating process, to be developed and approved by the Conference, would identify candidates from throughout the fellowship. These candidates would be vetted by a committee of the Conference and presented on a slate for election by the Conference.

The second is a Bylaws amendment to create a new intermediate service level and to change the composition and size of the delegate Conference. In order to address the lack of experience and inequities typically seen at the annual meeting of the Conference, the proposed changes would give every group the opportunity to have a voice in the activities of the ISO. The current eight regions would be abolished in favor of approximately forty areas. Areas would be defined by the Conference on the basis of

geographical proximity or some other affinity, such as language or preference for electronic meetings.

Each group would elect a General Service Representative (GSR), who would represent his or her group at an area assembly meeting. The area assemblies would, in turn, elect delegates to represent their areas at the international Conference. This would reduce the size of the Conference to approximately forty area delegates plus representatives of the Board, LitCom, and office. The annual Conference meeting would be much more manageable, allowing the opportunity for more open and thorough discussion of issues of concern to the fellowship. In addition, measures coming before the Conference could receive more careful prior consideration at the local and area levels before coming before the Conference.

The two motions suggest creating two Conference committees. An Area Coordinating Committee (ACC) would be responsible initially for defining the areas and monitoring the assignment of groups to areas.

The other suggestion is to establish a Conference Nominating Committee, which would receive and process nominations from throughout the fellowship for open positions on the ISO Board of Trustees and ISO Literature Committee. It is envisioned that this committee would be elected by the Conference and would be responsible for vetting candidates for these international service positions and presenting a slate of candidates for consideration by the Conference.

This work was endorsed in concept by the 2012 Vancouver Conference. Although the final details have not been finalized at the time of this writing, the motions will be posted on the ISO service website well in advance of the Conference for all delegates to review. They may be accessed at www.saa-iso.org. The user name and password may be obtained by members of the fellowship from the ISO office.

Comments and suggestions are welcomed and may be sent to:

info@saa-recovery.org

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 e-mail) 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.

March 24

April 28

May 26

June 23

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!***

GLBT Outreach Subcommittee

A few updates from our Committee:

- 1) The GLBT pamphlet is currently undergoing review/revision by a subcommittee of LitCom and is hoped to be presented at the full LitCom meeting at the upcoming 2013 Convention. We hope it will be approved and move forward to publication;
- 2) To enhance our Public Information/Outreach abilities, we did send information along to the Information Systems and Online Presence Committee, (ISOPcom), for review and possible inclusion on the ISO website. The information is now under review;
- 3) In regards to the Organizing Feedback Groups Project. We are seeking a page on the ISO Service Web Page and this is also under review by ISOPcom, so continue to stand by for more information in the future about this project.

What's New:

Lately we have had quite a few inquiries from people looking for GLBT meetings in their local areas. As you may know, we do not have many meetings nationally that are specifically identified as GLBT - we only know of ten in the U.S. and three telemeetings.

A simple project you can help us with would be to write us at the e-mail address below, and let us know what city you are in and what meeting(s) you attend there.

This would help us begin to collect a larger list of "GLBT friendly" meetings to which we may refer members when they inquire. If you are willing to be a contact for GLBT addicts in your area as well, please let us know.

As with the above and our other projects, we are seeking volunteers to help out. Please consider service with the GLBT Outreach Subcommittee.

For more information or to volunteer for GLBT Outreach activities, e-mail us at the address below, or attend our monthly teleconference, which is the first Sunday of each month. Contact the ISO Office for call in information.

glbt@saa-recovery.org

Seventh 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 Twelfth 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 Twelfth 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 260 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 LifeLine Partner donations 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!

Seventh Tradition Committee

ISO Income/Expense Summary as of January 31, 2013

	Jan 13
Income	
Sales	19,205.31
Shipping & Handling	2,096.00
Donations	20,799.00
Interest Earned	16.36
Convention Income	2,618.00
Total Income	44,734.67
Cost of Goods Sold	
Total COGS	7,269.03
Gross Profit	37,465.64
Expense	
Wages	18,851.24
Benefits	2,945.19
Payroll Taxes	1,675.86
Payroll Expenses	18.54
Insurance	340.69
Financial Charges	922.18
Communications	664.44
Occupancy Expenses	1,413.45
Office Expenses	773.17
The Outer Circle	1,013.65
Professional Fees	0.00
Depreciation	175.00
Bad Debts/Refunds	61.59
Travel-Related Expenses	5,094.54
Board/Committee Expenses	4,027.04
Convention Expenses	182.94
Total Expense	38,159.52
Net Income	-693.88

Financial Results for January 2013

In the month of January we had a deficit of \$693.88. We had budgeted for a deficit of \$2,098.00.

