

THE OUTER CIRCLE



SAA's Structural Roadmap

**The steps you can
take to prepare
— and help with
the coming area
formation**

PLUS

Reworking the Steps

Why Literature Matters

4 Keys to Recovery





International Service Organization of SAA, Inc.

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

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The Outer Circle Mission

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

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

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

If you have comments or suggestions, please see contact information on p. 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.

November - December 2017

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FROM THE EDITOR

What Keeps Me Coming Back

BY GARY T.

Within SAA's solution, there's a gentler message that's kept me coming back, and that I feel, we as a fellowship need to stress more.

The longer I'm in recovery, the more convinced I am that what we're really addicted to is shame. That's why I love our fellowship's slogan: from shame to grace.

But much of what I hear from members and in meetings is about shame. There's a lot of: "I acted out again (insert details here). I failed again." Getting honest is good. But underneath those types of shares is the harsh, shame-based belief that they are inherently bad people and don't deserve recovery. Consequently, they often don't keep coming back.

SAA's solution to addiction is getting a sponsor and working the Twelve Steps. That's worked for me. But within that solution, there's a gentler message that's kept me coming back and that I feel we, as a fellowship, need to stress more — the message of healthy self-love.

Healthy self-love is what keeps me sober and wanting to be of service. Self-love is what my Higher Power gives me so that I don't have to live in shame anymore. Self-love is what I received from working the steps. Self-love is what changed my attitude from "having" to go to meetings to "wanting" to go to meetings. Self-love is what made me move from trying to avoid acting out, to knowing I deserve better. In short, I want recovery because I know it's good for me. I want it because I love myself enough to make time for my wellbeing.

That kind of self-love shifted my mindset from shame to grace. Today, I have a gentle Higher Power who gives me unconditional love and teaches me to give myself and others the same, one day at a time. I believe the more we, as a fellowship, can demonstrate healthy self-love, the more people will keep coming back.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

SAA Ramps Up Outreach

BY PHILIP A., PROGRAM
OUTREACH MANAGER

**In the past
year, SAA
members spoke
to hundreds of
professionals
and provided
information about
our program.**

SAA is making excellent progress increasing outreach. In the past year, SAA has exhibited at professional conferences in Tucson, Austin, Houston, Minneapolis, Raleigh-Durham, Phoenix, Washington D.C., Dallas, Salt Lake City, and Los Angeles.

SAA members spoke to hundreds of professionals such as therapists, counselors, social workers, and correctional professionals and provided information about our program of recovery. In Phoenix and Salt Lake City, new visitor information sheets were used to set up a post-event meeting by local SAA members in the professional's home city. This new process was very successful and provided more than 100 opportunities for follow-up communication with local SAA groups.

This process is being expanded to all intergroups. The goal is to have a "Cooperation with the Professional Community Coordinator" (CPC Coordinator).

Sending mailings to professionals also has become easier. The ISO can assist groups with templates for letters or cards, mailing lists, and printing and mailing using the ISO non-profit bulk mail permit.

Large scale print campaigns are currently in progress in Toledo, Ohio, and Atlanta. These projects follow the first successful pilots conducted in Houston, Phoenix, and Vancouver. The Toledo and Atlanta print notices will reach 120,000 and 550,000 readers respectively. Suffering addicts will call a local phone number and be connected to an SAA member who will twelve-step them and refer them to a meeting.

For assistance with outreach please contact Phillip B. at phillipb@saa-iso.net.

DEAR GRACE

Do Sponsors Need to Have the Same Higher Power as Sponsees?

BY WOMEN'S
OUTREACH
SUBCOMMITTEE

**It may take
time to find a
sponsor with
whom you feel
free to explore
what the Higher
Power of your
understanding
means to you.**

Dear Grace,

I am new to SAA and have been looking for a sponsor. I have asked two people and both of them told me they only work with people who have the same Higher Power they do. I really want to get started on the steps but I don't even know what my Higher Power is! Are they allowed to do that? I thought this was a program for all beliefs.

Signed, Confused

Dear Confused,

Welcome! Joining the fellowship and seeking a sponsor are positive and courageous decisions!

You are right — the program works for people of all beliefs. “SAA is not affiliated with any religion, creed, or dogma. The program offers a spiritual solution to our addiction, without requiring adherence to any specific set of beliefs or practices. The path is wide enough for everyone who wishes to walk it” (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 21).

