

THE OUTER CIRCLE

Minor Miracles

Is there room for teens in recovery?

One group's answer may surprise you.

PLUS

Merging spirituality and sexuality

Letter of amends

The power of sponsorship





International Service Organization of SAA, Inc.

TOC articles contain the experiences and opinions of individual SAA members and do not represent the official views or positions of the ISO of SAA, Inc. or the SAA fellowship as a whole.

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The Outer Circle Mission

The mission of *The Outer Circle* is to provide information from the ISO and to share the experience, strength, and hope members have obtained from working the SAA program of recovery. As the first iteration put it in 1998, *The Outer Circle* newsletter “carries the message of hope to the sex addict who still suffers” — especially prisoners and others who don’t have the Internet.

Through *TOC*, SAA members contribute articles and poems that focus on working the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. It also communicates ISO news, regional activities, and other items of interest.

SAA meetings are encouraged to reproduce *TOC* at no charge and display it alongside other SAA literature. To keep costs down, please print out the online version.

If you have comments or suggestions, please see contact information on p. 29. To have an article considered for publication, see our Submission Guidelines on page 31.

To ensure that future issues can be offered without cost, please consider making a tax-deductible donation now to support publication of the newsletter.

November - December 2016

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FROM THE EDITOR

Add Service to Recovery with These Tools

BY GARY T.

As Step Twelve makes clear, recovery is all about being of service. But how can we be of service if we don't know what our fellowship is doing?

Did you know that SAA is embarking on what's probably the biggest change to its governance since our fellowship began? Or that the conference and convention are being split into two events? Or that a new group is now taking service resumes for national service?

If you're like most of us, the answer is "no." That's too bad, because, as Step Twelve makes clear, recovery is all about being of service and reaching the still suffering sex addict. How can we do that if we don't know what our fellowship is doing or how we can be of service?

This question is so important that an entire web site has been developed to connect members with service: *saa-iso.org*. There you'll find a list of the various committees — from the Board of Trustees to Prisoner Outreach — along with information about their vision and mission. You'll also find the latest motions and actions from past conventions.

Currently, accessing much of the service web site requires a username and password, so you need to contact the office to receive those credentials. But in an effort to encourage more service, the committee in charge of our websites is considering making the site accessible without a password.

You can also use *The Outer Circle* as a service tool. On page 30, every issue features a list of all the committees and when they meet. On page 29, there's a list of contact information. So if you see a committee that you'd like to get involved with or make a request to, just contact the office for the call-in information or the committee's email address.

As the Green Book says on p. 61: "We keep the priceless gift of our sexual sobriety by being of service to other sex addicts." In other words, the only way to keep what you've got is to give it away.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Growing Intergroups Need Your Support

BY JOE H.

Watching our intergroups develop over the years has been exciting, and they continue to do excellent work.

In the last 10 years, I have seen our number of intergroups double to more than 60. It has been a challenging journey for our intergroups, as many have struggled to find service volunteers from the groups they support.

In the last couple of years, our intergroups have begun creating outreach committees and focusing on outreach programs. We also have an active Intergroup Communication Committee (ICC) and a web space that contains information submitted by multiple intergroups that is available to everyone. If you would like to join the ICC or access the ICC wiki, please send a request to info@saa-recovery.org.

Our intergroups allow local groups and members to work together to help work Step Twelve. Watching our intergroups develop over the years has been exciting, and they continue to do excellent work.

Intergroups typically provide the following services:

- » Funding and coordinating the use of a jointly held post office box and arranging for mail distribution to the groups
- » Funding and coordinating a jointly operated telephone response line, including coordinating volunteers to return phone calls to the line
- » Funding and coordinating special outreach projects
- » Developing and maintaining an intergroup website
- » Maintaining and publishing meeting lists

Please support your local intergroup. If you want to know more about what an intergroup does or how to create an intergroup, please go to our website and download the SAA Intergroup Guide (<https://saa-recovery.org/TheISO/Intergroups/>).

FROM THE BOARD

Who's Ready to Host the Next SAA Convention?

BY MIKE L.

There are many ways to get involved in the planning process, and various talents are needed.

Believe it or not, the next convention will be SAA's 30th. We are fortunate to have conventions in the works for the current service year and for the two years to follow, taking us through 2019.

Still, it's a good time for you and your local fellowship to consider hosting an SAA convention. I've been involved in the planning of at least three SAA conventions over the years, going back as far as 1997, and I can speak to what rewarding experiences those have been.

Today, the ISO office is very active in the planning of the convention, so it's no longer necessary for there to be large SAA fellowships in the cities where the fellowship is planning the convention. And new technologies make it easier for folks from other cities to participate in the planning meetings.

A recording of the Long Range Planning Convention Committee workshop is also available through the ISO office, and committee members are available to help with the planning process.

Remember, too, that starting in 2018, the convention itself and the conference — the business meeting — will be split into two different weekends, which will also take some of the work off the convention committee.

There are many ways to get involved in the planning process, and various talents are needed. For example, those with artistic talents can help design a logo.

Please give some thought to having an SAA convention in your home city. The deadline for notifying the office of plans to make a bid is April 1, 2017. For more information, about planning a convention, you can contact info@saa-recovery.org.

LETTERS

Social Media and SAA Make a Bad Combination

In response to the piece by Gary T. in the September-October 2016 *The Outer Circle*, I have deep concerns about using social media to attract our message.