Our sales revenue for the SAA Green Book exceeded our estimate by \$2,057.25 for January.

Our pamphlet and booklet sales exceeded our estimate by \$825.42 for January. Our bronze medallion sales exceeded our estimate by \$822.39 in January. Our Chips exceeded our estimate by \$102.25 in January.

Our total sales for January exceeded our estimate by \$3,665.31.

Individual donations were below our estimate by \$373.13 for January. Group donations were below our estimate by \$812.87 for January.

Our product inventory is valued at \$41,909.40.

Our expenses were below our estimate by \$488.48 in January.

Summary of the annual budget (January 1, 2013 to December 31, 2013):

- Sales have exceeded our budget estimate by \$3,665.31
- Donations are below our budget estimate by \$1,186.00
- Expenses are below budget estimate by \$488.48
- Net surplus has exceeded our budget estimate by \$1,404.12

Our operational reserve amount is \$136,100.00 and is fully funded. This is the estimated amount necessary to run the office for four months, and is reset each January.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

In Your Service,

Joe H.

Director of Operations

director@saa-iso.org

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

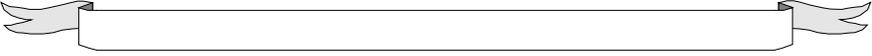
From the Editor

by Mike L.

I recently had the chance to see a performance of the wonderful musical *Show Boat*. Having premiered in 1927, it is by no means the first American musical; there are dozens of long-forgotten musicals that premiered as far back as the late 1800s that only survive today as well-worn 78rpm recordings (or CD transfers of same) in the hands of various collectors.



*It's time to announce the topic for the
November/December 2013 issue,
which is "right thinking."*



Show Boat remains the earliest musical that is still performed today because it was a new kind of show that dealt with serious topics such as alcoholism, interracial marriage, and marital abandonment. If you have a chance to see the 1936 film of the show, I hope you will take advantage of it (the 1951 film, which is in color and much more readily available on home video, is good but no match for the 1936).

One criticism that is frequently leveled at the show is that, though it covers a period of roughly forty years, even the older characters are still alive at the end, unlike the original novel from 1926 or the 1929 part-sound film of the novel. Yet that seems to me to be a younger person's perspective, and not one that represents the experiences of many people who live well into their eighties or longer.

I think back to a phys ed teacher I had back in high school (we called it phys ed rather than PE where I come from, although I don't know what they call it now). While I did well scholastically through most of my school years, phys ed was not one of my stronger points. My parents generally felt that "if at first you don't succeed, just forget about it," so they didn't push me to stretch myself in areas that were difficult for me. It was three of my phys ed teachers over the years who really worked at teaching me to believe in

myself. For example, I had a horrible time learning how to drive because my depth perception was so bad that I never had a good sense of where I was on the road, and he gave me a simple trick that instantaneously changed all of that. He told me just to line up that emblem at the front of the hood with the curb. I developed my depth perception from that little trick; it's a good thing, too, because those emblems are now history.

As I moved on in life and away from my home town, I did keep in very occasional touch (read every five years or so) with this one particular teacher. Then I learned via the internet that his wife had died. It took me a couple of months after that to finally pick up the phone and call him to see how he was doing. When I finally realized that he didn't have many people he could depend upon, I figured it was time for me to repay the favors he had done me some forty years ago, something I'm grateful to have the chance to do, and something I can tell that he appreciates. It's also another gift of recovery, since I couldn't do that if I were still in my addiction.

I hope that you enjoy this issue of *The Outer Circle*. We have some great articles on spiritual experiences as well as a couple of different perspectives on Step Three.

It's time to announce the topic for the November/December 2013 issue, which is "right thinking." How does that look for you? For starters, I think of the phrase, "I can't think myself into right acting; I just can't act myself into right thinking."

Remember that the topic for the next issue is "disclosures." I'm eager to hear about your experiences with doing a disclosure to family members, and whether, with the benefit of hindsight, you would do it again or how you would do it differently; or maybe you would do it exactly the same way. Let me know.

I'm going to be out of pocket for much of the first half of March. Therefore, I'm extending the deadline for submission of articles from March 5 to March 14.

I hope that your recovery, just like Ol' Man River, keeps rolling along, and that you enjoy the spring months that are just about upon us. I look forward to talking with you again next issue.

Letter to the Editor

I enjoyed the letters and the responses to the Will and Grace columns in the Jan/Feb 2013 edition of *The Outer Circle*. I believe that it's important to note that both sponsees were concerned about possible relationships in the future. As a sponsor, I remind sponsees to stay in the present and trust in their Higher Power today. Anytime we are not present, we are not in touch with our Higher Power. The writers questioned whether their sponsors were in touch with their specific needs. Whether sponsors are gay or straight, young or old, married or single, strictly religious or generally spiritual, I believe that if they are rigorously working the Steps, then they are speaking the truth. Sponsees must be reminded to discuss their concerns openly and honestly with their sponsors so that they can learn from those who have been there before. We cannot sponsor ourselves.

