

THE OUTER CIRCLE

Mapping Out the Steps
Is it time for a sponsorship guide?

PLUS

Beware the '13th Step'

The Sixth Step Shift

Listening for God





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. 30. 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.

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FROM THE EDITOR

The Ultimate Act of Service

BY GARY T.

Rather than being stuck in my own selfishness, self-seeking and self-centeredness, I was able to be there for my mom as she died.

I have a recovery friend who often reminds me that when you really boil it down, all of the steps lead to one place: being of service to others. Even though the Twelfth Step doesn't actually mention the word "service," it's implied in the spiritual awakening it brings that allows us to carry the message of recovery. Practicing "these principals in all of our lives," means that we'll be of service in all of our lives — not just in recovery.

That last point was manifested to me recently when my mom passed away. Losing a loved one is never easy. Losing a parent is life changing. But rather than being stuck in my own selfishness, self-seeking, and self-centeredness, I was able to be there for my mom as she died. I sat with her in home hospice and gave her meds that made her passing more comfortable, and I spoke to her about all the love that surrounded her, despite my own discomfort with watching her die. Once she passed, I helped my dad with funeral arrangements. I gave her eulogy. I wrote her obituary. I was of service.

Just like service work in recovery, none of these acts felt like a burden. They felt like gifts — gifts that helped me to make peace with her passing, process my grief, and make space for the complicated mix of emotions it unearthed.

My service work also provided gifts to my family. I was able to be present for my dad and each of my five siblings in a way I never could have been without recovery. The step work I had done helped me to finally let go of the mother I wished I'd had and accept the mother I actually had. My service helped them to do the same. It's the most powerful service I've ever done, and it's made the most profound loss of my life not just bearable, but somehow beautiful.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Translation Project Seeks Foreign Language Speakers

BY CODY S.,
PUBLISHING MANAGER

While basic fluency is necessary, you do not need to be an expert in the other language or have translation credentials.

Earlier this year, you may have read in *The Outer Circle* about our effort to translate SAA literature into more languages. Currently, we have a substantial amount translated into Spanish and one pamphlet is translated into French.

Since January, many SAA members have volunteered to be on language translating committees. These committees will act as advisors to professional translators. They will help ensure that the SAA message is being carried accurately, precisely, and consistently from one language to another.

By the time this issue is printed, we should be moving forward with translations of the Green Book and the website into one or two new languages. Other languages will follow in the upcoming months.

Regarding the website, since we are in the middle of a redesign, the Information Systems and Online Presence Committee has determined which pages on the new website constitute the “core message” that we wish to have translated. These are high priority pages that are geared towards helping the newcomer seeking recovery. All content can currently be translated using automated software such as Google Translate. However, accuracy, precision, and consistency often suffer when using these programs.

We are always looking for new volunteers, so if you know another language, or you know of another member who is bilingual, please consider donating your time and talent. While basic fluency is necessary, you do not need to be an expert in the other language or have translator credentials. We are currently looking to move forward with Italian, Arabic, French, and Portuguese. If you know one or more of these languages, please consider joining our team. For more information, contact Cody S. at codys@saa-iso.net.

DEAR GRACE

Navigating Relationships in Recovery

BY WOMEN'S
OUTREACH
SUBCOMMITTEE

Too many women, especially early in recovery, get bogged down in gossip and drama, and forget they are in the program to work the steps.

Dear Grace,

I am friends with some of my “sobriety sisters” (those with whom I share the same sponsor), but there is now conflict between one of them and my sponsor.

I feel uncomfortable because they are both people I care about. How do I handle this situation?

—**Caught in the Middle**

Dear Caught:

It’s often a sign of great progress in recovery when I begin to care honestly about other people. In my addiction, I frequently didn’t care much about others; my past is littered with broken and discarded relationships, including friendships.

Congratulations, then, on your progress, and welcome to a new challenge of recovery: how to navigate personal relationships and set boundaries. As I said in an earlier column, I learn what is my business and what is not-my-business.

What’s going on with your sponsor and her other sponsees is not your business. You can simply continue to care about and talk to both of them. Refrain from talking about either of them to the other.

This is always a good rule and especially important now. Too many women, especially early in recovery, get bogged down in gossip and drama, and forget that they are in the program to work the steps.

Always remember the point of sponsorship: “most importantly, sponsors guide us through the Twelve Steps” (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 13). “Sobriety sisters” and support networks, outreach calls, etc. are all just tools I have added.

(By the way, many of us define “sobriety sisters” as all women in recovery. One reason is that the definition of the term, as in your question, implies a “motherly” role for your sponsor, which is not always helpful, and can create “sibling” rivalry.)

These tools should be used when they are helpful and set aside when they are not. If I cling to them, they can hamper recovery as often as they support recovery.

So what does it mean to work the steps in this circumstance?