1) To claim social media is just attraction and not promotion is a misconception. Third parties are paid big money to track data on what is trending. This is done without the knowledge or consent of the participants and then turned into advertising targeted to specific audiences, including sex addicts. Any mention of SAA on social media has likely already been sold to third parties for profit. I know from personal experience that pornographers feast on the vulnerability of someone just coming out as a sex addict and try to exploit this.

2) Setting aside the concerns above, potential employers may look up records on Facebook or other social media sites and decline an applicant for a job due to stigma.

3) The risk of people masquerading as sex addicts who are actually perpetrators, law enforcement, or the like can easily be achieved on social media. Hence, the trust needed to talk honestly about sex addiction is broken. Tradition 12 is therefore at risk for being compromised because people may be conversing with sex addicts for reasons of identifying and prosecuting — the opposite of anonymity.

4) Once things are out there, there is no taking it back. For example, when the ISO decided to change their policy on publishing age restrictions on the meeting lists on their outreach website, it was too late. The age restriction info had already been copied by another website. Then, that info was posted on social media and possibly spread to thousands, which could have promulgated the misconception.

5) Many in our fellowship are banned from using the internet through incarceration or court order. Others block social media sites to keep sober. Let us not forget these people.

Our safest position is to have no opinion on outside issues. Let us not encourage the fostering of a debate which will leave the fellowship and the ISO in a quagmire of controversy.

Hal S.

ISO NEWS

Budget Surplus Higher than Expected; Sales on Target

In the month of September, our budget showed a surplus of \$2,992.32. We had budgeted for a surplus of \$940.50.

Our gross sales revenue for the SAA Green Book was below our estimate by \$1,265.83 in September and is below our estimate by \$3,453.44 for the year. For January through September, we are at 95.7 percent of our estimated SAA Green Book sales.

Our pamphlet and booklet sales were below our estimate by \$142.53 for September but have exceeded our estimate by \$935.77 for the year. For January through September, we are at 101.5 percent of our estimated pamphlet and booklet sales.

Our bronze medallion sales were below our estimate by \$205.00 in September and are below our estimate by \$1,613.09 for the year. For January through September, we are at 93.1 percent of our estimated bronze medallion sales.

Our total sales for September were below our estimate by \$1,841.11 and are below our estimate by \$6,483.60 for the year. For January through September, we are at 96.5 percent of our estimated sales.

Individual donations exceeded our estimate by \$5,829.81 for September and have exceeded our estimate by \$1,553.71 for the year. For January through September, we are at 100.7 percent of our estimated individual donations.

Group donations were below our estimate by \$3,769.02 in September and are below our estimate by \$11,654.73 for the year. For January through September, we are at 88.8 percent of our estimated group donations.

Our product inventory is valued at \$49,228.52. Our expenses were below our estimate by \$2,042.07 in September and are below our estimate by \$16,551.60 for the year. We are at 97 percent of our estimated expenses.

During our first nine months of operations, our budget shows a net surplus of \$7,872.68. Our operational reserve is fully funded. If you have any questions, please let me know.

In Your Service,

Joe H.

Executive Director

ISO NEWS

New Publication Manager Joins ISO

In September, the International Service Organization (ISO) of SAA welcomed its newest staff member, Cody S.

Cody is the Publications Manager for the ISO, a new position that was approved by the board in May. His duties include managing the various ways that the ISO promotes the SAA message through print, recorded, and electronic means.

Currently, Cody is working on projects such as developing new translations into new languages of our literature and converting all the literature into audio and eBook versions. He is also researching the possibility of an online forum for SAA members.

Cody hopes to encourage member participation in the literature process. “Members of the fellowship are the fellowship,” Cody said. “Members have many talents that they can use to carry our message. Some are writers and could help produce new literature or meditations for our upcoming book. Others know multiple languages and could help translate SAA material into new languages. Both of these are ways of working the Twelve Steps, but especially the Twelfth Step.”

Cody joined the fellowship in 2012 but left for a time.

“I was not ready to commit to the program. I wanted the results without the work. Coming back has shown me the truth that the program works if you work it,” he said.

If you would like to contribute to the meditation book, you may email meditation@saa-recovery.org.

Guidelines for the meditation book and member-submitted literature may be found at www.saa-recovery.org.

Cody lives in Houston with his wife and four sons. He may be reached at cody@saa-iso.net.

DEAR GRACE

Does SAA Address Love Addiction?

BY WOMEN'S
OUTREACH
SUBCOMMITTEE

**Even if our
only acting
our behavior is
around unhealthy
relationships
and the harms
done are strictly
emotional, we
can deal with that
in SAA.**

Dear Grace,

I want to attend meetings of Sex Addicts Anonymous, but I feel my addiction is more about love and relationships than sex.

Can I deal with love or relationship addiction in SAA or do I have to go to a different program?

Wondering

Dear Wondering:

That's a great question that many members wonder about because our name, Sex Addicts Anonymous, doesn't include anything about love or relationships, while some other Twelve-Step program names do.

It is clear in our literature that these issues can be dealt with here. On page four of the SAA Green Book, in the chapter called "Our Addiction," it says, "We acted out in many different ways. Sometimes we had trouble with one unwanted behavior, sometimes with many. We struggled with...destructive relationships; romantic obsession...or other behaviors that involve risk to ourselves—physical, legal, emotional or spiritual—and harm to others."