Both writers also worried about a perceived lack of sexual activity in their lives. To me, celibacy is a spiritually guided discernment, whereas abstinence is a prudent choice we make based upon Twelve-Step principles. For married and single SAAers alike, the difference in these two terms may be subtle but vital. We must learn to have patience and trust in our Higher Power to lead us to healthy intimate relationships. Too often, loneliness and selfish desires drive us to repeat the same stinkin' thinkin' that we exhibited when we were acting out. In recovery, we learn to journey from loneliness to solitude.

When we are sober, practicing the maintenance Steps with a sponsor, and learning to nurture appropriate intimate relationships with others, we find that a healthy sex life is often a fruit of recovery. In a spiritual sense, sex becomes a means of communicating love to our partners and a way to invite God into union with another. As Bill W. prays at the conclusion of Step Three, "Thy will, not mine, be done."

Peace,
Jim D

The Dark Side of the Moon

by Michael P.

There are two sides to everything
One side of the Moon is the Light of believing
The other is the dark of addicting
Going with God can solve living

Apollo 8 saw it first by rounding
From the Book of Genesis reading
Even then, 1968 we were changing
The future was unknown and fleeting

A new life is a beginning
A new life with healing
A new life of worshiping
A new life which God is bringing

A belief in God can bring us accepting
Working a Twelve-Step program can be a new beginning
The focus of a meeting is sharing
And with others we are healing

A new life is a beginning
A new life with healing
A new life of worshiping
A new life which God is bringing

We only see one side of this thing
The dark side of addiction wants a fling
But in the light there is believing
And with God there is saving

A new life is a beginning
A new life with healing
A new life of worshiping
A new life which God is bringing

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**

(Note: This is a continuation of the Nov/Dec 2012 "Dear Grace" column)

Dear Grace,

Do I have to listen to my sponsor's suggestions? Some of the things she suggests that I do (for example, waiting a year or more before dating) seem really extreme! I'm not sure if it's truly what is best for me.

Sincerely,
Confused

Dear Confused,

In a nutshell: In the SAA program, sponsors are other addicts, willing to share how they worked the Steps and how they found recovery. Sponsors are not experts, but fellow travelers in recovery, who carry the message as part of their own program of recovery. Sponsors share their experience, strength and hope, in the hope that others will find the same freedom from addictive sexual behavior that they have. That said, you are always free to get a new sponsor.

However, and this is a very big however, you did choose your sponsor to guide you through the Twelve Steps. You may have chosen her based on something she shared that resonated with you. The pamphlet "A Special Welcome to the Woman Newcomer" advises: "A good general guideline is to choose a sponsor whose recovery you respect." We are encouraged to listen in meetings for a member who "has what we want" and ask that person to be our sponsor. If you followed these suggestions, you are now working with someone who has what you want, and is willing to share with you how she got it.

Given that, this may be an opportunity for you to practice letting go. The "Tools of Recovery" booklet tells us that "Honesty, commitment, openness and willingness are important attitudes for a sponsee." If you are hesitant, it

is important that you at least give your sponsor's suggestions and guidance serious consideration. Later the booklet continues, "You may not understand or like all the suggestions he or she makes, so we encourage you to ask questions. Try to stay open; they have traveled the road you are on and speak from experience." For example, it is fair to ask your sponsor why she is suggesting certain things, if she took similar actions, and how it worked out for her. Perhaps she is suggesting something that will help you avoid a mistake she made!

The process of recovery takes time and sometimes feels frustrating because there are no quick fixes. Taking the time to consider and pray about what your sponsor is suggesting is a good idea. Sponsors are human, and they do make mistakes. Sometimes we may need to change sponsors for a variety of reasons. Be careful when doing so that you are not changing sponsors to avoid difficult or challenging tasks suggested to you by your current sponsor. Our experience shows us that this is a "we program"—that we recover together; that we need each other. It is a good idea to discuss the decision with other sober members whom you respect before taking action. Ultimately, it is your decision as to whether to listen or not. After all, it is your recovery.

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

Working Through Being Triggered

by Gordon M.