However, each individual is on their own journey of spiritual growth. For some, this may mean a deepening faith in a particular Higher Power. For others, faith is more of a quest or even a struggle.

“Belief in a Higher Power can be difficult for many of us in SAA who come to the program with a faith that was damaged in one way or another, or those of us who never had any spiritual beliefs at all. Some of us came from strict, judgmental religious backgrounds that reinforced our fear and shame” (*Sex Addicts Anon-*



ymous, page 26). Some sponsors feel comfortable working with sponsees having different spiritual beliefs than their own, while others do not feel that is right for them.

A sponsor's job is to guide us through the Twelve Steps. However, there is no single correct way to work the Twelve Steps, nor is there one right way to sponsor. "It is up to the sponsor and 'sponsee' to decide exactly how they will work with each other" (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 14).

It may take time to find a sponsor with whom you feel free to explore what the Higher Power of your understanding means to you. "If someone declines to sponsor us, we need not take it personally. We simply ask someone else. Members

are also free to change sponsors. The important thing is to have and use one, because we can't keep trying to solve problems by ourselves" (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 13).

May you be blessed with a sponsor who is just right for you!

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

Treating Abstinence Like a Cherished Gift

BY JOHN W.

**Being abstinent
frees me to
become sober;
sobriety brings
serenity — and
the ability to help
the addict who
still suffers.**

Human beings have an uncanny ability to deceive themselves. We do this lest our beliefs gets challenged. It was this self-deception that kept me from joining SAA until I was fifty-eight.

As a professional religious worker, I thought it was enough just to keep my addiction to porn private. I thought my ability to manage it was all God needed from me; I even thought agreeing with God to keep it secret was my bargaining chip. If God did not rip out my compulsion then God must approve of my acting out.

Believing I had God's okay made me feel like a sophisticated insider. Enjoying porn with a twist was no different from liking gourmet cooking. Lost in my self-centeredness, I had no time to notice anything wrong in my life. It took me a very long time to realize I did not want to expose my family to porn focused on pain and humiliation. How could I explain that and risk computer viruses that could attack my family's financial security? Efforts to nuance my computer use with my wife just earned me membership in the lying-sex-addict-club with a lifetime renewal clause attached.

The day I knew I was powerless was when I saw myself for what I was: an addict sitting at the computer downstairs exposed, ready to masturbate to yet another image while my girls waited upstairs for me to take them to school. This was the first gift of insight from a power greater than myself.

A call to an SAA intergroup hotline gave me a sense of relief, but it still took me two months of white-knuckling and my wife's intervention before I attended a Sunday night meeting. From then on, I never missed my Sunday meeting. Later, I even added a weekday meeting as a backup for a Sunday

night that might be impossible. This has been the key to maintaining my abstinence for more than ten years: faithful participation in weekly meetings.

Meetings taught me about a sober life and a new kind of friendship. They also gave me basic tools like being rigorously honest, seeking a sponsor, and working the steps with others. Using the three circles to set hard and clear boundaries, I replaced the time I used to spend acting out with developing a daily spiritual practice and beginning a life focused on service to others in and outside of the recovery rooms.

After many years of trying to sober up on my own, I now live each day abstinent as a gift from my Higher Power. Being abstinent frees me to become sober; sobriety brings serenity based on doing the best I am able. More importantly, perhaps, sobriety allows me to focus on the addict who still suffers and the ones in full recovery. Each day is better when I intentionally look outward, which serves to make me keenly aware of how self-centered I can be.

I now have many years sobriety which I obtained one day at time. This fact teaches me that recovery often comes in small steps. I have to do is make sure those steps are on the path to recovery.

Some personal results: I do not have to white-knuckle staying abstinent. It is now a habit. I can work the steps in a

more relaxed way to create a better life for others and me. I get more freedom from saying “I am wrong” than explaining how I am right. I find recovering addicts have a funny bone. For example, when my group was struggling with a concept, I realized I had forgotten I knew something relevant, so I exclaimed, “I am an idiot.” Before I could get to the point, another sex addict said “sorry, that meeting is down the hall.” The laughter that followed was deep healing medicine for a full recovery we could share.

On exceptionally clear days, I see that the person I cannot stand is just human. More embarrassingly, that person’s faults often embody my own character defects. (Is irony flattened-humor?) I remember that all information is good if used rightly.

