

THE OUTER CIRCLE



Lessons of a Slip
A mistake leads to new
understanding about
healthier sexuality.

PLUS

Freedom of Truth

Stories of Service

Redefining Shame





International Service Organization of SAA, Inc.

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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.

January - February 2017

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FROM THE EDITOR

What's New for 2017?

BY GARY T.

**This year, I hope
you'll make it
your resolution
to submit your
article to *The
Outer Circle*.**

As an editor, I've always loved the new year. That's because, just as it is with people, the new year is a time for fresh starts with publications.

So it is with this first issue of 2017. In it, you'll find a number of changes — all designed to make *The Outer Circle* a more valuable part of your recovery journey.

The first change you'll notice is the cover. Now each issue will feature a gorgeous color photo to distinguish itself from the previous issue. This change was brought about from a fellow who told me he couldn't tell the issues apart because the covers were all the same.

The second change also comes from reader feedback requesting that *The Outer Circle* offer more stories and less announcements. So starting with this issue, I've added a new column and space for an extra member story. I'm particularly excited about the new column, Stories of Service, which, as the name suggests, reveals how service has helped people stay sober in recovery.

Of course, offering more stories from the fellowships means *The Outer Circle* needs even more submissions. Remember, all the articles you see in this newsletter are written by members for members. Just as in meetings, if no one shows up (or submits articles) the meeting (or the newsletter) can't happen.

So this New Year's Day, I hope you'll make it your resolution to submit your article to *The Outer Circle* and join the group of other internationally (anonymously) published sex addicts who are sharing their experience, strength, and hope with others through the written word.

You can find deadlines, writing guidelines and the required general release form on page 30 of this issue. And please spread the word at meetings as well!

FROM THE DIRECTOR

New Year Goals: Updated Website, More Translations

BY JOE H.

**We need
volunteers to
develop the
glossaries for
each language
and support
the ongoing
translations.**

I am looking forward to several major initiatives in 2017. We expect to launch our redesigned outreach website (www.saa-recovery.org) in the early part of the year. It will include an enhanced meeting search. The new website is designed to work well with smart phones and tablets. This will benefit all members, especially new members and travelers.

Also, we will begin to translate our core SAA message into around ten languages. This will expand our ability to reach still-suffering sex addicts around the world. How fast the translations move depends on volunteers. We need volunteers to develop the glossaries for each language and support the ongoing translations. If you are fluent in both English and a second language, please let us know. Send us an email to info@saa-recovery.org. You can also go to our service website (saa-iso.org) and submit a service resume. Be sure to tell us in the first section of the resume that you want to help with translations.

Look in your inbox soon. We will send an email about translation volunteers. All of this activity is being managed by our new publications manager, Cody S., whom we could not have hired except for your generous financial support.

You may be wondering why we are now focusing on translations. The truth is that now we have the resources. For the past four years, I have received emails from many members outside the U.S. who want to help translate our message. Until now, we did not have the resources to help. Now that we can, it excites me to carry our message to those who do not speak English.

We are able to do these things because of the generous financial support from our members and groups. Thank you!

DEAR GRACE

Travel, Open-Mindedness Needed for Face-to-Face Meetings

BY WOMEN'S
OUTREACH
SUBCOMMITTEE

We may have to be willing to reach out and get to know people we usually wouldn't.

Dear Grace,

I want more of a face-to-face presence in my recovery. There are a couple of other women at the in-person meeting I attend, but I don't really connect to either of them. Can you help me?

Face-to-face

Dear Face-to-face,

Many women have found themselves in this situation. Some women satisfy their desire for face-to-face contact by attending retreats or conventions.

Traveling to meet other female sex addicts in recovery is ingrained in the experience and culture of many women sex addicts, whether or not they have access to local meetings. Many of us find travel a necessity.

Another thing to consider is that we may have to be willing to reach out and get to know people whom we usually wouldn't. This is both a challenge and one of the great gifts of the journey. Many have found that these relationships, which started with trepidation, are enormously enriching to our recovery.

Beyond that, we are often uncomfortable with people who highlight aspects of ourselves we do not like. If we can practice sitting with that discomfort, we often find a growing peace living in our own skin.

And those people we are so uncomfortable with often become some of our biggest allies. Perhaps the women in your meeting would also like to see more women locally. A great way for you to expand face to face contact could be to join together to start a women's only meeting on a different day than your mixed meeting.



Let's Talk

The Women's Outreach Subcommittee (WOSC) of SAA announces a series of teleconference calls designed to further the conversation begun by our panel at the 2016 convention: "Women in the Fellowship: What's working; What's not working."

We invite all interested SAA members, of all genders, to join us in this open forum. Share experience, strength, and hope. Hear what other groups have done to welcome women and encourage their full participation. Ask questions.