What is this need
This craving that drives me
That will make me give up what I gained
That plays tricks with my mind and wants me to hide out
And run towards what *it* wants

I am not this “I will do whatever I want” guy anymore

I am an expression of God’s Love
I am not an isolationist with no friends
Who has to act out on his own

I have friends who love me
Who suffer like me and who want for me
What they want for themselves—Peace

Peace comes through
Peace comes through when my door is opened from the inside

Peace comes through wave upon wave and splashes me with resilience
and strength

Peace comes through and flows through me and out to you and back again

Peace comes through

So I will not hang out with you tonight
No I will not be your slave

I am free to feel
To be
And to see that Peace comes through when I open myself up

A Model for Living in the Present—Part One

by Jim L

One of the most popular slogans that we in SAA have inherited from AA is, “One Day at a Time.” This little saying is a strong reminder that our recovery program and, indeed, life can only be lived realistically in the present—not yesterday, not tomorrow, but today.

If we continually think about and re-live events that occurred yesterday, last week, or last year, we are shackled to the past and blocked from living in the present. Likewise, fantasizing or worrying about what might happen in the future distracts us from truly living in the present.

The purpose of these two articles is to suggest a model for thinking about and responding to natural human feelings that will help us live in the present. In this first article, we will briefly explore some facts about feelings and take a look at how to recognize that many negative feelings actually have their roots somewhere other than the present.

Let’s begin by looking at a couple of concepts that may be very helpful.

1) Feelings are real, but they do not necessarily reflect the truth. And recognizing that feelings lead to thoughts, we can also say: 2) Thoughts are real, but they do not necessarily require action.

As addicts, we are prone to impulsive actions based on feelings and the thoughts that emanate from them. We want to avoid pain, and we want to “feel good.” Feeling good, therefore, can be recognized as an underlying motivation behind impulsive actions. Often, acting out or behaving in a way that was detrimental to us and harmful to others was driven by wanting to mask pain and to feel better.

Feelings are an ever-present reality of life. But feelings are just feelings—no more and no less! I may be flooded with strong emotions, but that doesn’t mean that my perception of an event or situation is accurate. Furthermore, I do not have to react impulsively just because I have a feeling. As was often the case while in my addiction, my inordinate desire to feel good was distorted by misperception of reality. Feelings of anger, rejection, fear, disappointment often drove my behavior. Step Two suggests that our misperceptions were serious enough to be called insanity.

If we can pause long enough to acknowledge the feeling as simply a feeling and to consider what is, in fact, true about the event or situation that precipitated it, we will discover that much of the emotional charge initially felt quickly dissipates. The intensity of the feeling is moderated by even a few seconds of reflection on what is true. As the emotional charge diminishes, we can then be more thoughtful and deliberate in deciding what, if any, action should be taken.

For example, if someone bumps into me and causes me to spill coffee all over the front of my clean white shirt, my initial feeling is anger. An impulsive reaction would be to curse, push back, or even throw the rest of my coffee on the offending party. But a brief pause and reflection on what is true allows me to recognize that the other person stumbled or was pushed or was distracted by an unrelated situation. The incident was purely an accident, not a deliberate act.

Or someone makes a careless statement that offends me. I am hurt and angry. My first impulse is to fire back with words that would be equally hurtful to that person or, perhaps, even punch him in the mouth. But a moment of reflection allows me to consider what is true about his statement. That person may be misinformed. Or he may be just trying to start an argument or a fight. That brief moment of reflection allows me to choose a more thoughtful and deliberate course of action. The AA Big Book admonishes us to look at someone who is behaving badly as we would a sick friend.

Another important way of looking at feelings is to explore what is causing the feeling. We “feel” in the present, but where does the root of that feeling really lie? By examination of where feelings are coming from, we discover that many emotions, especially the negative ones, are primarily rooted outside of the present—either in the past or in the future.

For example, although anger is felt in the present, if we do not deal with it appropriately, and we carry it over until tomorrow, it becomes resentment. Resentment resides in the past. The AA Big Book tells us that our number one problem is resentment, and we are admonished to clean out our resentments as we work Steps Four, Five, Six, and Seven. It also warns that allowing resentment to fester and persist will surely undermine recovery. It becomes imperative, then, to deal with anger in an appropriate and timely fashion in order to avoid resentment.

It is easy to recognize that resentment clearly has its roots in the past. The same is mostly true of shame, regrets, and disappointments (unmet expectations). They are based on something that happened in the past. Allowing any of these emotions to dominate our thinking is tantamount to living in the past.

On the other hand, fear, anxiety, and worry actually reflect inordinate concern about the future. Unrealistic expectations even venture into trying to control the future. To be afraid, to be worried, or to be preoccupied with what someone else might do or might not do constitutes trying to live in the future. Has worry ever changed what will, in fact, happen?

Graphically, we might envision that most negative emotions are not based in the present:

PAST	PRESENT	FUTURE
	Anger	
	←	
	Resentment	
	←	
	Shame	
	←	
	Regret	
←		
Disappointment		
←		
Fear		
	→	Anxiety
	→	Worry
	→	Expectations

If we can deal appropriately with our many emotions that are based in the past or the future, we are then able to focus more actively on living in the present.