Just as plants use rich black dirt (humus, from whence comes the word humility) to grow strong, so to be grounded in modesty does not mean keeping clean, but rather getting down and dirty in humble service. Today, knowing my flaws is no longer a cause for shame. It is just part of the garden of recovery. “No flaws, no flowers” is another way of saying my most applied SAA slogan “progress, not perfection.”

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.



SAA's Structural Roadmap

Area formation is coming. Here's the steps you can take to prepare — and help

BY AREA FORMATION COMMITTEE

You might have heard about something called “Area Formation” and wondered “Why should I care?” or, “What can I do to get involved?” There are good reasons why the Fellowship chose this new structure and some simple but important ways you can get involved.

Starting in 2014, the Conference created a process and committees to help implement the goal of forming areas and rearranging the structure of the ISO. Two of the main goals of the new structure are:

- » Increase local members’ opportunities to participate in the business of our international fellowship, and
- » Keep the annual conference meetings manageable as the fellowship grows.

Let’s look at each of these goals in turn.

How will the move to an area-based service structure increase local groups’

opportunity to participate? As part of the new ISO structure, areas consisting of approximately twenty or more groups will be formed based on the commonalities of geographic proximity, language, or electronic meeting modality (for instance, telemeetings).

In the future, groups will elect Group Service Representatives (GSRs) to participate in area assemblies. At an assembly, GSRs can discuss and form a group conscience on the exact same motions that will be discussed and voted on at the annual meeting of the conference, which will be later that same year. Then the areas will elect a single area delegate to attend the annual meeting and express their area's group conscience.

This will allow more participation in the deliberating process than there is currently, because many groups cannot afford air fare, hotel expenses, etc. The goal is to encourage as many local groups as possible to be active in areas and weigh in on matters that affect their groups and SAA as a whole.

How will this change help with the manageability of the annual meeting of the conference?

As of May 2017, there were over 1,770 local groups registered with the ISO, with more being registered all the time. Every one of those groups can send a delegate to the conference, and, in theory,

we would just about need a football stadium to host the annual meeting of the conference if every group sent a representative! Can you imagine how long the debates might last? How would everyone have a chance to be heard? This would clearly be unmanageable.

The football stadium scenario is, however, highly unlikely. Typically, less than ten percent of the groups send delegates to the annual meeting. To put this in perspective, at the 2017 annual conference, only around 125 delegates attended in Orlando.

Sooner or later, a change to the service structure would be necessary. The fellowship has decided that the time is now. We hope you agree and will decide to participate in the process.

Which brings us to an excellent question: “What can I do?”

1. Educate yourself.

A list of frequently asked questions and answers are on the saa-iso.org website, under “Member Services.” The login and password are the same as for the convention website access.

Contact the ISO at info@saa-recovery.org office if you need login information. From there, go to the “Area Coordinating (ACC)” sub-heading under “Conference.”

The FAQs are on this ACC page. If you have further questions, the ACC

can be e-mailed using the e-mail address: acc.feedback@saa-iso.org.

2. Become an Area Advocate.

The fellowship has tasked the Area Coordinating Committee (ACC) with presenting a draft of an area alignment (essentially a list of proposed areas that encompasses all registered SAA meetings) for consideration by the conference in 2018, with the first conference comprised of area delegates coming in 2020. That may seem like a long way away, but for those involved in the area formation process, it's right around the corner!

The ACC needs people (area advocates) in all locales and types of electronic meetings to be willing to step up and start the ball rolling to form areas. The ACC page explains how to get the forms needed. To date, only a handful of area proposals have been received from the fellowship. We need your help!

3. Start the discussion.

Even if you don't want to become the area advocate, raising the issue at your meetings and with your intergroup will help get the process going. Intergroups are one forum where area discussions might be held, but area formation is the responsibility of, and an opportunity for, all members and groups.

What are the next steps?

A. The groups in a particular location or sharing a meeting modality or language other than English can start communicating amongst themselves to see what alignment of meetings might make sense. Ask the various groups if they want to participate in a particular proposed area. Contact the ACC by email if you want more info about meetings around you.

B. Once a consensus is reached or is at least developing, someone will need to complete a proposed area registration form, which is on the ACC page of the saa-iso.org website. Send this in to the ACC at the e-mail address previously provided. This will start a dialogue between the ACC and the proposed area advocate(s).