First, focus on yourself and your step work. Stay out of what is not your business. Second, remember that the Twelve Steps “provide basic principles for living. Most of us find opportunities on a daily basis to apply one or more of the steps to some challenge in my life” (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 22).

For example, in this situation, Step One could be adapted to remind me that I am powerless over others and



can't manage their thinking, feelings, or actions.

In this way, it is possible to use the principles in the Twelve Steps to recover from addictive sexual behavior and to “guide us in the everyday challenges of life” (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 61).

Best wishes to you on this part of your recovery journey,

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.*

LIVING IN SOBRIETY

Discovering Healthier Connections in Recovery

BY FRANK D.

The Fellowship taught me I have much more to offer than sex. It has been worth it to remain sober just to keep enjoying those connections.

Today, I have 19 years of sobriety from my acting out behaviors, and I feel deeply connected with others. But I spent much of my life thinking of myself as a loner; “introvert” is the more politically correct term nowadays.

I considered myself an introvert long before I became aware of being a sex addict. I would come home from school and go directly to my room, coming downstairs only for supper. My excuse was that I had lots of studying to do. But even before my addiction caught on, I was living in my own fantasy world. Part of the reason for keeping to myself was that I couldn't bear being around my dysfunctional family.

Nevertheless, I did have opportunities to engage socially in high school and college. One of my elementary school teachers asked me to help him with a high school team he coached. I did this for my entire three years of high school.

As much as I couldn't wait to get away from my family after graduating high school and going to university, I was also afraid of the unknowns of dorm life. I remember staying in my dorm room but leaving the door open in hopes that somebody would come in and talk to me.

I eventually discovered the thrill of a new connection: quasi-anonymous sex. I didn't see the fact that these folks weren't part of my regular social life as a drawback — quite the opposite. I also didn't realize the disadvantages to these sorts of connections. I lost interest in connecting with people with whom sex wasn't a possibility.

Worse, these connections were not as satisfying as I imagined they would be. Most of my partners

had no interest in pursuing any sort of relationship with me outside of the sex, and I couldn't maintain any ongoing relationship with them. Still, I was living the life I thought I wanted.

I was basically a total loner when I came to the doors of SAA. If I got to a meeting early enough, I chose a seat that had empty seats around it. I didn't go out for fellowship after the meetings. I was, in essence, repeating my same behaviors from high school and college.

And yet, buried beneath those behaviors were the same hopes for connection that I subconsciously harbored when I was younger. I would hope that somebody would come and sit next to me, just as when I left my door open at the dorm. Almost always somebody would end up sitting next to me; and Higher Power always brought me the person I most needed to talk to that evening.

Even though I didn't think I was good enough to go out to fellowship with the others after meetings, I found a niche in service work, the same niche I found with the athletic team in high school. That service work helped me learn how to connect with others. I continued to come out of my shell and get to know others, and not just haphazardly or only through service work.

I remember celebrating at a birthday meeting in another twelve-step program and hearing several folks mention how

shy I was. It caught me by surprise that people were mistaking my naturally quiet demeanor for shyness. Finally, somebody said, "Frank's not shy at all. He's the first one to go up to the newcomer and introduce himself."

When I began to write this article, the theme was going to be "service work keeps me sober." However, I have come to realize that service work is the way Higher Power taught me to connect with others. Those connections in turn taught me that I had much more to offer others than sex — what a concept! It has been worth it to remain sober just to keep enjoying those connections.

Now I am on the verge of proposing marriage to somebody I have known through recovery for more than ten years. The answer may be "yes" or it may be "no" — and, yes, I am scared. Either way, even considering marriage is something I never thought would ever happen to me.

Step One says, "We admitted we were powerless over addictive sexual behavior — that our lives had become unmanageable." Thus we're told at the very beginning that this is a "we" program. I have found a lot of comfort in that "we."

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



Beware the '13th Step'

Why experienced members pursuing newcomers quickly becomes unhealthy

BY LISA S.

T

he act of “Thirteenth Stepping” is when a more experienced member of a twelve-step group pursues a relationship with a member that is usually new to the program. It may start out innocent, but it becomes predatory in nature if it progresses into exploiting the vulnerability of someone struggling with sobriety. I would argue that more experienced

members who engage in this behavior have already lost their sobriety, at least in our fellowship.

Thirteen Stepping happens in every type of twelve-step recovery program. It is not gender specific or associated with any sexual orientation. It can happen between two members or between a sponsor and sponsee.

As a woman, I find myself in the minority in SAA. This has given me a different perspective on Thirteenth Stepping — and made me more vulnerable to becoming a victim of it. To start with, it was significantly more difficult to find a sponsor. I asked a few male members whom I felt safe with, but they had legitimate reasons to say no. I tried other types of meetings without luck.

Eventually a male member approached me and said he would be my temporary sponsor and that we could meet for coffee and talk. He told me he needed to read his Fifth Step to someone and that may be a great start to our sponsor/sponsee relationship.