In the next article (Part Two), we will explore how applying the principles learned from the Twelve Steps may be used to process feelings and thoughts in a healthy and measured manner. We will consider the key operative words that help us deal with the past and the future in a way that frees us to live in the present.

An Experience with Spiritual Experience

by Malcolm B.

I remember once hearing a talk being given at a men's treatment facility. The speaker was telling the guys going through the program that "Your job is to come in here and start having some spiritual experiences." I'm sure the concept was as confusing to some of the others as it was to me; I was still pretty green at the time, and I may not yet have understood the difference between "spiritual experience" and "spiritual awakening." I have since gotten a better understanding of what spiritual experiences are, and I can now understand what he meant by that.

I have seen some very long and involved definitions of "spiritual experience." For me, the concept has always been quite simple. A spiritual experience is something that helps me to see a matter differently than I did before; I could have been carrying around a belief for years and had my long-held belief changed in a few seconds as the result of a spiritual experience.

Spiritual experiences, I have found, can take a variety of forms. They can come about as a result of something I read in a book, or hear at a meeting, for example. I can even have a spiritual experience from hearing something that somebody says while I'm standing in line to buy a ticket to see a movie, or by something somebody says in the movie itself. Most often, however, I have found that I have spiritual experiences as a result of something that somebody says directly to me; at least these are the ones that I remember the best. One particular example sticks out in my mind:

Years ago, when I was still only a few years into SAA, which was my first recovery program, it started becoming clear to me that I was running up against a brick wall and couldn't get past it. I'd have a great recovery life during the week and while at meetings, and then the weekend would come along and I'd be picking up another desire chip on Monday. Because of something I shared at a meeting, another member of the fellowship suggested to me that I might want to look at my alcohol issues. Somewhat reluctantly, I agreed to do so, and started attending meetings of a fellowship that dealt with that issue.

I live in an essentially blue-collar area of town where there never has been much in the way of SAA meetings, though there were certainly plenty of meetings of my new fellowship. I would normally attend these meetings on the way home from work. I work in an office downtown and, back then at least, I had to wear a shirt and tie to work (our office was one of the last downtown offices to drop that requirement). I was of course the only person at the meetings dressed like that. This certainly played into my sense of being unique, which may have been part of the reason I didn't go home first and change clothes before attending the meeting.

In any event, over time I started feeling less and less like I was accepted at this particular meeting. A lot of that sense was probably just my own issues coming to the fore. For example, somebody might correct a concept that I had, and I would take it personally, and so forth.

One day, I was driving home from work and I passed the meeting hall, which was easily visible from the freeway. I hadn't been to a meeting there in several days, and as I was driving past, I thought to myself, "I don't know why I keep going to that meeting; the people there don't like me anyway. I'm not going there anymore. I'll just deal with this issue on my own." I had already learned in SAA that I couldn't deal with issues like this "on my own," but that is what I thought anyway.

When I got home, there was a message on the answering machine from a man named Billy who was a regular at that meeting. Billy said, in his scratchy, gravelly voice: "This is Billy. I haven't seen you at a meeting in several days, and I was just calling to see if you were okay." That simple phone call was all the spiritual experience I needed to realize that it really wasn't a very bright idea for me to stop attending that program. This sudden realization I had turned out to be truer than I could have ever imagined when I started getting some real sobriety in SAA because I was also having success in the other program.

Well, it has been several years since the last time I saw or heard from Billy, and in fact that particular group folded a couple of years ago as well. Yet, if it hadn't been for the spiritual experience of Billy's call, I might not have stayed in that program or eventually gotten what I needed to stay sober from my sexual addiction.

I can't say that most of the spiritual experiences I have had have been as powerful as that one. Yet, most if not all of them have helped me to see things in a different way, and each has helped to improve the quality of my life.

Spiritual Experiences

by Barry M.

Sex addiction is as much an intimacy disorder as any other offered diagnostic label, as was helpfully suggested by one of SAA's courageous co-founders, Patrick Carnes (as in his 2005 *Facing the Shadows*). Spiritual experiences are part and parcel of recovery from addiction. Spiritual maturity is a life-long quest, and seldom if ever a permanent achievement. It involves being at home; at home in one's body, that very place which we inhabit, and at home for being spiritual beings not easily at home with anything else. Where else, pray tell, do we trust being "at home"? I almost felt "at home" from the very first SAA meeting I attended; almost, since there was considerable nervousness and a degree of perhaps healthy suspicion I had to admit to and work with over a long period of time (for "once bitten, twice shy"!).