C. As the process moves along, individual groups should elect GSRs, and eventually each area should hold an area assembly. Remember, one of the goals is for each area to elect and send a delegate to the annual meeting of the conference. This will cost money, and one of the first orders of area business will be to figure out where the funding will come from!

Area formation is the group conscience of the fellowship. It is coming. Please consider getting involved. We need your help! ●



Why another pass can make the difference

BY RAYMOND W.

I joined SAA back in early 2012, and after a few months of finding my way, I was able to gain some sobriety. I had found a sponsor, and we had worked through the Twelve Steps in about a year. Soon, I had a year of sobriety, then a year and a half. I felt I was finally getting the hang of things!

What helped me was a solid routine. I was going to three to four meetings per week, each with a different feel. I benefited from the men's closed meeting, but also from the mixed meetings. My sponsor and I were also meeting once a week during my Step work — and after Step Twelve we were still meeting two to three times per month.

As I passed a year of sobriety, my sponsor's schedule changed; frankly, I was slow to react. Heck, I had a solid year and was doing well. But, I had grown slightly complacent in other parts of my program. Three to four meetings per week became two to three, then my "main two," unless I had a conflict. Sobriety was still good for the time being. But time continued to pass, and I would meet with my sponsor perhaps once a month, then merely occasionally. I was still enjoying the fellowship of meetings,

Part of the hurdle to reworking the steps is that I felt very angry through the relapses.

and staying connected participating in different activities — but the urgency had worn off.

Soon, some middle circle Internet use became more frequent, then a regular staple. I found myself continually bumping up against my blocker software.

This should have been a sign to immediately reconnect with my sponsor, find a new sponsor, or start emergency procedures to reinvigorate my program! But I thought this was a short term rough-patch and told myself I was returning to serenity and deep sobriety any day now.

After a month or two — and twenty months of continuous sobriety — the middle circle behavior drifted into the inner circle (pornography use). “Ok, fine: relapses happen, I’ll get back on track,” I told myself. I did get 90 days, but then another relapse happened.

Soon, I was struggling to get a month. More troubling: still no new sponsor, no resumption of three to four meetings a week. Eventually I landed back into a

daily battle with the inner circle. That’s when I realized half-measures, even three-quarter measures, which I (thought I) had been doing, were not enough.

At this point, I reached out to a new sponsor, and we committed to work the Steps again. He had a slightly different approach, and I was able to work through the first three steps fairly promptly using a lot of what I had done before but also a lot of recent experience.

Part of the hurdle to reworking the Steps is that I felt very angry through the relapses — angry at myself, angry that I was an addict, angry at some events in my youth, angry at work, etc. I was starting to really chafe at small things.

Somehow, I realized this was classic pre-recovery behavior and attitudes. Perhaps I needed to be honest and realize I needed more than just a few more meetings, or to make a few more phone calls. Something big was needed. Based on relapse behavior and trends, that something was needed quickly.

The real gift and surprise came reworking Step Four. The first time around, it took a few months and was reasonably thorough at the time. But this time it took a little longer and went into far more detail. I realized — as only I could upon a thorough second look — that my patterns were very much

still at play: not so much during my first year of sobriety, with the routine Step work, meeting attendance and other activity, but more so during that time period I took my foot off the gas.

Step Four was at least twice as large this time, and included (for the first time) the full inventory of emotions (jealousy, anger, etc.), and character assets. While there was some overlap in writing about the emotions as compared to my inventory and character defects, it was very helpful to write about them by themselves. It helped me see trends much clearer, and see how I react to common situations often in the same way.

Simply writing I'm angry about this, then that, then the other thing, helped me realize I need to assert myself appropriately more. It also helped me see what I get angry about. It was usually something small and of low consequence, or anger at a decision I made in full choice where there wasn't a clear answer, or at someone with whom I didn't set appropriate boundaries.