I consider myself fairly intelligent and self-aware, but I didn't understand the implications of his proposal. I was new to the program, and I hadn't really accepted Step One yet. I didn't have a Higher Power, and I hadn't really dug into the Green Book, even though it was given to me the first night I walked through the door. At that point, I was in survival mode — raw, scared, and vulnerable.

At the first meeting with my new sponsor, he read me his so-called Fifth Step. It was more of a rant about his parents and his life. There was always drama.

Within a week, I received a text, telling me that his wife had left him. He was drunk and wanted company. Nothing happened, because I said no... well nothing physically that is. I was devastated. How dumb was I to not see this? How could he do this?

The next day brought apologies, excuses, and begging for forgiveness. I acquiesced (co-dependency is one of my shortcomings). Members from the meeting told

me to be careful with further communication. My therapist, on the other hand, said no communication — I had to end it, no explanation, no discussion. As a co-dependent this was one of the hardest things to do. My needs always came last. Taking care of me by hurting someone else was not acceptable.

I followed through and I ended the relationship. What followed was a barrage of texts:

- » How I was the horrible one abandoning him.
- » What had happened was no big deal.
- » He wouldn't have done anything if I had shown up.
- » I was being childish and selfish.

He's never returned to the program and if the last chance encounter says anything, he still blames me. Let's just say that looks could kill, I wouldn't be writing this.

I don't feel bad for how I handled it. My sobriety is more important than anyone's feelings. I pray for him, and I hope that he finds sobriety.

Now for the other side.

Unfortunately, just because it happened to me doesn't mean I haven't been guilty of similar behavior. I have never Thirteenth Stepped

anyone, but I did flirt with a new member over an extended period of time. I got something from the attention he gave me — a connection, worthiness, etc.

One evening, I created a need for this man to share his phone number. Another member who witnessed this exchange verbalized his concerns. I ignored them. However, we both agreed to delete each other's numbers after thirty-six hours.

In both of these cases — my sponsor and the man I flirted with — there was no sexual relationship. But it does happen, and the effects can be devastating.

First of all, there is the loss of sobriety for both members. If the victim doesn't say anything and just leaves, then others will most likely be targeted. If the victim does say something, he or she may be blamed or alienated. The experienced member may also be alienated. Then there is the loss of trust and safety in the fellowship, both of which are at a premium price to begin with.

I want to address the natural argument that it's two consenting adults who can make their own decisions. This is not always the truth. When members are new or struggling with sobriety, they are vulnerable, searching for any kind

Spending time alone with another addict should only be done with someone who is not a threat to your sobriety.

of stability. A more experienced member who appears to have the answers can gain their trust, manipulating them into doing things they might not do otherwise. When the victim begins to question the relationship, there is shame. There can even be threats to keep the victim quiet. Many members of our fellowship have histories of sexual abuse. Being violated in this manner can trigger memories of previous trauma.

Commingleing in a group is okay, even healthy. It provides a safe environment to learn how to relate to others — especially the opposite sex. Spending time alone with another addict, however, should only be done with someone who is not a threat to your sobriety.

In my experience, both personal and as an observer, I don't believe men and women should sponsor each other. It is a very slippery slope. I will also say that those in the LGBT community should find sponsors who are safe as well.

Why?

Because with every sponsor/sponsee there is a teacher/student relationship. A sponsee looks to, trusts in, and depends upon his or her sponsor for guidance and answers. If a sponsor is not constantly being kept in check, it is easy to begin to rationalize and justify behavior. This is where their sobriety becomes shaky — and both are at risk.

We all need a sponsor and accountability partners. But if you're not sober or if you're newly sober, you shouldn't be sponsoring someone. You should be finding a sponsor and working the steps.

As part of this fellowship, be aware of what is going on. When you see something that doesn't feel/ seem right, say something. Don't bury your head and say it's none of your business. The people in this fellowship are your family. Protect them; stick up for them, like you would your own.

Lastly, the only reason I have a healthy relationship with my boyfriend is because I learned to have healthy relationships with the men and women in this program. We can learn a lot from each other in the right setting, with the right boundaries, and the right motivations.

Recovery Muscle

By Paul P.

*Before recovery there wasn't much strength,
Barely alive as addiction took its toll
So powerless I have admitted,
It tried to destroy my soul.*

*Practicing principles on a daily basis
Keeps recovery muscle ever so strong
The more I stay in the solution,
My days will be long.*

*Inside meetings recovery thinking sinks
in
Addict doing push-ups outside the door
Making me go down that familiar path
But recovery has so much in store.*

*Before as I was weak,
I lacked faith and even hope
Easy to get off track
Going down that slippery slope.*

*Recovery muscle gets developed
Through meetings, steps and action
Greater than what I felt before
The reward is life's satisfaction.*

*A power greater than myself,
From a belief learned in Steps Two and
Three
Flexing my recovery muscle,
At last I cry "I am Free."
The hope, the promises that I know*

*Change felt from the inside out
I am strong in recovery,
Practicing it, I am devout.*

Mapping Out the Steps



Is it time for an SAA Sponsorship Guide?