This tells us that, even if our only acting out behavior is around unhealthy relationships and the harms done are strictly emotional, we can deal with that here in SAA.

This chapter goes on to say, on the same page, "While none of us fits the profile perfectly, we can all identify with some of the following traits. We chose...romantic obsession over those things we cherished the most.... Romantic fantasies...



and seductive planning filled our minds and distorted our thinking.... Our lives became filled with deceit in order to hide our behaviors. We found ourselves isolated and alone.”

If this sounds familiar to you, you are welcome here! You are home. You will find women and men here that struggle with the same issues.

There is additional support available to women by sending an email to grace@saa-women.org and requesting the SAA Women’s Outreach List. There are over 200 women on that list

who are available for you to talk with.

Blessings,

Grace

*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 (grace@saa-women.org) receives. *Names have been changed to protect anonymity.*

DEAR WILL

Finding Balance with the Circles

BY WILL

**Writing out his
circles was one of
the best program
things that Will
ever did.**

Dear Will,

My sponsor has been hounding me about doing my circles, and I just want to start working the Steps. I got sober in another program just by working the Steps and I didn't have to do a bunch of preliminary stuff before working them. Can you tell me why the circles are so important?

Champing at the Bit

Dear Champing,

First of all, thank you for saying "Champing." Where Will lives these days, most people say "Chomping," which can probably be justified somehow, but it still chomps on Will's nerves.

Anyway, Will never argues with a sponsor. In this case, however, he really does believe the sponsor is right and that the Three Circles are very important for three reasons:

1. They define what is (and isn't) acting out.
2. They identify triggers.
3. They identify healthy behaviors.

When Will was new, some years ago, either the circles had not yet been developed or else his sponsor didn't know about them. So, because Will loves to do things the hard way, he made anything that related even slightly to acting out, such as looking into a passing car, a reason to take a desire chip. Eventually, he amassed quite a collection of desire chips (also called recommitment coins), which he gave to others because this was before they had online auctions.

After a year or so of this, an SAA newcomer told



Will about the Three Circles and how great they were in formulating a sex plan. Will talked to his (new) sponsor about these circles. Even though Will was already partway through the Steps, his sponsor suggested that he go back and do his circles. This was one of the best program things that Will ever did.

Will was finally able to make a distinction between middle-circle behaviors and inner-circle behaviors, a distinction probably obvious to a lot of people, but Will can be slow on the uptake. As a result, Will found himself taking a lot fewer desire chips. More important, he found himself getting to a point where he didn't want to engage in even middle-circle behaviors.

The other advantage to the circles is the outer circle, which some consider the

most important. Will knew he had to find things to do with his newfound free time, which otherwise would lead him back to acting out. He started once again finding enjoyment in things he used to do and he even found new things he enjoyed that he could add to his outer circle. Though no substitute for the Steps, the circles really helped him find joy in recovery.

Anyway, that is Will's experience, strength, and hope around the Three Circles. He hopes that you will take an hour or two and experiment with them.

Will

*If you have a question for Will,
please send an email to [men4saa@
saa-recovery.org](mailto:men4saa@saa-recovery.org).*

LIVING IN SOBRIETY

Developing a Relationship with My Higher Power

BY DOUG S.

I know that I am not cured of my addiction, that I must stay sober one day at a time. I have learned to trust God, do the next right thing, and leave the outcome to Him.

I've been abstinent from my inner circle behaviors for more than six years — the longest time I've been sexually sober since puberty.

I was a respected man in my community, a valued employee, and a leader in my church. I was married, a father and grandfather. But I lived two lives. In my other life, I was addicted to pornography and anonymous sex. I kept that life secret, and for 40 years I didn't get caught. Then, early one morning a dozen armed police officers came to my house with a search warrant. I knew why they were there. My life was about to be completely different.

My career was gone, my reputation shattered, my marriage in deep trouble. I was going to prison. I knew I had to change my life and didn't know how. My attorney suggested a residential treatment program, where I went to my first SAA meeting. What a relief it was to be with men and women who knew the depth of my pain, who understood what it was like to be unable to stop acting in a way that was counter to my values.

For the first time, I no longer had to keep my sexual behavior secret. I went to an SAA meeting every day for 200 days. I got a sponsor and tried my best to follow his suggestions. I began working the Steps.

Then I went to prison. In prison, I went to meetings of other Twelve Step fellowships because they were available. I read recovery literature. But, eventually, I got careless and stopped working my program. After four years of sobriety, I relapsed.

I knew what I had to do. With the help of the ISO and the SAA prison outreach program, I organized an SAA group in federal prison. That wasn't easy, and there were a large number of obstacles to overcome. Inmates kept their sex crimes a secret and were afraid

of being “outed.” Prison rules did not allow “secret” organizations. But, with time, we overcame the obstacles and successfully organized an SAA group. An SAA group from outside the prison even provided monthly speakers.

This time, sobriety was different, real. With the help of sober inmates and the SAA letter-writing program, I worked the steps thoroughly. For the first time, the obsessions began to go away. The Twelve Steps showed me how to develop a trusting, personal relationship with my Higher Power. I found a way to carry the message to other sex addicts and sponsored nine men in prison.

When I left prison after seven years, I knew where to go: I went to SAA. There, I was welcomed and not judged. SAA is a place where everyone is valued for his or her contributions, not condemned for the past.