I have been long impressed with the meditation book I use and its co-authors, often wondering of their steadfastly conveyed spirituality. Their carefully culled opening quotations time and again illustrate their profound spirituality or at least the sources which then serve as the basis for that day's meditation. Consider one reading which features an affirmation and caution, that a spirituality without a body is but an abstraction and a body without spirituality is objectifying or reductionist. An SAA meeting could not meaningfully last, let alone last long without the felt presence of a shared spirituality—featuring such spiritual dimensions as respect, acceptance, honesty, courage, humility, and commitment, not to mention the elements of forgiveness via reconciliation and the practice of justice towards others based at the same time on justice towards and with one's self.

The trials and errors, dead-ends and side roads, of recovery experience have been and remain a spiritual experience. This includes the mountain peaks as well as the valley troughs; slips along with sustained sobriety. Thinking of the essentials for recovery like the steps, a sponsor or co-sponsor, actual sobriety, occasional if not regular, workshops and journaling or counseling (really both), I also think of the indispensable Serenity Prayer.

My research into the Serenity Prayer's original form indicates that there are the four themes of grace, serenity, courage and wisdom, as well as the profession of the prayer in the first person plural "us" and "we" (not merely "me" and "I"), and the presence of the ethical "ought," not just "can," operating in this basic prayer. While a short and hence memorable prayer, it continues to challenge me more deeply and widely perhaps more than any other prayer, and there are surely some profound ones that stand the tests of time.

Indeed to pray the Serenity Prayer is to show up, willingly be present, and offer oneself to life's adventures. Such adventure through thick and thin, hard and soft moments, interim "successes" and realistic bouts of losing it all combine to yield a hopeful realism—hopeful for the possibilities in recovery in this short life of ours and realistic for facing and accepting the real limits of one's one life, while I have it.

Making a Decision

by Carlo G.

There used to be this riddle going around that related to Step Three. The riddle went something like this: "There are three frogs sitting on a log. One of them decides to jump off the log into the lake. How many frogs are left?" Well, obviously, the answer wasn't "two," because that would be too simple. The answer was "three," and the reason? "Because the one frog had only made a decision."

This riddle bothered me, I think mostly because it downplayed the importance of making a decision. After all, doesn't it say in the Doctor's Opinion in the AA Big Book, "They ... make many resolutions, but never a decision" [p. xxviii]? A resolution is what I make on New Year's Day and break on January 2; a decision, in this context, has to be a little more than that. Also, I figured, the Step itself begins with the words, "Made a decision." So, I reasoned, if "making a decision" counted for so little, then there should actually be two parts to Step Three, separated by a colon. Before the colon, Step Three would say, "Made a decision to turn our will and their lives over to the care of God as we understood God"; and after the colon it would say, "turned our will and our lives..."

So, for a very long time, I had a problem with this riddle. I also had a problem with those who would make fun of the idea of making a decision, and made the Step about frogs and a log instead.

Well, in a sense both the people who promoted this riddle and I were right. The decision, it was later explained to me, had to be followed by action. And the action, as I suspected, was actually turning my will over. But how do I know I have turned my will over? How do I know I have taken that concrete step? Because I go on from there to taking the remaining nine Steps!

So, yes, there is value, and a lot of value, in making that decision. It is crucial to my recovery, and it certainly reflects that all-important willingness on my part. Yet, as the ones repeating the riddle like to imply, there is still more left to do, and that is the action that follows the Step. The decision and the actions go hand in hand.

Step Three: Turning Our Lives Over

by Anna N.

I began my recovery in a fellowship different from SAA, and I was puzzled by the some of the language of Step Three long before I came into this program. "Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over..." Although the word "will" is singular, "lives" is nonetheless plural. Was that a typo on the part of the ones who originally wrote and approved the Steps? Or did they just think that "lives" sounded better than "life" in that particular context? Perhaps one or the other of those things are true; yet, I'm going to assume, given the number of people who reviewed the original text, that somebody would have caught the incongruity, and so the text as it has come down to us must be correct. Accordingly, I'm going to take that assumption as a starting point.

The unspoken subject of most of the Steps is "we." Accordingly, I don't think that there is any doubt that the subject of Step Three is also "we," especially since Step Three additionally includes the word "our." So, given that unspoken "we" as the subject of the Step, what would the alternatives be with regard to the words that follow? "Made a decision to turn our wills and our lives" is pretty plausible; at least each of them agrees with the singular subject, even if "wills" sounds just a bit awkward. "Made a decision to turn our will and our life" is less plausible; I suppose that by some stretch of the imagination it could be said that we have a collective will, but a collective life? I'm not so certain about that one.

Somebody a lot wiser than I am finally explained to me that I could come up with a much better answer to the question simply by changing the subject to "I"; thus the language of the Step becomes "[I] made a decision to turn [my] will and [my] lives over to the care of God as I understood God."