BY KRISTEN W.

I recall that night in the park so well — the dark sky, the trees, the tears that streamed, my knees hitting the ground in surrender, and, of course, my shaky voice as I prayed for help. This is the sort of beautiful experience one may have when first surrendering sex addiction. However, this was not the case for me.

Instead, I was nine months free from inner circle behavior, prayed to my Higher Power, had a homegroup, and was active in service work. But I also had a sponsor with whom I was not actually working the steps even though we talked regularly. All the while, my internal condition was getting a little worse with every day that passed.

On the night I finally broke, I realized that it did not matter how many outreach calls I made, or how many meetings I attended. If I did not work the steps with a sponsor, I would fall back into active addiction once more.

I am very happy to report that I did find a way out, and, God willing, I am celebrating 18 months free from acting out as of this writing. What's more, I have been granted a reprieve from my obsession. This freedom has come from working with a sponsor to work the Steps, just as our Green Book promises.

However, it has been my experience that the road to finding the solution, even long after finding our fellowship, is not always an easy one. Soon after that night in the park I embarked on a search for new sponsorship — or as I understand it today, someone to guide me through the Twelve Steps. I started with the grace list, then the phone meetings, since there was no woman able to sponsor in my face-to-face meeting.

On my search, I found people who were sober for a significant period, but who were not ready to sponsor. I found those who held a belief much like my first sponsor that working the Twelve Steps for the first time should take multiple years. I also found many people who do sponsor but only out of another S-fellowship's literature.

One day I was continuing my search and my hopes began to build as I talked to a member who seemed promising at first — until she stated that she sponsors using the Bible and would require a very specific definition of sobriety from me. Then I began to wonder if I was reading the same Green Book as these members.

A friend from my homegroup rang soon after and let me vent. Then he asked me what I was going to do. I responded with, "I'm just going to keep trying." Before I fell asleep that night, I prayed a simple prayer, asking God for the right sponsor. It wasn't

long until that sponsor came into my life, and I have been much relieved.

I am so in love with our Green Book and our fellowship, which is nothing short of miraculous. Recently I have embarked on my own journey in sponsorship and have been left with the question of how to best carry the message of SAA. Is there a way to make the load the newcomer must carry any lighter?

One possible answer was given to me at this year's international convention. During the convention, I took part in a conversation about an SAA Step Guide that consolidates the wonderful message of our Green Book.

This task means a great deal to me personally because of the people like me who may be willing to sponsor but are unsure of what that work entails. Many members believe a step guide would help sponsorship as whole — and present a more consistent view of our program to the newcomer.

Many members including myself are also in favor of having many different guides within the same book. I love this idea because it honors the ever growing ways we recover, while still respecting Tradition Six, which states we ought never endorse any outside organizations.

Those of us who have found a way out, let us write down our own experiences, and unite in our common solution. ●

Making the Sixth Step Shift



How to make the change from a me-centered life to a God-centered life

BY DAVE R.

O

ur fellowship has multiple ways of working Step Six, “Were entirely ready for God to remove all these defects of character.” I like to wait a while after having a sponsee do a Fifth Step presentation. Why? Because a common reaction to doing a Fifth Step is the feeling that “I can do this. I can change how I have been making decisions.”

Step Six includes a discovery that we cannot. Oh, yes, for some items on our moral inventory, doing the Fifth Step frees us up so that we are able to change them. But for a number of items, it doesn't.

The other reason for waiting is that there are subtleties to Step Six and Step Seven that are not immediately obvious. When a sponsee is unable to comprehend the differences between one step and the next, they can often benefit from spending more time trying to live the previous steps. That extra time helps them get the experiential framework in which to comprehend the next step. This is one big reason why the steps need to be worked in the order they are written.

I have heard people express confusion between Steps Four and Six. In my

experience, there are three major differences between Step Four and Step Six. First, Step Four is about past behavior; Step Six is about today's choices. Second, Step Four is a moral inventory — it is listing the moral decisions; Step Six is about why we make those choices. Third, Step Four is focused on ourselves; Step Six is the start of a change in focus towards others.

The first question a lot of sponsees have is “what is a ‘character defect’?” Here are four ways to help the sponsee identify their character defects.

1. Explore how they are unable to change certain patterns of moral decisions. Even when they want to change what they do, they keep on making the same choices. Those patterns are driven by the character defects and helping them see that is a big step forward.

2. Examine any problems with relationships. When loved ones or bosses or others are able to “push their buttons,” it's another clue to a character defect. Talking a sponsee “down off the ceiling” can include pointing out the signs to a character defect.