I found a sponsor who would hold my feet to the fire. I worked the steps again. For forty years, I built up a cache of selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear without dealing with it. I was inconsiderate and self-seeking. My self-will and pride failed me again and again, blocking my relationships with God and other people. I dealt with those failures of the past as I worked Steps One through Nine.

I know that I am not cured of my addiction, that I must stay sober one day at a time. Now, I work Steps Ten, Eleven,

and Twelve every day so I don't let my defects of character build up again and lead me back into addiction. I take a daily personal inventory, in writing, and make amends promptly. I pray regularly in the morning and evening, and during the day. Whenever I am agitated or doubtful, I ask for the right thought or action. I wish I did this perfectly. I don't, but I do the best I can.

I served two years as secretary of my local groups and represent them at the intergroup. I arrange weekly speakers for the SAA meeting at the treatment center where I was a patient. This year, for the first time, I attended the International SAA convention. What an exciting event!

After 11 years in recovery, I still go to four SAA meetings each week. I sponsor six men. I make and receive phone calls from other addicts. My life today is nothing like it was 11 years ago. My marriage (yes, I'm still married to the same wonderful woman) is honest and intimate. I have a great relationship with my children and grandchildren. I have learned to trust God, do the next right thing, and leave the outcome to Him.

Thank you, SAA!

If you have five or more years of sobriety and would like to celebrate by writing a Living in Sobriety column, please contact toc@saa-recovery.org.



Minor Miracles

How one group created safe meeting places for teens

I

BY MAX H.

n October of 2004, a fourteen year old boy attended an SAA meeting in Houston, Texas. The group held an emergency group conscience and voted to allow the teen to remain for that one meeting. Although he did not return, that young newcomer's presence sparked a wider discussion about the appropriateness of underage teens in general SAA meetings in Houston.

The concern was that teens and adults with addictive sexual behaviors possibly involving minors would encounter one another in the very rooms where both were seeking to recover.

On February 16, 2005, the first SAA Adult Co-Sponsors in Service to SAA Teen Meetings Orientation was held. After researching the history of meetings for teens in SAA and in eight other Twelve Step programs, a handful of adults established a separately administered group known as an SAA Teen Meeting (SAATM) and formed an intergroup.

Because most intergroup members were addicts who were also survivors of sexual abuse, they wanted to provide safety for teens as well as adults striving not to violate minors. Additionally, even a false accusation of harm to a teen had the potential to affect not only individual members but also their families and SAA as a whole. For these reasons, the intergroup’s collective decision was to develop separate meetings to carry SAA’s message to teens.

The recovery message remained the same for both adults and teens: that sobriety from addictive sexual behavior is possible to everyone through the SAA Twelve Steps. This meeting differed only in the extensive safety requirements for both adult and teen members.

For instance, Texas Family Code mandates that anyone knowing of the abuse of a child must report it. All parties associated with SAA teen meetings in Houston, including the teens themselves, needed to be aware that co-sponsors are required to comply with that law as a condition of their service.

Other safety requirements of the SAA teen meetings in Houston include the following:

- » The meetings are divided by gender.
- » The meetings only serve teens

ages 13–17. Teens are not allowed to attend teen meetings beyond their eighteenth birthday, and are only able to return as co-sponsors after they turn 21. (This was later relaxed by group conscience with the consent of the parents when some teens reached 18.)

- » Each teen’s legal guardian must sign a parental consent form.
- » Adult co-sponsors do not meet or communicate with teens alone. Each teen meeting and any communications between adult co-sponsors and recovering teens must include at least two adult co-sponsors.

Adult co-sponsors must meet minimum eligibility criteria, such as:

- » Three years in the SAA program.
- » One year of continuous sexual sobriety.
- » Successful completion of all Twelve Steps with an SAA sponsor.
- » Written support of that sponsor.
- » A clean criminal record verified twice annually through criminal background checks.

Before disclosing the day, time or location of group meetings, cosponsors meet with teens and guardians face to face to go through what is known as the “Twelfth Step” process. In this

process, SAA co-sponsors discussed in detail:

- » What sex addiction is.
- » How the Twelve Steps of SAA work.
- » What members can and cannot expect from meetings and adult co-sponsors.
- » Requirements in Texas for reporting abuse.
- » The parental consent form.

Teens and guardians were given an opportunity to ask questions, and guardians were given contact information for COSA, a separate Twelve-Step program for friends and family of sex addicts. After the parental consent form was signed, information about the location of the meeting was given

out.

The teen meeting was arranged so that, each week, parents and teens arrived at the meeting facility together. The SAA teen meeting took place in a room at one end of a hallway, and parents held a COSA meeting at the other end. When the hour was up, teens, co-sponsors, and parents all gathered again to say their goodbyes before departing.

Some parents drove from as far away as Dallas to do “whatever it took” to provide support for their teen. There were a number meeting cycles, starting when the need arose and stopping when there were no teens attending.

This last cycle of nearly two years has seen approximately eleven or

Official ISO Stance on Teen Meetings

In response to a request from the delegate Conference and from several individuals within the fellowship, the ISO has conducted an in-depth study of the issues surrounding the question of minors attending SAA meetings.

After lengthy and deliberate discussions, the Board has determined that it is not appropriate or prudent for the ISO to develop and promulgate guidelines relating to this issue. Tradition Four clearly states that member groups are autonomous and are solely responsible for running their own meetings.