Two WOSC members will be present on each call, simply as facilitators. The calls are free-standing; you may call in to one or more. No preparation is required. Just an open mind and a willingness to engage with others on this topic. The schedule and call-in information for the first three calls is below. More will be scheduled as participation warrants. We hope to hear you there!

Saturday, January 28th at 10:00 am; Sunday, March 12th at 5:00 pm; Tuesday, May 2nd at 8:00 pm (All times Central). The call-in number is 712-770-4160; Passcode: 410674

LIVING IN SOBRIETY

Uncovering The Hidden Treasures of Life

BY FRANK B.

**The program
has changed my
life in all areas.
I have the tools
today to deal with
problems that
come up.**

I'm a gay man with more than twenty-one years of sexual sobriety from my inner circle behaviors, which include having anonymous sex and entering sexual establishments.

On my last night of acting out, I stayed out until five a.m. prowling various places, but what was different this night is that I hit my bottom. I still remember asking my Higher Power to help me. I was acting out in the same compulsive ways at 37 years of age that I had engaged in since I was age 15. I felt hopeless but from that hopelessness an opening happened for me when I asked for help.

I threw myself into the program of SAA, which had just started in San Francisco in 1995. I was an early member. I'm still grateful to the other members who put sobriety first in their lives and who were rigorously honest about their behavior. I learned that my sobriety and my program had to be the number one priority of my life. I could not let anything else get in the way of my sobriety.

I attended as many meetings as were available, and I made friends quickly with other sex addicts. I took a service commitment at a meeting and I used the phone whenever I felt like I was going to act out.

Eventually I got a sponsor. He had more than a year of sobriety and had worked the steps already. He took me through the steps. I started sponsoring other people because I knew that if I didn't give my sobriety away I'd lose it. I am also doing prison outreach now.

I've received so many gifts as a result of SAA and my sobriety. I've been able to move in the right direction at work and I've made so many friends



both inside and outside the program. When I turned 50, I had more than fifty people at my party. When I first got into the program I barely had any friends.

I have been able to try many new hobbies that are now in my outer circle including hiking, camping, giving workshops, and travel. I'm also involved with several spiritual communities. Finally I have been in a primary relationship with a man for more than three years, which for me is a miracle. I almost never dated before I got into SAA.

We have so much fun and are connected. But I also get to find out that relationships are not easy, and that they require a lot of communication and willingness to admit when I am wrong. A lot of footwork and trial and error

in dating had to happen before I met my partner. I made mistakes along the way in dating but remained open, stayed sober, and tried to listen to my Higher Power and other's advice.

The program has changed my life in all areas. I have the tools today to deal with problems that come up. I don't go into my inner circle when I have problems the way I used to. I could never have done this alone so I am grateful to everyone in SAA who is traveling on this path with me. I keep coming back because I don't want to miss what my Higher Power has in store for me around the next corner.

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.



Lessons of a Slip

A mistake leads to new understanding about healthier sexuality

BY NICOLE S.

Acting out with D. was the most foolish thing I have done since I began my recovery. I told myself that he was a nice guy (famous last words) but in reality I knew enough to know better.

There were all kinds of serious red flags. Still, I felt drawn to him. In my self-deceit I convinced myself that he cared, and that he wasn't going to use me. But really, I knew what I was getting myself into. I am not a victim. Later after talking to my sponsor about my relapse I would ask myself, "What was I thinking? What drew me to this person? Why didn't I just say no?"

I didn't realize at the time that D. was the personification of my powerlessness — and my life was about to get unmanageable. I was attracted to him for what I thought were all the right reasons. He was funny and appeared sensitive. He was a talented storyteller and woodcarver. He

made beautiful carved mushrooms for me. In my fantasies we would have romance.

Nothing could have been further from the truth. He left me bitter and even more lonely than I had been before. Instead of romance, I was left empty. Sex did nothing to assuage my pain.

Afterwards I hated myself and him. I was left asking, “Why did I do something so foolish when I had years in recovery?” I walked out of the relationship with old wounds reopened, questioning my worth.

When I talked with my sponsor about my relapse he urged me to be compassionate with myself. I am glad I took his advice. Through talking with him and my therapist I was able to gain some insight into my behavior. I set about trying to learn from my mistakes.

I found that over the course of my life I had faced a lot of rejection because of my mental illness, my poverty, my being a rape survivor, and being a sex addict. And then I saw the ways I rationalized: I acted out with him because he was a willing partner. He was there and he wanted me.