In a sense, I do have more than one life. I have my life inside the rooms of recovery, and yet I have other lives as well. I have my work life, my family life, my social life, and many others.

So I can ask myself, does my life inside the rooms of recovery match my other lives? This may seem like a no-brainer, and yet it is true that I don't always live up to the ideals I set for myself in the program. Perhaps I don't observe the boundaries of my children, or perhaps I confine myself to a cash register honesty in my personal life, without always observing genuine honesty. So it comes down to the age-old question (at least age-old in our fellowship), "Does my walk match my talk?"

I don't have to contort the meaning on its face of the language of Step Three to make genuine sense of it. The words serve as a plain reminder to me to take the things I have learned in recovery and to carry them outside of the rooms. In that sense, I am already looking forward to Step Twelve where I "carry the message" to those who may never see an SAA Green Book other than me.

I Heard God Laugh

by Scott B.

I had not been in the program long, still living in Houston, Texas, back in the mid-1990s and it was going to get really cold that November evening (y'all know what I mean; like below sixty degrees!!). I decided that before I left for the Sunday night SAA meeting that I would light the pilot lights for the two gas furnaces that heated our home. These units were now a few years old, and the humid Houston climate tends to wreak havoc with metal parts in non-air conditioned spaces like the attic where the furnaces were located.

I grabbed my tools, and took both units apart to inspect them. They looked fine, no holes in the burners or heat exchangers. I looked my watch and to my dismay it was already ten minutes after six. Our Sunday night meeting began at seven, and I lived a good twenty-five minutes away from where it was held. But there I was, parts and tools everywhere and no pilot lights lit yet, and a lot of reassembly to do. Since I was already on my knees, I asked my Higher Power to simply get me where he needed me to be, Thy will be done.

I didn't give it another thought as I finished putting both furnaces back together, lit both pilot lights, put all my tools away, and got cleaned up to head out for the meeting. I got into the car and was about halfway to the meeting when I glanced at the clock on the car radio. It said six-twenty. At first I thought, "Great; another thing to fix." But then I looked at my watch, the same watch that I had looked at when I was still on my knees up in the attic. The watch and the clock in the car both read the same: six-twenty.

Just as I began to wonder how I could have misread my watch when I prayed for God to get me where He needed me to be, I heard in my head a deep and joyous chuckle and an overwhelming sense of presence and peace. God was laughing at me.

As the chuckling subsided, I could hear God telling me that he had heard my simple request. Since my prayer aligned perfectly with His will and I had attached absolutely no expectation to it whatsoever, He did what I asked.

I knew then, without a shadow of a doubt that God hears all of our prayers and that he loves each and every one of us unconditionally. When we align our will with His that He will slow down time itself. And that He will sometimes laugh at us and even with us.

I have shared this story gratefully many times in the nearly twenty years that I have been attending SAA meetings. God has graced me with continuous, but not guaranteed sobriety. That is why I keep coming back; "it works, because I work it."

One Approach to Spirituality in SAA

by Dave R.

In SAA, we come from many different backgrounds and cultures. Thus, in our fellowship, we have many different approaches to spirituality. Here is a non-religious approach based on human characteristics; it is offered as a way to help others think about what a spirituality might mean for them.

Spirituality is deeply human and is the foundation of our own understanding of ourselves and our connection to others in society. This understanding of what constitutes spirituality starts with the many important human characteristics that cannot be measured. We cannot measure courage, integrity, honesty, kindness. Yet these are important parts of our lives. We can take all these characteristics and put the label "Spirituality" on them. Thus, spirituality is critical to who we are and our relationships to everyone else.

In recovery, spirituality starts with honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness, and we apply broad spiritual principles to how we act.

Honesty is the starting point into this spirituality. We avoid the spiritually destructive trap of thinking and talking about how things could be or how things should be. We drop the masks that we have hidden our faults behind and that we have shown to the outside world. Instead, we face the raw truth about ourselves and our lives. Our experience is that such honesty has far more power than any pious pronouncement or cute children's story.

To make our fellowship a safe place for such honesty, we follow the spiritual principles of anonymity and confidentiality. We share only our first names and avoid details of outside people, places, or events. Who we are outside of these rooms is set aside so that we can hear the spiritual truths spoken by those we would otherwise never listen to. What we hear, we keep inside our hearts so that outside discussions will not destroy the group.

Such honesty brings us into closer fellowship with others in the group and we gain the spiritual benefit of a new community.

This spirituality continues with open-mindedness. We come to recognize that truth can be spoken by anyone, including the person who just walked in for his or her first meeting. We learn that we did not and do not know everything. In our moments of struggle with our addictions, we find that our ability to comprehend reality is severely compromised and we need outside viewpoints. So, we listen to those around us and gain new understandings.