The ISO does not direct or even suggest how an individual group conducts its internal affairs, especially when potential legal issues might be involved. Guidance is derived from study and application of the principles contained in the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of SAA. The ISO does, however, wish to inform member groups that they may encounter this issue and that they might want to give consideration to this issue before being faced with an awkward situation.

Although not an exhaustive list, the following items were considered by the ISO:

- » *Twelve Traditions of SAA*
- » *Mechanisms of sponsorship*
- » *Parental consent issues*

so teenagers attending, at times as many as four or five at a single meeting. One teen has approximately 18 months of sobriety.

Like recovering adults, not all teens became sober — but many did. Some faltered or relapsed and were supported by the group as they tried again. Unfortunately, also like adults, some teens fell away from the program. However, others made the transition to general adult meetings beyond their eighteenth birthday.

Over the last two years, the number of parents seeking support for their teens has exploded. Primarily it is due to some counselors being aware of the program, as well as other adult SAA members becoming aware of the program and seeking support for their

teens. We know we haven't even reached the tip of the iceberg. Some teens share that many of their friends need the program.

Outreach has been particularly tricky due to the safety of the teens. At the start of the program an outreach effort was made to school counselors and other professional counselors. The schools seemed to want to have nothing to do with it.

Houston is believed to be the only city that has had these meetings. And on a personal note, being involved weekly in these meetings has taken my recovery to a new level, another opportunity to be a bit less selfish than the full-blown selfish addict I was when entering recovery 19 years ago.

- » *Local and state definitions of child abuse*
- » *Mandatory reporting statutes*
- » *Parole and probation restrictions*
- » *Composition of local groups*
- » *Maturity of persons seeking recovery*

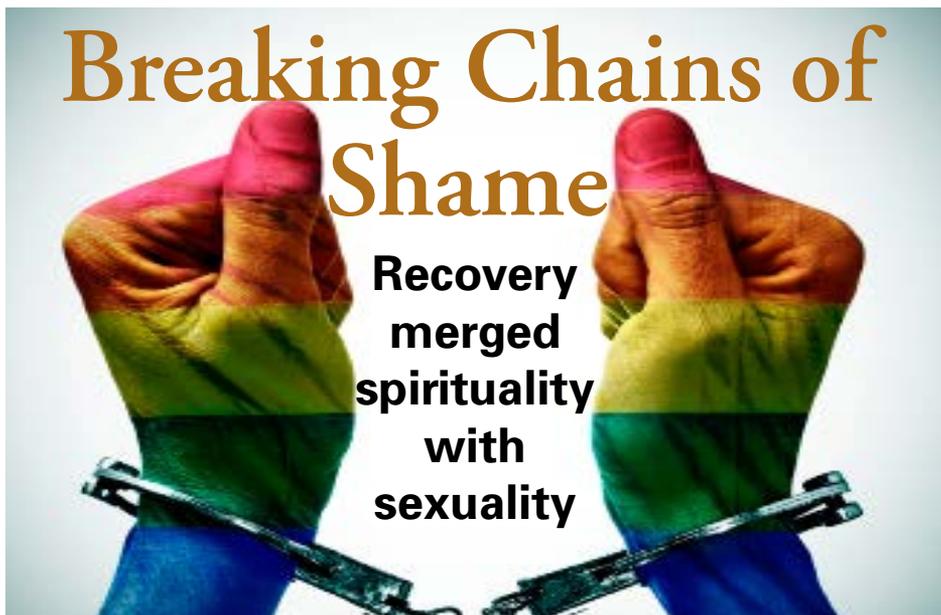
In the final analysis, it is the responsibility of each member group to determine how it will respond to a minor seeking help or referred for help with sex addiction. By careful review of the Traditions and local circumstances, each group is free to reach its own group conscience on this matter. ISO and its Board of Trustees will continue to monitor this issue and address needs as they arise.

The ISO is confident that application of the principles contained in the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions form a secure basis for reaching an informed group conscience, keeping in mind at all times that program principles are always subject to the boundaries established by law. Please contact the ISO office if you have questions about this decision or this communication.

*In service,
ISO Board of Trustees*

Breaking Chains of Shame

**Recovery
merged
spirituality
with
sexuality**



BY JACK G.

Through the grace of God and working the SAA program, I have experienced a profound understanding of who I am in God's eyes. My background is probably familiar to many gay people who became sex addicts in part because of their inability to integrate their homosexuality with their spirituality.

I come from a traditional, religious Filipino family with high expectations in academics, career, and financial accomplishments. There was a serious lack of expression or display of love or affection.

Since my family didn't meet these needs, I started searching for the truth from God. But I struggled to make sense of why God made me gay and whether he could truly love me. Ever since I was a young boy, I believed that being gay was something to be ashamed of — a disgrace to the family.

I began craving love and affection through sex, even though each acting out came attached with guilt and shame. Each Sunday after I acted out, I felt the need to ask God's forgiveness over and over. I felt so defeated.

Prayers of healing from homosexuality and my attempts to stop acting out

failed over and over. My sexual cravings became unrelenting. I lost friends, emotional connections with loved ones, and broke up with every boyfriend to pursue my addiction. I was absent from important family occasions. I stopped going to church and Bible studies. I was cruising every night in the bath house, the park, and online for anonymous sex. Inevitably, I suffered from exhaustion, diseases, and physical, mental, and emotional abuse. My bottom line behaviors got worse and worse, until, finally, a good friend suggested SAA.