I told myself that if I didn't jump on this chance there would never be another. I would live out my

Although I wouldn't say I am grateful for my relapse, I am grateful for the opportunity to learn what I want in a relationship.

life totally alone. I went through life believing that I would never be good enough for anyone. When he came into my life I was convinced that this would be the only chance I would ever have to have sex in my life. I didn't have enough self-esteem to be able to imagine myself in a committed caring sexual relationship.

Although I wouldn't say I am grateful for my relapse, I am grateful for the opportunity to learn what I want in a relationship. Armed with some insight into my behavior, I sat down with my sponsor and made a list of all the things I was looking for in a partner.

Then, I gave myself some time. Now with the encouragement of my sponsor and therapist I am pursuing online dating. I have come to understand that I am able

to find a partner who respects me and has the qualities I want and need. I found I wanted to be seen as sexual without having to have sex. I need a partner who accepts me for who I am not what I am willing to do.

Both the man I acted out with and I frequent a local bar. I go there every Saturday night without fail. As I do not have issues with alcohol, I enjoy one or two drinks.

After our relationship ended, I was terrified to go back there (but I did). About one week after I acted out with him, I was there and overheard someone I knew in passing discussing details of my life that I had told only my therapist and him. He had obviously kissed and told. I was hurt.

Then about two months after our relationship ended he was there on a Saturday night. I had stayed sober since acting out with him. I said hello and sat down at the bar the way I always did. I started up a conversation with the female bartender about what drink I should have that night.

While we talked, D. motioned to me to come sit beside him. I ignored him. I was sipping the drink and enjoying it immensely.

Then my trigger walked up and started touching me. He patted

My slip has given me the opportunity to address the underlying feelings of shame and inadequacy that led me to allow myself to be used for sex and to use others.

my head and stroked my back. I cringed. Angry, I pushed his hand away. He didn't take the hint. I wanted him to leave me alone. At one point he said to me, "If you want I can go back to my side of the bar."

"Yes, please do."

He was drunk and ignoring what I was saying. It was one of the longest moments of my life. Some part of me did not want to say no. Some part of me believed I owed him. I looked at the drink and then at him. I decided to stay despite him. I wanted to enjoy my drink. I stood my ground.

This was my hangout and I wasn't going to let him ruin it for me. The back and forth went on for several minutes. I thought, "I don't have to go home with you," I was almost ready to strike him

when the bartender yelled, “Back off mushroom man.” He went back to his side of the bar and left me alone. I enjoyed my drink in peace.

When my relapse happened I found myself back at Step One. I had grown complacent. Even with years in recovery I was still powerless over my addiction. Sex addiction was still cunning baffling and powerful.

I still had the ability and obligation to lead a well-managed life — one in which relationships happened in stages and sex was not out of control. It feels good to be dating.

It has given me an opportunity to address the underlying feelings of shame and inadequacy that led me to allow myself to be used for sex and to use others for sex.

Saying no was hard. But, then, I thought of all the people in my fellowship who cared and how I had learned I could be wanted for more than just sex.

At the end of every SAA meeting we lock hands and say, “because you’re worth it.”

I am deeply grateful to the program and the fellowship for helping me learn that I am worth more than casual sex. 

The Life Raft

By Paul P

*Wavering back and forth
Taken by the tide
Hanging on for dear life
Hoping it will subside*

*Perilous outcome
God size hole to fill
Need to re align
With Higher Power will*

*Survival tentative at best
Grasping on to some ideal
A life raft to the rescue
An inner soul trying to heal.*

*A forgotten past
Turbulence and strife filled
Desperate search for solution
Higher Power instilled.*

*It rescues me from danger
Secures my place for today
Only requirement is faith
A willingness to pray.*

*Recovery as our life raft
Room for more than a few
Sustained hope and gratitude
Seeing ourselves from a different
view.*

*Keeps us afloat
Destination more desired
It won't tip over
An integral recovery so admired.*



Breaking Free

Before recovery, lies
and deceit weighed him
down

BY JACK G.

O

n my first exposure to SAA, I was apprehensive. I wasn't sure why I was there with other guys who seemed to have such incredible problems. My first therapist had told me I needed to attend at least eight meetings before making decisions on what I thought. He also told me to leave my judgmental attitude at the door. Another statement that stuck

with me was, "You don't know how much you don't know. Just listen."

I'm glad I did all of the above. Now, ten months into the SAA program with approximately seventy meetings to date, I have learned that this is just the place I need to be. My story is probably no different than any others, but it is unique to me and life saving for me. Hopefully, my sharing it will pull just one more person deeper into working the Steps and feeling the changes that they can make in your life.

At the time of this writing, I am working on my Fourth Step. Since starting the SAA program in March 2016, I have felt a change in my make-up. I didn't think this program would do anything initially, but I can honestly say it has.