Willingness is the next key part of spirituality. We find that action works where knowledge failed. It is when we take the actions suggested to us

that we find relief. We follow another major spiritual principle of the program: if it works, then do it. If it doesn't work, don't do it. Our spirituality is based on the reality of what works. We have too much at stake to risk it on unproven or pious speculations.

In working this program, we gain other spiritual characteristics like courage, integrity, and wisdom.

This recovery spirituality is open to all who try it.

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.

Giving Up Control

by Larry E.

It is another early morning, and I'm awake. I've been suffering intense feelings of loss, fear, shame and humiliation. I think that I have lost my support network three thousand miles away. Deprived of my fellowship, I am terrified of relapsing.

I now live in a nice warm sunny place. But to paraphrase an old maxim, "no matter where I go, there I am." I am still me. When I sobered up after thirty-five years of active addiction, I was disappointed that my problems did not go away. Changing location won't change me either.

Another old program maxim: "the disease isn't about sex, it's about life." How true for me. As a child I suffered from chronic abandonment and emotional abuse and a lack of healthy boundaries and role models.

My father was an addict full of his own secretive shame, hiding his gambling behind masculine grandiosity and rage. My mother—grandiose and narcissistic—had a surgeon's skill with a word and a look, ever distorting truth to protect our false image as a fully functional family.

Molded into a surrogate parent at a young age, I assumed command and didn't let it go for fifty years. I found what I thought was the love I so needed where I could: in another child's arms, in images of lust, in fleeting physical relief of sexual urges, and in apparent control of others. I learned perfectionism and cognitive distortion. And I learned how to lie.

Of course I could never do good enough and thus I grew a huge reservoir of secret shame and self-abuse. It took a lot to break the mold. Arrest and conviction for viewing child pornography delivered the necessary shock. Treatment and SAA followed.

For me it is working. It is only a daily reprieve, and even with six years under my belt, I am no safer than the newbie at his first meeting. The disease—and the mind through which it acts—are cunning, crafty, and devious. And a slip never is more than a keystroke, spoken word, lingering look or touch away.

I give up control of my life to my HP, as it "suggests" in the Third Step. That is a daily and often-challenging task, for the illusion of control appears to be a safety net. But a net is full of holes by nature. Blurred by shame and fear in my active addiction, my vision of the net was imperfect; I saw the thread, not the holes.

But I balance giving up and retaining control, for the program does not demand that I be a spineless rubber chicken. On the contrary the program is said to be one of action. But whose action and what kind of action?

Clearly the action must be mine, for no one else can think or act for me. I was the actor in my active addiction. I cannot depend on others to act for me in my recovery.

Also clearly the action must be about me and particularly about what I think and feel. This is my recovery, not someone else's. I cannot control other people, places or things and vice versa. I may be obliged to fulfill certain duties to others in society: to follow the law, to earn a living, to pay for products and services, to engage in common behaviors and courtesies, and so on. But how I think and feel is entirely up to me.

Not relying on others to meet my needs—not even on my HP—reduces my expectations of others and, therefore, reduces the chances that I will resent others. Not acting with an intention to control others has the same result. Hence it helps remove a shortcoming. It also helps me focus and to surrender control a little at a time, moment by moment.

I described how I felt when I started writing this. Those feelings have dissipated as the early morning fog has evaporated with the rising sun. Writing about them is an action in my recovery program. Letting them fall from my fingers on the keys seems to discharge some of their energy.

Ultimately giving up control for me includes giving up shame and forgiving myself for my fallibility. I am not perfect. I draw strength from being imperfect. It is ironic but freeing.

E-mail Addresses

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

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

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

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How to Submit an Article to *The Outer Circle*

“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.

Second: Send your article: by e-mail to: toc@saa-recovery.org
 or mail to: ISO
 P. O. Box 70949
 Houston, TX 77270

Third: Send in the below **Release Form**. Download an extra from the SAA website if needed or feel free to make copies.

Submission Deadlines & Suggested Topics		
Next Issues	Deadline	Suggested Topics
Jul-Aug 2013	May 5, 2013	Steps & Traditions 7 & 8, and “ <i>The Daily Inventory</i> ”
Sep-Oct 2013	July 5, 2013	Steps & Traditions 9 & 10, and “ <i>Gratitude</i> ”
Nov-Dec 2013	Sep 5, 2013	Steps & Traditions 11 & 12, and “ <i>Right Thinking</i> ”
Jan-Feb 2014	Nov 5, 2013	Steps & Traditions 1 & 2
Mar-Apr 2014	Jan 5, 2014	Steps & Traditions 3 & 4
May-Jun 2014	Mar 5, 2014	Steps & Traditions 5 & 6

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