3. Look at lists of character defects and ask which ones fit. For example, there are famous lists of seven character defects. I have found it can help to look both at those and the mirror opposites. We

can ask not just if greed is in one's life, but also the compulsive giving to others and not having proper boundaries with others.

4. Reread Step Four. Then ask them what character defect are at work and whether that defect is still in their life.

Step Six is not just about discovering these character defects, but also about wanting them out of our lives. One way to help a sponsee in this is to ask them to write down all the costs they and their loved ones have had because of this character defect. We need to know that these character defects have real costs. Boasting about one's character defects is “staying in the problem, not the solution.”

Steps Six and Seven are very clear: we are unable to change our character defects by ourselves. Many character defects exist only in interactions with others and can only be changed from outside ourselves.

Step Six does not end with a clear benefit. There isn't a “here is the good you just got from working this step.” It leaves us off balance for a good reason. It is part of the shift from looking just at ourselves to looking outside of ourselves. The rest of the Steps are focused on our interactions with other people. By working Step Six, the sponsee starts to look forward to the rest of the steps. ●

Shut Up and Listen



Sometimes you have to stop talking to really hear your Higher Power

BY ALIZA P.

You know the feeling when you tell sponsors about something you did or said — or wanted to do or say — and they're silent? You wait a few seconds, a few more seconds ... silence. And for those of you who meet with your sponsors over the phone, like I do, it's like, "Hello? Hello? Are you still there?"

"Yes, I'm here,"

"Oh," you say. "I just wasn't sure, because you know, it just got really quiet all of a sudden and I had just told you about the way I..." and you trail off because you realize she hadn't been disconnected. She knows what you told her. She chose to remain silent. And then it's quiet on the phone line again. Too quiet.

So you begin to notice the sounds all around you — the birds chirping, the hum of the AC next door, and then, as if it just materialized out of nowhere, a loud tick, tick, tick of the clock behind your head. It is so loud, it drowns out the birds and the AC. You're concentrating so hard on the ticking of that clock that you jump a good few inches when the voice on the other end of the line finally speaks up.

“Aliza, what do you need to do now?” I don’t know about you, but when that happens, I feel a ridiculous amount of tension leave my body. My shoulders relax, my head clears, and once more, I can hear the birds chirping faintly outside my window as I consider what I need to do.

The Big Book comes out, the inventory is opened on my computer, the serenity prayer, the Third Step prayer, the resentment prayer... the moment of insanity has passed. I’m back in working order, restored by a silence and a voice that hasn’t said much, but has told me everything I needed to hear.

This connection with other members is vital because sometimes I wonder about this God idea. Really, I do. And I can get frustrated, even angry. I mean, how in heaven’s name am I supposed to know what to do in tough situations when God doesn’t talk? Yeah, “Thy will be done” and all that, but how am I supposed to know what “thy will” is?

So instead of sitting down for a serious one-on-one with God, I make outreach calls. I’m not sure why the first person I call is always a newcomer. Maybe it’s the recovery in me jumping to do service. Maybe not.

Then I call my recovery contemporaries. They usually do a good

job commiserating, validating, and telling me I can call them any time. That’s always a nice thing to hear. I still don’t know what to do. Finally, all my easier options exhausted, I call those people who’ve been around for a while, the people who have a significant amount of sobriety, the people who made me want to stick around this program in the first place. And inevitably, without fail, the first question is always, “Well, have you prayed about it?” I don’t even know why I bothered to call. I could have predicted that.

“All right, all right. I guess I’ll pray about it.”

So I hang up the phone. I sigh. And I ask God what He wants me to do. And it’s silent. I wait a few seconds, a few seconds more, a few more... Hello? God? Are you still there? I hear the birds chirping outside, the hum of the AC next door, and then I begin to hear that ticking clock. I swear, it never makes noise any other time. Tick, tick, tick ...

But wait. I’ve been here before. I know this feeling. I know what happens next. And then I hear His voice, “Aliza, what do you need to do now?” And the tension eases. My shoulders relax, my head clears, and somehow, I know what to do.

What can I say? I guess God’s a good sponsor. ●

DEAR WILL

Inner or Middle Circle? How to Decide

BY WILL

The goal of the program is not to come right up to the edge of acting out and then not do it, but rather to develop activities and attitudes consistent with sobriety.

Dear Will:

I'm back in SAA after being away for a while. The last time didn't "take," and I'm hoping to do better this time. I'm putting together my circles, and I'm trying to decide whether to put a couple of things in my inner circle or middle circle. Do you have any suggestions?

Inner or Middle

Dear IoM:

Congratulations on your return. Will is also a re-tread. His second time in SAA was the charm and he hopes that your second time is as well.

Will is an old-timer, and his first time in SAA was just before the organization came up with the circles. In fact, when he came back to SAA after being away for about a year, it was another member, and not his sponsor, who told him about the circles. Basically, the inner circle is the behaviors that a member wants to avoid completely, the behaviors that count as losing one's sobriety if one engages in them.