I am like most men with the attitude that I can do this on my own. I've been successful in my work. I can plan, so handling my sex addiction should be no different. But I was wrong. I truly didn't know what I didn't know until I gave in to a Higher Power.

I'm religious, so God was always available to me. But it wasn't until I gave up my attitude, Type A behavior, and nose in the air superiority that I realized what the SAA Twelve-Step Program could do for me.

My inner circle behaviors were typical of many others: Internet pornography, compulsive masturbation, and objectification of women. I had been acting out over a twenty-year period. I was caught by my wife, which was the best thing that could have happened to me. I now had to get on the path to recovery to save my marriage and family, but more importantly, my life.

There are statements in your life that stick with you. Several came from my wife which were, "You were the one person that I had trusted the longest in my life." "How much of our marriage was really true?" "How can I compete with the younger women you have been looking at?"

Thank God my wife has stayed and been supportive in my journey so far. She has emotional meltdowns and flashbacks of my acting out behavior, which pop up when I feel I am making progress, but I have to remember that my wife is re-living those lost years that I was absent.

There are three major words said at every meeting I attend that I now understand more clearly since coming to SAA: Lust Killed Love.

I never loved any Internet videos or pictures. I never loved any sex acts that I viewed online. I never had any love for any of the acting out I did. By lusting after these things, I successfully diminished my understanding of love. I am now learning through recovery how to love and that true love is right next to me in my own home. My wife is true love.

During my acting out, I lied and was deceitful. When I do my check in at the SAA meetings, my greatest inner circle items are the lies and deceit I've used to cover up my addictive sexual behavior. Acting out was now and then, but the lies and deceit were twenty-four-seven.

Recovery is now my twenty-four-seven program. SAA meetings, individual therapy, group therapy, reading, writing, and a return to the church have all been part of my recovery. Rigorous honesty has been a major pillar for me and is noted throughout the SAA program. Taking the weight of lies and deceit off of my shoulders has made me feel lighter. What a beautiful world it is without the constant lying.

My Fourth Step will be completed soon. The feelings I have now are good. Just think how greater things will be with the completion of each of the next steps. As I hear each week, "Sometimes quickly sometimes slowly, but changes will happen if you let them." 

Restored to Sanity



The Steps helped this addict overcome mental illness

BY MYRON G.

The beginning of my addiction was around age 13. I remember plugging in a VCR tape of a movie that had an attractive woman in it, and watching raptly, rewinding and playing over and over. My behavior seemed to be compulsive even then, and it was something I hid from my parents and siblings. I progressed onward to fantasies about a particular girl, which had me in a position of power over her and were sexual in nature. I became obsessed with a different girl for a period of time, until someone new came along. I began masturbating at age 16. It was compulsive, often several times per day, to pornographic magazines.

I would rent videos with (pornographic) content from the local video store often. I became suicidal once school was out, having idle hands and the stirrings of addiction. A friend helped get me a job at a clothing store and it was the best thing that could have happened to me. Finally, during my senior year in high school, I became more active in school events, joined a musical production, joined the choir, copy edited for the school newspaper, and as a result, I went on a few dates rather than hiding in the shadows. The good feelings of connection brought me closer to people at that time.

When I began attending college, I had a difficult time adjusting to the new surroundings and lifestyle. This stress led to a compulsive, daily habit of rifling through dozens, possibly hundreds of pictures via the Internet and masturbating.

I began to notice how I felt shameful after my actions, so I attempted to stop masturbating for a month. After having nocturnal emissions and feeling shameful afterward, I decided that if I was going to feel badly in the end, I might as well enjoy it. Very flawed thinking, but probably it came from the addict.

I had some dates with girls in college, and a much belated first kiss, again due to the stunted relationship development my addiction caused. I had a therapist whom I discussed my lack of female connection with, and agreed to try simply saying hello to two girls a week. Before long, I was going on dates and having some success with dating. However, I didn't know where any of it was going. I was mostly interested in kissing rather than being respectful and getting to know the girls I was seeing.

At one point I was physically involved with one girl in another town, and when I came back to my hometown I began flirting with another woman. I had a lack of boundaries and respect when it came to the dating process.

I dropped out of college and worked full time at a respectable computer company. At that time I began taking an antidepressant and smoking marijuana. The combination created my first manic state. I became hyper-sexual, spent thousands of dollars of saved money, and the addict was in full swing.

I was hospitalized and put on medication, which was difficult to take, as there were drastic side effects. I became depressed. As time went on, I dated some women but found myself with wandering eyes even when I was with someone attractive. At one point I even tried to cheat on one girl, but it fell through. I had sex with a married woman who was drunk one night, showing a serious lack of judgment on my part.