Even after ten years in SAA, I know I am still a sex addict. However, just as my addiction was progressive, so has been my recovery. After testing positive for a serious STI, I reset my sobriety date. I adopted a celibate lifestyle, and that has been a real blessing for me. Only recently, have I been able to sense the freedom to be sexual again without any fear or desire to act out.

Being honest with my sponsor and regularly reporting to him most days, if not every day, is a key tool of my recovery. Another major tool is Step Eleven and meditation. It seems that in everything I do daily—whether mopping the floor, doing my dishes, going for a walk or a run—I am able to be aware and present in the moment. I also do formal meditations, either guided or on my own, concentrating on

my breath, calming and stilling my breath, mind, and body. It is then that the spiritual part of me emerges and I feel a connection to the God of my understanding.

In one of the local group meetings, we have a ten-minute meditation. One day, already arriving in a meditative state from a run, I had a profound experience. As I continued to meditate, I heard God say to me, “Jack, you are my son, whom I love, and with you I am well pleased.” In the midst of this epiphany, I broke down in tears. It was a surreal experience, but I knew in that moment that God had re-integrated my sexuality with my spirituality.

After years of being lost in addiction, I didn’t know my sexuality and my spirituality could be reconciled. But God did. My part was to go to meetings, listen, and share in our collective experience, strength, and hope, work the Steps, call my sponsor, meditate, abstain from unhealthy sex, and leave the rest to God. The love of God is truly unconditional, and he has restored me to the person he meant me to be.

Today, I’m a grateful sex addict. That may sound contradictory, but it was this disease that eventually led me to understand that the love and approval I sought all my life could come complete and whole from none other than the God of my understanding.



Dear Me

An amends letter makes peace with self and Higher Power

BY MYRON G.

T

his is a Ninth Step letter of amends to myself. At the age of 71, I seek God's counsel in discerning how my obsessive worries on aging have affected my sexual addiction and other character shortcomings. This is my gateway into the Ninth Step. I pray that in forgiving myself, God is forgiving me.

It's really hard to write this letter. I love writing letters to my friends. I find I am often able to write the most intimate thoughts and feelings in a letter. But to myself? About myself? It feels awkward. Almost wrong somehow. I have worked the steps several times and gave at least lip service to making amends to myself but I've never done so in writing. Now I see why.

I am getting older. I am more alive than I have ever been. I feel my sex life slipping away. My sex life has never been better. I cling to what was. I go places with my husband I have never gone before. I resent

what I never had when I was young. I have sex almost every day. It's almost over. It's a new beginning.

I have waves of resentments of what could have been. I get flooded with fear of what is surely coming. Then a wave of gratitude of what is. I live in the past. I live in the future. I forget the present. I bring myself back.

I am getting older. I think I accept this. But deep down, I do not. I see myself as much younger than my physical years. I often push my body physically until I hurt myself. And when I heal, I turn around and do the same thing. I know this is the definition of insanity.

Making amends, what does making amends mean to me? It seems to be about mending a wound. What is the wound that I am inflicting upon myself? Certainly it is the wound of harsh self-judgment. I think I am beating myself up for getting old. And there is no part of who I am in my body that concerns me more than my sexual functioning.

When I see myself as wounded, I also see myself as a victim. This leads me toward anger and resentment. And I begin to cling to what sexual functioning I still have. I have sought medical interventions to augment my sexual

functioning. Perhaps that's more clinging. Perhaps not. I pray for discernment.

Letting go, what does it mean to let go? What is it I am letting go of? Control, all or nothing, what ought to be?

I heal myself when I give up the struggle. When I surrender my willfulness, I am more likely to just be in the moment. Aging ceases to be a problem. It just is.

What does prayer mean to me? I am mending. But it is not me who is doing the mending. In my daily meditations, I ask God, "How do you want to live yourself in me?"

If I answer, it is me answering. I learn to live in the space of silence. I learn how to cultivate solitude. I learn to let my body be a vessel of God's grace. Purity of intention informs my sexual functioning. I learn to live in gratitude.

I am grateful now to be more sexually spontaneous, erotic, centered, relational.

I am grateful to now find pleasure in the smallest gesture, a smile, a touch, a hug.

I am grateful to begin to love and be loved without conditions or regrets.

I am grateful to see God being unfolded in these, my struggles.

Passing the Torch



The fellowship needs sponsors to share the gift of recovery

BY CLIF G.

Do you remember the first time you walked into “the room”? I certainly do. I was one scared and embarrassed sex addict. My life was a mess. I had secrets I didn’t want to share, especially with a group of strangers. I was lost and wanted to get better but I didn’t know how to do it.

As I sat and listened, I grew more comfortable. I could relate as I heard my story from the mouths of others. I also had a glimmer of hope as I learned that others were achieving something I could not comprehend: sobriety. I wanted that, but I was still lost because I didn’t know how to get it.

I was fortunate because, after a short period of time, I was able to find a sponsor who helped me start my journey through the Steps of SAA toward eventual healing. Nevertheless, my case is often the exception rather than the rule.