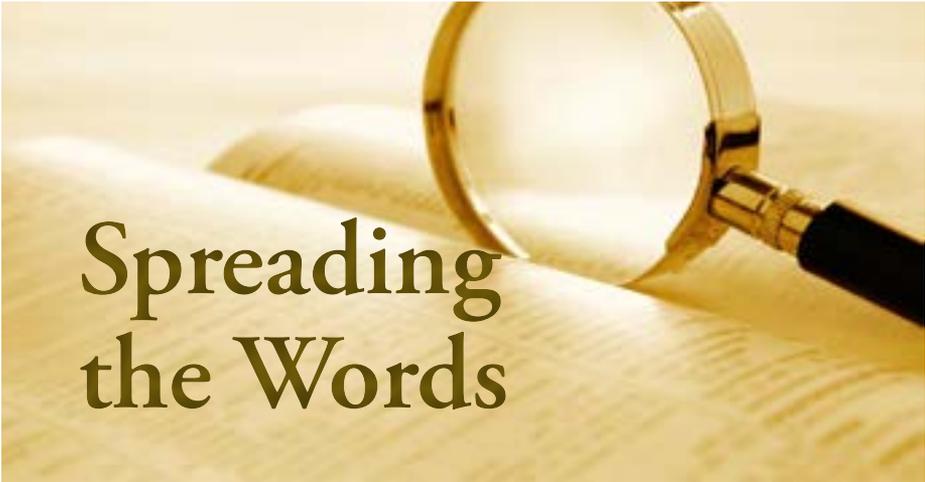
Seeing all that on one or two pages (vs. a sixteen-page inventory) helped me gain clarity about this tendency I have regarding anger and resentment. The assets list — again something I only did on round two — lifted my

Reworking the Steps has been a lot of work, but it has also provided some unexpected blessings and insights.

spirits but also helped me see that defects/assets are two sides of the same coin. That means my defect of being inappropriately passive has a good side of being collaborative and inclusive of others' needs and opinions. This is a good thing. I learned the key is balance and appropriateness in each trait.

I am currently on Step Five with my sponsor in my second pass through the Steps. It has been a lot of work, and took some dedicated focus. But it also prevented a further slide down the acting out scale — and it has provided some unexpected blessings and insights.

My meeting attendance has improved. I have a more spiritual focus, some additional humility, and more structure to my program. This has led to more sober time, some additional tools for staying on track, and honestly more compassion for those who are new and/or struggling. Much of this came from a decision to get a new sponsor, and rework the Steps with robustness. ●



Spreading the Words

Making SAA literature available is essential to a unified recovery message

BY JOHN W.

I attended my first SAA meeting in June of 2005. Soon after we began, two people volunteered to go with me to another room to introduce me to SAA. As we left the circle, they stopped at a table to pick up pamphlets for me that the group had decided would be helpful for the newcomer. I immediately had some short, focused material to read about the program during that first week.

When I came back for my second meeting, I noticed that the table was full of pamphlets and even some books. And so it was every week. We could browse the pamphlets, take what interested us, and consider purchasing the more expensive materials such as *Sex Addicts Anonymous*.

This meeting held literature in high regard as a recovery tool. For eight years, I attended this meeting exclusively. I got sober — and stayed sober — with the help of the people in that room and the written word. When the time was right, I began to use a computer in recovery by providing printouts of phone lists, step sign-up lists, group conscience notes, and cleaner formats for meeting guides. In this small way, I began creating literature.

When the ISO Literature Committee (LitCom) needed someone to fill out a term, I became the North Central Representative elected to serve the fellowship as a whole. There, as a member of LitCom, I learned the care we put into the documents offered — testing each to be true to the SAA program of recovery and clearly writing it. Now I could fully grieve the lost opportunity of groups to know and use this gift for recovery.

Eventually, I started going to a second meeting as backup for when I missed my home meeting. Later I sought out a new home meeting. This was how I discovered that many meetings do not make literature plainly available. If I brought in a new pamphlet, it would often disappear into the meeting's bag, unread and unknown to old-timers and newcomers alike.

With one group, I started bringing in a trifold display board with literature in pockets for people to take. Every week I would bring the display in and out of the meeting restocking it with more literature as needed using seventh tradition funds. However, it became more John's project rather than the group's own.

When I left that group, I left the materials with them to use as they saw fit. Having become a bit of a sojourner in groups, the weakness

Using our SAA literature across the fellowship supports the First Tradition. If literature is unknown, people work in the dark.

of not supporting recovery with literature became clear. People would struggle alone with issues that many times could be helped by studying literature.

Using our SAA literature across the fellowship supports the First Tradition: "Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon SAA unity." If literature is unavailable, people work in the dark. Let us lighten that burden to full recovery with literature that affirms their humanity and offers hope through working the SAA program.