Rock bottom hit when I lived by myself in an apartment and was on disability from my bipolar disorder. I was masturbating and watching Internet pornography videos for eight hours a day.

My will to live was waning. I had unrequited affections for a woman who lived in my apartment building, and when I heard she was going to meet with another guy, I attempted suicide.

Restored to Sanity Continued on page 19



What does moving from shame to grace really mean?

BY STEVIE G.

I am a bit of a nut for acronyms. So when my sponsor gave me an acronym for shame as “Should Have Already Mastered Everything,” it really put me in visceral touch with my own child within who was told at an early age by those he looked up to that I had to “figure it out for myself”.

My small, lost, alone, and scared self eventually did figure it out. By trial and error, I found that certain obsessive thoughts and compulsive sexual behaviors made the pain and fear and deep loneliness go away — at least for a moment.

This eventually became a bit of a problem, growing into an addiction. That caused quite a great deal more pain and suffering than it might have at first relieved. It’s like what my very first sponsor would ask as I would describe to him my inner circle/bottom line behaviors, “How’s that working for you?”

However, if we look at it carefully, as one brother in my Tuesday meeting wisely re-frames the thinking, “Sex addiction wasn’t and isn’t the problem. It was and is the wrong solution.” Thus, I’ve come to define the real

problem – which of course makes it simultaneously the real opportunity for growth – as a lack of connection to myself, to others, and ultimately, to God. It’s a lack of relationship and the overwhelming desire to get there, to get to that state of relational being of connection, of kinship, of oneness by any means necessary.

Shame gets in the way of that connection because it tells us that we are bad. Guilt, a healthier reaction to our sex addiction, tells us instead that the things we’ve done are bad. Guilt takes away some of the loaded moralistic language and reduces it to a mistake we very flawed humans have made and very likely will continue to make. We can admit our mistakes freely, take responsibility for them, make amends, and move on. It’s no coincidence that’s the essence of Step Ten.

So what then does it mean to move from shame to grace? As an acronym lover, I decided to create an acronym answer. And so I came up with “God Radically Accepts Complicated Earthlings”.

If you think about it, this action of grace coming completely out of the blue and acceptance by a Higher Power is truly radical. And there’s really only one word that describes that kind of radical acceptance: Love. 

Restored to Sanity Continued from page 17

Shortly after I recovered from the attempt, I began working a good job for a computer company, and I met a woman whom I started dating. She encouraged my participation in SAA, so I started going.

I found that I was slow to make progress, and the first year seemed to be just going through the motions in some cases. After I got a sponsor, things started turning around. I began to see gradual changes in my behavior. I had the confidence to lead a few meetings, to interact with group members after the meetings, and found the beginnings of recovery taking place.

After four years, my sponsor’s help, attending weekly meetings, doing step work, and starting to believe in a Higher Power, pieces of my life that were missing began coming back to me. I can smile and laugh more easily now, I can see women in public without staring or objectifying. I am interacting with people more often, and am on a much healthier, saner path in life. The life I have in recovery is much easier on my conscience, and is allowing my self-esteem to increase by gradual increments. This program has saved my life one day at a time. 

DEAR WILL

When Should the Circles be Written?

BY WILL

You can come up with your circles before starting your Steps and then rewrite them later with the experience of the program.

Dear Will,

My sponsor wants me to write down my circles. He says that I have to write them before we can proceed with the Steps. I think that once I have done a few of the Steps, I will have the experience to write out my circles. Should I write my circles first, as my sponsor suggests?

Chicken and Egg

Dear C&E,

Will normally goes along with the sponsor, because the sponsor has something the sponsee wanted. However, this time Will thinks that there could be room for compromise.

A slogan that is some years older than SAA is that “the Steps are in the order they are for a reason.” Along those same lines, Will notes that in the Green Book the section on the circles appears before the section on the Steps, just as the section on sponsorship appears before the section on the circles. This ordering (sponsor/circles/Steps) is probably not an accident.

Since each SAA member makes an individual definition of sobriety, it is good to have those definitions set down, in order for members to know what they want to achieve. Also, it is possible to sabotage one’s recovery by taking a particular behavior, which is logically middle circle, such as looking in a particular direction for more than three seconds, and calling it an inner circle behavior. God created sponsors to help sort these things out.

So where is the compromise? Well, C&E, as you progress in the program, you may wish to make changes in your circles. The Green Book (page 16)



says, “our circles are not set in stone for all time,” and that, after time in recovery, “we are free to add or delete behaviors, or move them from one circle to another, in order to reflect new growth and insights.”