How many times in our meetings do newcomers show up, attend for a while, struggle to achieve or maintain sobriety, and end up leaving? Why do people struggle? They do so in my humble opinion because they are not finding a solution to repair the tragedy that brought them here. Far too many times, they cannot find a sponsor willing to invest their experience, strength, and hope with a fellow addict.

“Ideally, a sponsor is abstinent from addictive sexual behavior, has worked the steps, and can teach us what he or she has learned from working the program” (GB pg 13).

It only takes an honest desire to give back to others. While it is desirable to have completed the Twelve Steps, it is not a requirement for sponsorship.

Remember, we are passing on our experience, strength, and hope, our successes as well as our struggles. Most importantly, we are available to listen and lend support.

We of the Fellowship Internal Standing Committee of the ISO encourage you to become part of the solution and share with others the precious gift of sponsorship. The sponsor/sponsee relationship blesses everyone involved. It changed my life.

Then and Now

By Paul P.

*It kept danger lurking
Around every bend
Surprising and perplexing
A heart aching to mend*

*A power that weakened
Made me into another being
Wreaked havoc with my mind
Such insanity I wasn't seeing.*

*Stumbled upon the rooms
Messages of hope I heard
Accepted them graciously
All the wisdom from every word.*

*Life got better
Sober and Strong I became
The steps were my path
I would never feel the same.*

*Recovery changed my thinking
Helped me see things in a new
light
Practicing the principles
Ending the self-willed fight.*

*Sober and sane
Growing stronger each hour
I owe it all to recovery
Thanks to my amazing Higher
Power.*

ISO ANNOUNCEMENTS

ISA Outreach Submits new Guide to Literature Committee

The Intimacy and Sexual Avoidance Outreach Committee is pleased to announce that the *Intimacy and Sexual Avoidance First Step Guide* has been submitted to the Literature Committee of SAA. In addition, we'd like to make available our contact email for anyone interested in finding out more about intimacy and sexual avoidance recovery. The contact email is avoidance@saa-recovery.org. To see when the ISA meets, go to p. 30.

SAA Pamphlets Now Available to Read Online

The ISO is pleased to announce the availability of SAA pamphlets on the SAA website (saa-recovery.org). The pamphlets may be found by following the "SAA Literature" sub-tab from the home page. Also included 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 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.

Submissions Sought for SAA Meditation Book

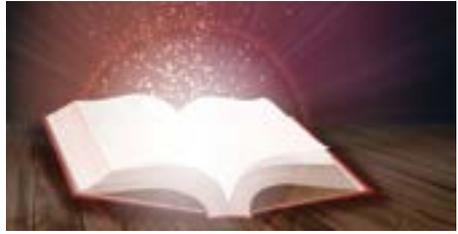
The ISO Literature Committee welcomes submission of entries from the fellowship-at-large for possible inclusion in the SAA Meditation Book. The Meditation Book will consist of 366 entries, one for each day of the calendar year.

To ensure consideration, submissions should contain the following:

- » A short quotation taken from SAA publications that are Literature Committee approved or Conference approved (see list below). The quote must include the source and page number, using the following style: Sex Addicts Anonymous, page 20. Quotes from other sources will not be considered.
- » The main body is an expansion of the topic or principle, ideally including perspective on a particular aspect of SAA recovery through your experience, your strength,

ISO ANNOUNCEMENTS

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 message. This is the critical component of your submission. We can add a quote or an affirmation, but only you can provide your ES&H.



- » At the bottom of the page, a concise statement to summarize the main idea of the meditation or to offer a poignant challenge or affirmation.

Each entry should be 200-350 words including the quotation and the closing affirmation. Submissions must include your name and contact information to be cross-referenced with your release form.

Sources for Opening Quotation:

Sex Addicts Anonymous (SAA Green Book); Sex Addicts Anonymous (Pamphlet); Abstinence; The Bubble; Three Circles; Getting a Sponsor; Writing to Prisoners; Sexual Sobriety and the Internet; Safe and Sexually Sober Meetings; Getting Started in Sex Addicts Anonymous; A Special Welcome to the Woman Newcomer; Recovery from Compulsive Sexual Avoidance; Group Guide; Intergroup Guide; Tools of Recovery; First Step to Recovery; Abstinence and Boundaries in SAA; SAA and the Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender Sex Addict

Release Form: The ISO must have a signed release before a submission can be considered. 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.

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.

Include complete contact information and, if possible, a signed scanned release. All submitters must send or have sent 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: Meditation Book, ISO, PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270.

ISO ANNOUNCEMENTS

SAA Group Inventory Form

Take time to reflect on your group's strengths and weaknesses in each of the following areas. Briefly mention one or more concrete examples in answer to each question.

1. Staying rooted in the Twelve Steps

- » Are the Steps being discussed in the group?
- » Does the group give adequate time for First Step presentations?
- » Are we emphasizing practicing the steps?

2. Knowledge of, adherence to, and fidelity to the Twelve Traditions.

- » Are principles being kept above personalities in our group?
- » Are we providing adequate financial support for our group and fellowship?
- » Are we always mindful of anonymity?

3. Newcomers

- » Are Twelfth-step calls being answered in a timely fashion?
- » Is attention being given to the needs of the newcomer?
- » Are we taking temporary sponsorship seriously?

4. Primary purpose: Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the sex addict who still suffers (Tradition Five).

- » How is outreach being addressed by our group?
- » Are we using attraction rather than promotion?