In the absence of SAA literature, people will bring in outside literature to fill the gaps. There is nothing inherently wrong with using outside source, but as a group, we offer an SAA solution to recovering from addictive sexual behavior. Therefore, we best serve the addicts in the room when we know our written traditions and shared thinking. ●

Keys to Recovery



Four elements needed to work the Steps

BY JIM L.

E

xperience suggests that four key elements are necessary to achieve recovery from addiction. They are not the solution to the problem, but they open the door to the possibility of successful recovery from working the Twelve Step program.

1. Honesty. Initially, I must be honest. I must admit that I am powerless over my addictive behavior and that, as a result, my life has become increasingly unmanageable. That admission begins with being honest with myself and quickly extends to being honest with others in the fellowship — first with a sponsor, then with others whom I gradually come to trust.

For an addict, learning to be honest may be a significant challenge. For many of us, lying to hide secret thoughts and actions had become the norm. So pervasive was my dishonesty that I caught myself lying about trivial matters unrelated to my addiction.

To engage seriously in recovery, I must begin by being honest—with self and others.

2. Willingness. A second key to successful recovery is willingness. It is interesting that the word willing appears only once in the Twelve Steps, but underlying every step along the path to recovery is the necessity of being willing to work the program. Willingness is closely related to desire. I must have a desire to stop addictive behavior and be willing to go to any length to achieve recovery.

If I am reluctant —unwilling — to take the next indicated action, I will fall short of achieving the recovery that is promised through the Twelve Steps. I must be willing to attend meetings regularly, to work diligently with my sponsor, to progress through the steps with intention, and to recognize the healing power in being of service to other struggling addicts.

3. Commitment. Close behind willingness is the necessity to make a commitment to work the program. As noted in our foundational documents, half measures availed us nothing. Not only do half-hearted attempts at recovery yield less-than-optimal results, but they also lead to frustration and a sense of hopelessness that can cause us to slide back into addictive behavior.

While honesty provides an essential backdrop and willingness

reflects a genuine desire, commitment is necessary to make progress in recovery.

4. Action. The final key to successful recovery is taking the actions prescribed in the Twelve Steps. The SAA program of recovery is a program of action. We do not get recovery by osmosis. Recovery does not result from attending an occasional meeting or by listening to an occasional recording.

Without deliberate and focused action—specifically, working the Twelve Steps with a sponsor—progress is slow or non-existent, and recovery does not result.

For me, recovery is not a destination; recovery is a journey — a daily adventure in living a life in the here and now — free from addictive thoughts and behavior. I embark on this expedition with an effort to be rigorously honest, a willingness to do whatever it takes, and a commitment to working the Twelve Steps. As learned in Steps One through Nine and reinforced in Steps Ten, Eleven, and Twelve, I stay the course by systematically and habitually taking the appropriate actions. It is then that I experience true recovery from addiction and the even greater gift of emotional sobriety, realizing that God has done for me what I could not do for myself. ●

DEAR WILL

Plea from Imprisoned Sex Addict is a Call to Service

BY WILL

**While it may not
be possible to
reach out to those
who have left
the fellowship,
we still have the
chance to reach
out to those in
prison.**

Dear Will,

I am incarcerated and have begun to receive *The Outer Circle*. Initially, I wrote the mailing address and was fortunately responded to by ISO staff.

However, as you can imagine, medical and mental health treatment, in addition to counseling, is limited in the prison setting. Furthermore, neither staff nor the prisoner populace are familiar with or understand the many complexities of human sexuality. Thus, I often am unable to share my issues or have conversation with like-minded individuals.

What do you suggest? I cannot attend meetings. I am able to write or make phone calls, but thus far have not found a sponsor (I imagine there is a stigma associated with prisoners). Please help!

Geoffrey R.

Dear Geoffrey,

First, a disclaimer. This is a real letter, and Will, despite his being a huge fan of prisoner outreach, did not plant this letter in *The Outer Circle* just to give himself a chance to discuss one of his favorite SAA topics. That being said...

Geoffrey, thank you so much for writing. Will well understands the stigma associated with anything prisoner-related in SAA. He remembers a time when he brought several guys from a transition house to an SAA meeting and took them to the customary coffee shop afterward to meet some other fellows.