Will has found that some things that were initially dangerous for him later became less so, and so could be moved from the middle circle. On the other hand, he has to consider these things prayerfully and get feedback on them from his sponsor or group (also page 16). For example, Will must always abstain from alcohol because, even in small amounts, it serves as an acting-out trigger for him.

In other words, you get to “have your cake and eat it too,” an expression that Will did not understand for decades until he heard it with the words “have” and “eat” reversed. You can come up with your circles before starting your Steps and then rewrite them later with the experience of the program giving you some new insights. I hope this is a solution that both you and your sponsor can live with.

Will

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

STORIES OF SERVICE

Giving Back Has Made All the Difference

BY JIMMY M.

**My addiction
wanted me
isolated and
alone. Service
work connects
me and helps put
me in the middle
of the program.**

I began working the SAA program in earnest when my world came crashing down.

I had been acting out since a young age and, despite arrest and repeated STDs, I could not stop.

That changed the day my wife informed me I had infected her with an STD. Today I identify that encounter as my rock bottom.

At that time I had been attending SAA meetings for 4 years but had never strung together anything more than a month of not acting out.

Hitting bottom gave me the willingness I needed to completely surrender and finally admit I was totally powerless over my addiction. It also brought me to the point where I had the strength to go up to a fellow and ask him to sponsor me.

My sponsor has shown me through example and encouragement that service work is a foundational component to healthy recovery. He has also impressed upon me that the true beneficiary of my service work is me.

I have a career and work obligations, so getting away during the day can be challenging. About a year ago a secretary position became available in my weekday noon SAA home group. I have been in Twelve-Step meetings for over nine years and have never considered stepping up to be a secretary.

On this occasion, however, the group needed a volunteer and my sponsor recommended I step up, so I did. I can say without reservation that having the privilege of being a secretary has played an enormous role in my recovery.



There is something that comes out of the most simple and mundane activities, like setting up a room, making coffee and putting out literature that gives me a sense of involvement and belonging unlike what I get in other areas of my life.

My addiction wanted me isolated and alone. Service work connects me and helps put me in the middle of the program.

Being a meeting secretary is only one of the myriad opportunities I see for service. I see service in the addict who is struggling and shares those struggles during a meeting. I see service in the fellow who stays after a meeting to talk to the newcomer. I

see service in the fellow who attends meetings and is there to listen. To me the key is connection with another addict, and that has made all the difference in my recovery.

Stories of Service are meant to be short articles between 100 words to 300 words that inspire others to be of service in the SAA fellowship. If you have a story of service to share, please send it to portlandsaa@gmail.com

FROM THE BOARD

Meetings Need to be More Inclusive to Women

BY PAUL M.

**If our fellowship
is to have unity
should we
not allow all
members into a
closed meeting?**

We have heard many times that women may be turned away from meetings or discouraged from attending mixed meeting that mainly have men attending.

I have even been guilty in the past, when speaking to woman, of assuming that she might feel more comfortable in a meeting that I know has women attending rather than coming to my home mixed meeting. I feel we men are missing an opportunity and I no longer do that.

In Tradition One we state, “Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on SAA unity.”

But let us break that down into the two sections. First, look at the second half: personal recovery depends on SAA unity. Our fellowship is open to all, regardless of gender identity. Nor do we restrict membership of any sexual orientation.

So if our fellowship is to have unity, should we not allow all members of the fellowship into a closed meeting?

Next, look at the first part: our common welfare should come first. Does our common welfare mean excluding those with whom we are not comfortable, i.e. the opposite sex, LGBT, etc.? I think not.

A diverse meeting tends to be more diverse in thought and fellowship. We can practice lowering our defenses in a mixed supportive group before we do it the “real world.”

There seems to be an argument by many members who say, “my wife says I cannot go to a meeting with women in it.” That may be an issue for some

partners/spouses, but we affirm the understanding that healthy meetings include men, women and transgender individuals in a supportive, loving, trusting atmosphere where our Higher Power is present and that is safer than almost anywhere else in the world.

If there is a question about the stability and sobriety of the group, it is suggested the group take an inventory as suggested in the SAA Group Guide (pg. 30) and also reprinted in *The Outer Circle*, July – August 2016 (pg. 28).

I suggest all members read “Safe and Sexually Sober Meetings – Helping Women Feel Welcome in Your Meeting.” *The Green Book* (pg. 10) says, “Discovering we are not alone is a liberating experience for us. It is a great comfort and relief to know that a fellowship of recovering sex addicts exists and the we have somewhere to turn to help us recover.”

I personally think that men-only and women-only meetings are missing something as well, but hopefully those women and men attend mixed meetings as well.

If we focus on recovery, sobriety and the solution it will help the newcomer feel safer and that there is support for them. The fellowship of recovering sex addicts means to be inclusive, not exclusive.