When Will was first setting up his circles, he realized his perfectionism was going to get in the way. He knew his tendency to establish strict categories, to make everything either inner circle or outer circle, was going to keep him from establishing any sort of sobriety. So he had to find some sort of happy medium, and that happy medium was—surprise—the middle circle.

So for Will the middle circle was those behaviors that could lead him to the inner circle, even though they weren't inner-circle behaviors themselves. As it says in the SAA pamphlet "The Three Cir-

cles,” “Similarly our ‘inner circle’ in SAA consists of that behavior which we deem equivalent to the first ‘drink.’” So hanging out in a place where that first “drink” could be had was one thing, and actually having the first “drink” was quite another.

So, for Will, these places, even though they may have objectively been “safe” places for others, were not safe places for Will. Still, if he went there, he could leave, and if he hadn’t gone to the acting-out behaviors represented by such places, then he had not broken his sobriety.

Of course, IoM, the goal of the SAA program is not to come right up to the edge of acting-out and then not do it, but rather to develop activities and attitudes consistent with sobriety, and over time this is what Will began to do. He started to substitute healthy activities for his former middle-circle activities, and these activities went into his outer circle.

So, to come back to your question, it is important to establish first what your actual inner-circle activities are. If one of those, for example, is anonymous sex, then the corresponding middle-circle behavior might be to engage in cruising behaviors. There are those who would put the cruising in the inner-circle



also; the problem with that is that once one starts cruising, then it is easy to go from there to saying, “Well, I may as well go through with it, since I have to take a chip anyway.” That is why it is so important to draw a clear line between inner-circle and middle-circle behaviors.

Of course, the bottom line in all questions such as this is to check with your sponsor, both when you are setting up your circles and once again when you contemplate changing them. Your sponsor, who knows you better than most folks in the program, will be best-equipped to help you in this regard.

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

To Keep What You Have, Give it Away

BY DARREN F.

What a difference
in my spiritual
connection once
I started working
with new comers
through the
Steps.

Recovery literature and my sponsor have told me that if you want to keep what you have, you have to give it away. From day one, I had the sense that I was going to have to try to help others if I went down this Twelve-Step road. Seven years later, giving “it” away is a foundation of my recovery. It is a privilege to serve this fellowship at any level.

Maybe it’s setting up chairs, opening the meeting room, reading the opening literature, sharing in a meeting, calling the new comer, sponsorship, intergroup, ISO service, or any number of things. If you work the program and serve the fellowship, there is a good chance of happy, contented, and long-term sobriety.

My sponsor volunteered me for my first job. “Stand at the door and welcome all the people,” he said, pointing to the door. I’d been having a few bad decades up to this point so doing just about anything other than acting out gave me something to be excited about. My sponsor and the group knew this. I was grateful to be useful. I went home and told my wife that I got to be a greeter and that I had made some new friends. I stayed sober that night. I immediately started to feel a part of that group even though I was only a few days into the fellowship. I remember the bear hugs I received from some of these members even though I didn’t think I deserved to feel that loved. Today I know I do.

As I progressed through all the steps and a spiritual awakening occurred, my sponsor suggested more responsibility. It was pretty simple. I just had to do what he was doing or had done. Monkey see; monkey do. I can play this game. I signed up for our month-long facilitator role, leading the

group through the literature we were studying. “This was ‘my’ group now,” I exclaimed to myself. We started on time and ended on time. We upheld the group conscience decisions. I felt a sense of ownership and belonging. Not once did I leave without being so excited to be a part of this wonderful fellowship and lifesaving program. I continued to stay sober those nights.

In my homegroup the sponsors will stand to show any new members who is available to help them through the steps. Having had the experience myself, my sponsor nudged me (grabbed me and pulled me to my feet) and said, “It’s time to give this thing away brother. What do you say we find some sex addicts to help?” I stayed sober that night.

Today, I believe that in order to get recovery, you have give it away. What a difference in my spiritual connection once I started working with new comers through the Steps. Amazing! My primary purpose is crystal clear.

My world today is large, personal, and full of men and women in this fellowship who allow me the privilege of service. A guy like me. Amazing. My prayer is that serving others will become or continue to remain an essential part of each of your journeys. May it lead to living a happy and fulfilled life!

Secretary, treasurer, group service representative, intergroup rep, intergroup chair, outreach chair, ICC member, Intergroup Communication Committee chair. What a ride it has been! I haven’t been bored once in seven years.

I have a disease that demands treatment on day 2,555 just like it did on day one. I love treating it with a dose of service to others in the fellowship. If there is one thing I’ve learned in these years, it is that when I start to care about you, I start to get cared for. Another sober day.

Members of my home group like to joke that we have a front row seat to the greatest show on earth. Watching people recover and serving others is an experience you don’t want to miss.