It seemed to go well and, encouraged, Will brought some of the same guys to the meeting the following week. When they got to the coffee shop after-

wards, they were surprised to discover that they were alone. Will believes this situation has improved somewhat since then, but also believes that some mistrust and fear is still there.

Will tried sharing about sex addiction in another Twelve-Step program, and quickly put that activity into the category of “Things That Will Only Does Once.”

A number of the meetings in Will’s hometown place an empty chair in the middle of the room. The chair represents members of the fellowship currently not attending meetings, for a variety of reasons. While it may not be possible to reach out to those who have left the fellowship in search of their true bottom or those who are no longer with us, we still have the chance to reach out to those in prison.

As it says in the SAA pamphlet “Writing to Prisoners,” “Guiding prisoners through the Twelve Steps is usually the most valuable gift that we can offer.” Letters come through the office rather than going directly from the prisoner to the volunteer, so it is never necessary for the prisoner to know even what state his or her contact lives in.

If the reader is interested in getting involved in this very valuable service



work, Will enthusiastically recommends getting in touch with the office, who will happily provide the name of one or more prisoners who are looking for correspondence, such as Geoffrey.

That said, Geoffrey, Will is confident that you will very soon have somebody to write to; Will is certainly going to do some recruiting even before this letter appears in *The Outer Circle*.

If the person you are writing to has what you want, ask him to be your sponsor. If not, well, ask for another volunteer to write to. Will looks forward to hearing how your process of working the Steps is coming along.

Will

*If you have a question for Will,
please send an email to
men4saa@saa-recovery.org.*

STORIES OF SERVICE

To Keep What You Have, Give it Away

BY ALLAN O.

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

In the Episcopal burial service, there's a prayer which includes ". . .grant that, increasing in knowledge and love of thee, he may go from strength to strength in the life of perfect service in thy heavenly kingdom." Seeing death and service connected in this way makes me believe that recognition of our mortality motivates us to serve our fellows however we can.

I had a good experience with service in SAA corresponding with a fellow from the noon meeting when he was in prison, so I decided to sign up with the ISO prisoner writer program. Since sex addicts who are incarcerated can't attend in-person meetings or telemeetings and can't get sponsors, they need help working their programs using approved communication methods. ISO receives names of prisoners and assigns them to SAA fellows to answer questions, provide support and encouragement and even act as sponsors.

Over the years, I've gotten invaluable experience sponsoring others in the program. Being a sponsor has been one of the most important things I've done to maintain my sobriety. The variety of fellows I've worked with have provided me insights our common problem. By working the program with others, I have enriched my program — and my life. If you're interested in the inmate writer program contact outreach@saa-recovery.org.

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.

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. Here's another response to that column.*

It's Not About Literature; It's About Working the Steps

My experience with non SAA literature in SAA meetings is that it saved my life. That's not my opinion. It's my experience. Because of the program described in the original twelve-step text book, I'm alive, sober, and content with a purpose and armed with a twelve-step message to carry.

I'm not alcoholic, but following the directions found in that fellowship's first 103 pages was exactly what I needed seven years ago when I didn't know what my problem was let alone know about a solution. It may not be what everyone in SAA needs, but that's okay.

What I see confusing the newcomer is not literature but a lack of emphasis on our twelve-step solution. At the bottom of page 99, our Green Book mentions that the steps, not the book, are the spiritual solution to our addiction. Page 21 says that there is no correct or SAA-sanctioned way to complete the Twelve Steps and mentions that many have gained insights from books or adapted methods from other twelve-step fellowships.

I appreciated the message from the director in the July TOC. "Meetings get stronger when they focus on the steps." Let's keep it simple and just do that. If you've had a spiritual awakening via that twelve steps, pass it on. If not, get busy working all twelve steps with a sponsor so that you too can pass it on.

The steps are open and roomy. People don't lose sobriety because they worked the steps from a different book; people typically lose sobriety because they haven't worked ALL the steps.

I hope groups don't stop reading "How it Works" taken from non-SAA literature. Those couple of paragraphs, written about eighty-two years ago, are a powerful statement of truth. I feel no need to change what I'm doing and am very thankful to those in the fellowship who work hard on producing literature for SAA. Now what do you say we go find a sex addict to help?

Darren F

FROM THE BOARD

A Powerful Way to Share the Message

BY TIM A.

The Lifeline Partner Program gives the ISO a way to strategically plan for new literature and meet the demands of a growing fellowship.