In Tradition Three, the only requirement is having the desire to stop addictive sexual behavior. In Tradition Five, it is each group’s primary purpose to carry the message.

Based on these Traditions, meeting access should not be restricted based on sexual identity or behavior. If there is only a men’s or women’s group in a local area, please consider converting or starting a mixed group that is open to anyone seeking help and having a desire to stop.

We currently have 1,700 meetings worldwide registered with the ISO. Of those 275 are Men only and 59 are Women only. The rest are Mixed, Boundary or Business.

I am the Chair of the ISO Board of Trustees and this is my humble opinion from my position on the Board but does not necessarily represent the group conscience of the Board as a whole.

I encourage us to keep up the conversation. Please email me or the ISO office with any comments or suggestions.

Paul M.

chair@saa-iso.org

ISO NEWS

Interested in ISO Service? Send Service Resumes to NomCom

In preparation for the 2017 annual meeting of the ISO Conference, the Nominating Committee (NomCom) is asking all members of the fellowship who are interested in serving at the ISO level to complete and submit a service resume. The form may be found on the service website at www.saa-iso.org under the “International Service” link in the left-hand menu.

At the annual meeting of the Conference in Orlando next May, the NomCom will present slates of nominees for election to the Board of Trustees, Literature Committee, and Conference Area Coordinating Committee.

NomCom is seeking potential candidates with solid program experience, long-term sobriety, and an appreciation of the value of active service. In addition, NomCom will strive to nominate candidates who reflect the broad diversity of our fellowship.

Completed service resumes should be emailed to info@saa-recovery.org or mailed to Nominating Committee, ISO, PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270. Deadline for consideration this year is January 26, 2017.

Conference Committee Structure Seeks Fellowship Input, Participation

The Conference Committee Structure Sub-Committee (CCS) of the Conference Steering Committee (CSC) would like to know what is currently working in your area. Do you have committees at your local or intergroup level? If so, what work are members of these committees doing (public information, contact with professionals, literature development, retreats, for example)? As we determine what is already working within the SAA fellowship locally, it can help chart a future course. We especially would like to hear diverse input on how you see future development of committee work within SAA.

As we transition to involvement of more members sharing the work of the fellowship, and having individual members do the work of our program, we invite you to participate. We are looking at work currently being done by the ISO Board and Board Committees — keeping the hand of SAA out to the still suffering sex addict through literature development, area formation, online presence, and many other service projects — and developing ways that more of this work can be accomplished through the energy, input and participation of all members of the fellowship. Our particular area is “How will Conference Committees be constituted and operate in the future?”

We welcome your participation. We offer you three options for contact:

- » You can attend our monthly phone meeting on the third Tuesday of each month at 5pm central time. You can obtain dial-in information by contacting the SAA office at info@saa-recovery.org, or by calling the office at (713)869-4902. We would love to have the input of all SAA members during this time of exciting transitions. All SAA members can participate in our discussions, and current delegates have voting power in any Conference Steering Committee workgroup.
- » If you, or any members of your groups, would like to send written communication, you can do so by sending an email to csc.committeestructure@saa-iso.org or writing to CSC/CCS c/o ISO, P.O. Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270.
- » A third option is to speak in person with a member of the Conference Committee Structure by phone. You can do this by sending an email to: csc.committeestructure@saa-iso.org. Include your phone number and a member will call you to answer questions or listen to your input.

Please pass this information along to all groups and members in your area. Thank you.

SAA Board Actions Include New Individual Donation Guidelines

October Board Actions

- » Approved three-year lease to increase ISO office space.
- » Approved the hotel contract for our 2018 International Convention.
- » Reinstated the Intergroup Communication Committee as an ISO focus committee and approved the scope of work drafted by the Committee.

November Board Actions:

- » Approved the ISO of SAA Inc. 2017 budget.
- » Approved funding for up to eleven Conference Steering Committee (CSC) representatives or alternates for two days of face-to-face meetings prior to the annual delegate meeting of the ISO in 2017 at Orlando, FL, two days of Conference participation at the Conference, and one day for meeting to convene the new CSC. Standard travel reimbursements are requested for seven days (five service days and two travel days) and six nights.
- » Approved funding for up to eleven Literature Committee representatives (which includes the editor of *TOC*) for face-to-face meetings that coincide with the 2017 Conference and Convention. It is also requested that alternates be reimbursed up to a maximum of \$500 per person. There are currently seven alternates. Alternates

ISO ANNOUNCEMENTS

who take the place of a voting member would receive full funding, if the voting member were not able to attend.