Service! The fellowship of SAA needs you. I need you. The new comer about to walk in your meeting needs you. What are you doing for the person still suffering? If you need some ideas, ask your sponsor. If you don’t have one, get one!

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 toc@saa-recovery.org

FROM THE BOARD

Do All SAA Groups Carry the SAA message?

BY MIKE L.

A recent development within our community makes it useful to re-examine this question.

I take it for granted that the literature the ISO carries is almost exclusively SAA literature. Such was not always the case; it took several delegate motions over the years before the office began principally carrying SAA literature.

While the push toward this change seemed silly to me at first, today I understand more why it matters. To paraphrase Tradition Five, carrying the SAA message to the still-suffering sex addict is the primary purpose of each group.

However, there are SAA groups who, in my judgment (and I am speaking for myself and not necessarily the entire Board), do not carry the SAA message as part of their primary purpose.

It is possible to find, on the ISO website, a subgroup of SAA groups who organize their meetings according to the principle that, “The Big Book of AA is the only place we find the precise instructions for working the Steps.”

Without addressing the accuracy of this statement, I ask, nevertheless, if fellowships who do not deal with recovery from sex addiction can give us instructions, precise or otherwise, on how to recover from our addiction using the Steps? I question whether a group can legitimately call itself SAA but principally use another fellowship’s literature.

The question may seem inconsequential; it is only a handful of meetings, after all. Also, for many years before we had a decent-sized body of our own literature, we often used AA litera-

ture in our meetings, “translating,” sometimes less successfully than others, certain words and phrases so they applied to sex addiction instead of alcoholism.

So, what is the big deal now? A recent development within our community makes it useful to re-examine this question.

Recently a number of s-fellowship groups changed their affiliation and became SAA groups. I have heard that some of these groups still use the literature from their fellowship, although it is also known that some of these groups at least supplement that literature with SAA (and AA) literature.

One question this state of affairs brings up is that of group autonomy. However, what really concerns me is the dilution of the SAA message. Have we set a precedent for a more diluted SAA message by allowing under the SAA umbrella groups who base their recovery program on that of AA?

Does this make it easier for groups from other fellowships to come into SAA but still keep their prior literature since, after all, “That other group isn’t using SAA literature”? To repeat, does the existence of

these groups within SAA tend to dilute our message?

As a member of AA, I understand that it is not feasible to suggest, for example, that an SAA group primarily using AA literature change its affiliation to AA, but indicate that the group’s focus is sex addiction, similar to the way we have SAA groups who focus on sexual anorexia. Still, within that or a similar scenario may exist the solution to this dilemma.

I don’t have the answers. I’m merely asking the questions. However, especially because of these recent developments, I think that these are questions that members of the fellowship will be increasingly asking.

I want to see us continue to respect group autonomy and, at the same time, I ask our groups and the fellowship as a whole to think about the question of the simplicity of the SAA message when it comes to determining how the meetings are conducted.

Editor’s note: if you have opinions about this article please send letters to the editor of between 150 words to 250 words to toc@saa-recovery.org

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

***Editor's Note:** The July-August '17 From the Editor column, "Does Using AA Material Violate the Traditions?" generated numerous letters to the editor. There was only room for a sampling of them in this issue. Please watch for further letters in the next issue.*

SAA and AA Literature Can Co-Exist

This letter is regarding whether SAA should stop using the AA Big Book, and consider it as "outside" literature.

I don't believe it's a good idea for SAA to get away from anything foundational or fundamental. And I think the Big Book of AA is exactly that: it is foundational to our program; it is the origin of all Twelve-Step recovery programs.

I think it's similar to how we grow and mature as people, eventually trying to break out of our parents' shadow and find our own way. But as we mature, we'd better not get away from foundational, fundamental principles like healthy eating, brushing our teeth, and bathing.

Using the Big Book shouldn't violate our Steps or Traditions. Consider: (1) Our Steps and Traditions are copied almost word-for-word from the Big Book; (2) Numerous sex addicts have recovered through the use of the Big Book alone. Along with our SAA literature, the Big Book is extremely helpful.

Let's stop using therapy-based, non-twelve-step literature; but let's embrace the Big Book of AA. Let's embrace its Steps and Traditions, its stories and examples, and its wonderful promises. Let's keep the baby while we throw out the bathwater.

Keith G.

Removing AA Literature References 'Grudgingly Welcomed'

First, I am an old-timer, born into SAA before there was the Green Book, and an advocate of using the borrowed material that comes from the AA Big Book. However, I know it is inevitable that newer members, who did not first fall in love with AA materials, but instead fell in love with the brilliant wisdom of our own basic text, will someday extricate all Big Book quotations from our meetings. It will be a sad day for me, but I understand it and grudgingly welcome it. A new broom sweeps clean; new leadership keeps our fellowship young.