5. Tools of the program: How are these tools being used by the group?

- » Sponsorship
- » Literature
- » Service
- » Phone list
- » Medallions
- » Other

6. Meetings (write in suggestions for improvement)

- » Topic or step presentations
- » Membership attendance
- » Format

7. Other areas where we are doing well or need improvement

- » Group's sexual sobriety
- » Fellowship outside meetings
- » Other

CONTACT THE ISO

Want to connect with the International Service Organization website, staff, Board of Trustees, trusted servants, or special workers? Here's the contact info you need:

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

Board of Trustees and Literature Committee

Great Lakes

Board: Stephen N. (Vice-Chair); Alternate: Vacant
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LitCom: David M.; Steven P.; Wayne K. Gary T.
(*The Outer Circle* editor)
LitComAL@saa-litcom.org

CALENDAR

Here are tentative ISO outreach and committee meeting times for the next several months. Meetings times change often. All times are Central Standard Time.

First Sunday of the month

Nominations Conference Committee: 11:00 a.m.

Audio Review (odd months): 2:30 p.m.

Intergroup Communications: 3:00 p.m.

LGBT Outreach: 5:00 p.m.

CSC: Policy & Procedure: 2:00 p.m.

Prisoner Outreach: 8:00 p.m.

First Saturday of the month

Author's Group: 4:00 p.m.

Second Saturday of the month

Intimacy and Sexual Avoidance: 8 a.m.

Women's Outreach: 5:00 p.m.

Second Sunday of the month

Literature Committee: 4:00 p.m.

General Outreach: 6:30 p.m.

Third Tuesday of the month

CSC: Conference Committee Structure: 5:00 p.m.

Third Wednesday of the month

Area Conference Committee: 7:00 p.m.

Third Saturday of the month

CSC: Twelve Concepts Work Group: 12:00 p.m.

Third Sunday of the month

CSC: Charter & Bylaws: 2:00 p.m.

Information Systems and Online Presence
Committee: 2:00 p.m.

SE Region: 6:00 p.m.

Fourth Sunday of the month

Conference Steering Committee: 2:00 p.m.

Meditation Writing Workshop: 5:00 p.m.

Fourth Tuesday of the month

Seventh Tradition: 6:00 p.m.

To attend a committee meeting, you must be a member or be invited. If you're interested in joining a committee, email info@saa-recovery.org or call the ISO office.

Here's a listing of upcoming SAA events from around the fellowship.

November - December

On **Nov. 6**, The Central/Northern Arizona Intergroup is sponsoring a special event to express gratitude for recovery with an open house fund-raiser for the ISO. There will be plenty of food and a speaker for

this occasion, which is open to all SAA members and their families and friends who are at least 18 years old. For more information, email Brian S. at briansphx@gmail.com or call 602-300-1181.

If you'd like your event to be listed in the Calendar section, please send it to toc@saa-recovery.org. To ensure your listing gets published in time, please send it at least two months in advance of the event.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Get Your Story Published in *The Outer Circle*

The Outer Circle newsletter relies on submissions from the Fellowship. It's a great way to carry the message to other sex addicts!

Articles may be submitted by email to toc@saa-recovery.org or by mail to the ISO office. If possible, please submit articles via email in Microsoft Word format. All articles must be accompanied by the **RELEASE FORM** at the bottom of this page.

Deadlines for Submission

Jan/Feb:	Nov 5
Mar/Apr:	Jan 5
May/June:	Mar 5
July/Aug:	May 5
Sept/Oct:	July 5
Nov/Dec:	Sept 5

Here are some general writing guidelines:

Personal stories can be anywhere from 500-1,000 words. The main guideline is to share your experience, strength, and hope in the principle of Step Twelve. It may be helpful to think of your submission as a written form of a share you'd give in a meeting — something that's working for you or that you're struggling with.

Also, please consider writing a 500- to 1,000-word article based on a workshop or talk you've given around the Steps and Traditions. Again, the key is sharing your experience, strength, and hope with other sex addicts. Please don't worry about grammar and spelling. We'll clean that up for you.

General Release Form

In consideration of being reviewed for possible publication, I hereby transfer and release to the ISO of SAA, Inc (assignee) all legal rights to the publication of my submission(s) or any edited version thereof in any official ISO publication, including Sex Addicts Anonymous, The Outer Circle, the SAA meditation book, the SAA websites, or any other SAA program material, such as pamphlets, booklets and audio recordings.

With this submission, I transfer to the assignee without limitation the legal title and all literary rights, including copyright and/or trademark and the full right and license to reproduce, copy, edit for content, modify, distribute, and create derivatives from the submitted work. I understand that every effort will be made to safeguard my personal anonymity in the publication and distribution of this material. I also understand that I may or may not receive further communication regarding my submission prior to its publication.

I hereby further attest that I possess full legal capacity to exercise this authorization, and I hereby Release the assignee from any claim whatsoever by me or my successors.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Printed name: _____

Witness: _____ Date: _____

Printed name: _____

SAA TWELVE STEPS

- 1.** We admitted we were powerless over addictive sexual behavior - that our lives had become unmanageable.
- 2.** Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
- 3.** Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.
- 4.** Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
- 5.** Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
- 6.** Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
- 7.** Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.
- 8.** Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
- 9.** Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
- 10.** Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
- 11.** Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood God, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.
- 12.** Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other sex addicts and to practice these principles in our lives.