- » Approved policy to accept donations that exceed the annual individual donation limit from SAA members who have passed away and left money to the ISO.
 - a) The funds that fall within the annual individual donation limit will be put into the ISO general operating funds.
 - b) The funds that fall outside the annual individual donation limit will be managed by the Board of Trustees.
- » Approved policy that, when the ISO receives a donation from an SAA member that exceeds the annual individual donation limit, the ISO office will deposit any funds that exceed the annual individual donation limit to the GREATER HOUSTON COMMUNITY FOUNDATION and the funds will be allocated to the ISO's Outreach Endowment Fund.

Low Sales, High Expenses Cause \$20,000 Budget Deficit

In the month of November our budget showed a deficit of \$20,301.85. We had budgeted for a deficit of \$5,894.5. The increase in our deficit was due to our sales and donations being below our estimate and our expenses being above our estimate due to the increase wages for the new employee, the rent for our new office space and the payment for our recent audit which was several thousand dollars more than our estimate.

Our gross sales revenue for the SAA Green Book was below our estimate by \$705.96 in November and is below our estimate by \$3,956.99 for the year. For January through November, we are at 96 percent of our estimated SAA Green Book sales.

Our pamphlet and booklet sales revenue was below our estimate by \$1,362.24 for November but has exceeded our estimate by \$943.03 for the year. For January through November, we are at 101.3 percent of our estimated pamphlet and booklet sales.

Our bronze medallion sales revenue was below our estimate by \$130.00 in November and is below our estimate by \$1,265.66 for the year. For January through November, we are at 95.6 percent of our estimated bronze medallion sales.

ISO NEWS

Our total sales revenue for November was below our estimate by \$2,846.23 and is below our estimate by \$7,081.39 for the year. For January through November, we are at 96.9 percent of our estimated sales.

Individual donations exceeded our estimate by \$129.08 for November and have exceeded our estimate by \$14,633.28 for the year. For January through November, we are at 105.9 percent of our estimated individual donations.

Group donations were below our estimate by \$2,441.37 in November and are below our estimate by \$15,528.20 for the year. For January through November, we are at 87.8 percent of our estimated group donations.

Our product inventory is valued at \$42,077.02. Our expenses exceeded our estimate by \$7,514.22 in November but are below our estimate by \$2,762.07 for the year. We are at 99.6 percent of our estimated expenses. Our operational reserve is fully funded.

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. 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.

First Sunday of the month

Nominating 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.

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:

Office

ISO Office Mailing Address:
PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270

Phone: 713-869-4902 -or- 800-477-8191
Fax: 713-692-0105

Office e-mail: info@saa-recovery.org
The Outer Circle e-mail: toc@saa-recovery.org
Website: www.saa-recovery.org

The Outer Circle

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Program Manager : Philip A.: philip@saa-iso.org
Administrative Assistant : Jerry B.: jerry@saa-iso.org
Prisoner Outreach: Jonathan C.: outreach@saa-recovery.org
Administrative Assistant: Harvey A. harveya@saa-iso.org
Publications Manager: Cody S. codys@saa-iso.org

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
BoardGL@saa-recovery.org
LitCom: Vacant; Alternate: Vacant
LitComGL@saa-litcom.org

Intermountain

Board: Bob H.; Alternate: Allan B.
BoardIM@saa-recovery.org
LitCom: Raymond W.; Alternate: Robbie
LitComIM@saa-litcom.org

North Central

Board: Dawn S.; Alternate: Vacant
BoardNC@saa-recovery.org
LitCom: John W.; Alternate: Alice P.
LitComNC@saa-litcom.org

Northeast

Board: Tim A. (Secretary); Alternate: Carl D.
BoardNE@saa-recovery.org
LitCom: Don R.; Alternate: Mike B.
LitComNE@saa-litcom.org

North Pacific

Board: Cliff G.; Alternate: Bob L.
BoardNP@saa-recovery.org

LitCom: Les J.; Alternate: Ben B.
LitComNP@saa-litcom.org

South Central

Board: Paul M. (Chair); Alternate: Mike L.
BoardSC@saa-recovery.org
LitCom: Tracy R.; Alternate: Doug S.
LitComSC@saa-litcom.org

Southeast

Board: John J. (Treasurer); Alternate: CW G.
BoardSE@saa-recovery.org
LitCom: Garret I.; Alternate: Byard B.
LitComSE@saa-litcom.org

Southern Pacific

Board: Antonio B.; Alternate: Wayne B.
BoardSP@saa-recovery.org
LitCom: Carole D.; Alternate: Mark W.
LitComSP@saa-litcom.org

At Large

Board: Lisa S.; Herman J.
BoardAL@saa-recovery.org
LitCom: David M.; Steven P.; Wayne K. Gary T.
(*The Outer Circle* editor)
LitComAL@saa-litcom.org

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.