What I do object to, however, is people going around decrying the AA texts, but

LETTERS/ISO NEWS

writing new stuff to simply use different words to say the same thing, copying the AA content and style as closely as possible. In particular, I've heard that there are new "SAA Promises" that are going around and being touted as the "homegrown replacement" for the AA Promises. Effectively, this is copying AA while at the same time saying we don't want to have anything to do with them.

We don't need new promises. We have promises, which are Literature Committee and Conference approved! Maybe some of the people who decry use of the AA materials should read our own materials more closely. We can use them today and honestly say that they are official. No, they do not look like a numbered one through twelve copy of the AA paragraph from the Ninth Step of AA, that many groups still use at SAA meetings. But they are promises that come from our Ninth Step, and relate better to our own disease rather than to someone else's disease.

Let's stop trying to rewrite what already exists, and let's stop trying to toss out AA altogether while mimicking them at every step. Our book is worthy on its own, and not as a copy of AA.

Dan B.

Board Approves Columbus and Atlanta for 2020/'21 Conventions

Here's a look at Board of Trustee actions from the 2017 Conference and beyond.

May

- » Approved holding the first Conference in 2018 and the second Conference in 2019 on the 2nd weekend in October.
- » Approved holding face-to-face board meetings on Wednesday and Thursday, delegate conference on Friday and Saturday, and a board meeting on Sunday morning for next two Conferences (2018 and 2019).
- » Adopted a policy and communication on Teen Meetings Committees.
- » Approved motion to have Columbus host the 2020 Convention and Atlanta to host the 2021 International Convention of SAA.

July

- » Approved increase per issue pay for *The Outer Circle* editor from \$500 per issue to \$1,000 per issue.

ISO NEWS

Conference Motions Approved in Orlando

- » Change ARTICLE IV, Section 10 of the ISO of SAA, Inc. bylaws to read: “The Board of Trustees shall ensure financial oversight of ISO of SAA, Inc. by engaging a CPA firm, not associated with any member of SAA, to provide an audit or financial review to provide assurance on the ISO of SAA, Inc. financial statements on an annual basis. The Board may also request an audit or financial review when a principal employee whose position includes significant, independent handling of ISO finances leaves the organization.”
- » The ISO Conference rescinded Conference Approval from First Step to Recovery – A Guide to Working the First Step.
- » The ISO Conference rescinded Conference Approval from Abstinence and Boundaries in SAA – Tools for Recovery.
- » Beginning in 2018, motions for consideration at the annual meeting of the ISO Conference must be submitted no later than June 30 preceding the October annual meeting of the Conference.

July Deficit Less than Expected; Green Book Sales on Target

In the month of July we had a deficit of \$6,325.98. We had budgeted for a deficit of \$6,100.00. We exceeded our budget by \$225.98

Our gross sales revenue for the SAA Green Book was below our estimate by \$467.31 in July. For the year we are at 96.4 percent of our estimated SAA Green Book sales.

Our pamphlet and booklet sales were below our estimate by \$1,761.04 for July. For the year we are at 98.5 percent of our estimated pamphlet and booklet sales.

Our bronze medallion sales were below our estimate by \$30.00 in July. For the year we are at 112.2 percent of our estimated bronze medallion sales.

Our total sales for July were below our estimate by \$2,582.29. For the year we are at 95.9 percent of our estimated sales.

Individual donations were below our estimate by \$2,679.87 for July. For the year we are at 97.1 percent of our estimated individual donations.

Group donations exceeded our estimate by \$237.52 in July. For the year we are at 102 percent of our estimated group donations.

ISO NEWS

Our product inventory is valued at \$62,090.81.

Our expenses were below our estimate by \$3,073.17 in July. For the year we are at 101.4 percent of our estimated expenses.

Our operational reserve is fully funded.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

In Your Service,

Joe H., Executive Director

Calendar — Here are tentative ISO outreach and committee meeting times for the next several months. Meeting 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: TBA

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: TBA

Third Wednesday of the month

Area Coordinating Committee: TBA

Third Saturday of the month

CSC: Twelve Concepts Work Group: TBA

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 Friday of the month

Seventh Tradition: 10:00 a.m.

Fourth Sunday of the month

Conference Steering Committee: TBA

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.; Alternate: Vacant
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LitCom: Cara A.; Alternate: Vacant
LitComGL@saa-litcom.org

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LitCom: Doug S., Mike B. Robbie H. (2nd chair)
David M (chair); Steven P.; 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!

Deadlines for Submission and Topics

Jan/Feb:	"Taking Action"	Nov 5
Mar/Apr:	"Healthier Sexuality"	Jan 5
May/June:	"First Three Steps"	Mar 5
July/Aug:	"Prayer, Meditation"	May 5
Sept/Oct:	"Steps Six and Seven"	July 5
Nov/Dec:	"Giving Back"	Sept 5

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.

Here are some general writing guidelines:

Articles 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.

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.