“We have no dues or fees...,” but, as is commonly added in an introduction on the Seventh Tradition, “we do have expenses.” As your board’s chair for the ISO’s Seventh Tradition Committee, I am grateful for the opportunity to share these words with you.

Ours is a growing and vibrant international fellowship, which relies on us to provide the resources to sustain that continued growth, but I’m getting ahead of myself.

We often hear in our meetings about the Fifth Tradition — “we have but one primary purpose...to carry the message to the sex addict that still suffers.” How does that Tradition, which guides our entire fellowship, translate for me in my particular place and time?

One way to answer that question is for me to remember and recognize that I am the one who is called upon to be the bearer of that message. Each of us, in our own place and time, has the opportunity — and the responsibility — to carry that message to the still suffering addicts inside and outside the meetings we attend.

That responsibility goes a step further when I ask myself the question, “What does carrying the message actually look like?” For me, it includes attending meetings regularly and participating by sharing my experience, strength, and hope. It means picking up the phone when my sponsors and other fellows reach out to me. It

means working my own program and continuing to discover the gifts the Steps have for my recovery and those who will come after me.

But there is another aspect that we often overlook and that has to do with my financial contributions as the basket is passed at each meeting I attend. That basket symbolically represents the hand of the still suffering sex addict reaching out to each of us with the simple request...
“Can you help me?”

It seems we have a frequent breakdown in the distribution process that prevents those Seventh Tradition offerings from working their way from our local meetings and intergroups to the international level, where those funds are often used.

Locally, we often find that individual meetings are sitting on hundreds of dollars preventing both the local and international fellowship from fulfilling its mission reflected in the Fifth Tradition.

Several years ago, the ISO staff in Houston, with the support of the board, created a mechanism that allows each one of us to carry the

message in a bold new way to suffering sex addicts previously beyond our reach from around the world.

The Lifeline Partner Program (LPP) gives each of us the opportunity to specify a monthly amount that is donated from our debit or credit cards. That monthly donation gives the board and staff the ability to strategically plan for the development and production of SAA literature. It also provides resources to respond to the demands of a fast-growing fellowship around the world.

I am an LPP participant because, though I routinely contribute to many charities, none of them have more profoundly impacted my life than SAA.

I still contribute to my local meetings each time that hand reaches out and the basket comes my way, but I know that my LPP contribution gets to where it needs to be in a consistent and dependable way, allowing me to carry the message to sex addicts I will never meet, in languages I will never speak, to places I may never see.

ISO NEWS

Nominating Committee Accepting Service Resumes

In preparation for the 2018 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 Houston in October 2018, the NomCom will present slates of nominees for election to the Board of Trustees, Literature Committee, and Conference Area Coordinating Committee.

The NomCom is seeking potential candidates with solid program experience, long-term sobriety, and an appreciation of the value of active service. In addition, the 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 definite consideration the 2018-19 service year is June 15, 2018.

Conference Steering Committee Seeks Feedback on How to Improve

During the Saturday morning portion of the 2017 conference, we asked for your input, your observations, and your questions. We as a committee believed that your input was most important as we are entering a new phase for the conference and fellowship.

We are reviewing the conference feedback and are interested in the opinion of the fellowship. After reviewing the feedback, we will begin constructing goals for the 2017-2018 service year. This service year began upon conclusion of the conference this past May, and will expire in October, 2018, making it longer than previous years.

We realize the Conference Steering Committee has to change how we communicate with the entire fellowship. The committee must make a greater effort to reach out to the delegates. Regional representatives must also reach out to the groups within their regions.

ISO NEWS

Furthermore, how the CSC interacts with the fellowship must change. We as a committee are open to ideas and are looking for ways to better serve the fellowship. This we promise.

All members of the fellowship are welcome to attend our monthly telephone meetings. Check out the calendar section of this issue for days and times. The main telephone meeting for the entire CSC is the fourth Sunday of each month at 2:00 pm CT. Subcommittee telephone meetings are listed in the calendar.

We'll have more information about goals for this service year as the committee moves forward. Please look for an update in the next issue of TOC.

Board Approves 2019 Convention Logo and Theme

Here's a look at Board of Trustee actions in August:

- » Approved motion to give permission to the Twin Cities SAA Intergroup to use the SAA logo on a banner to be used for display at outreach events.
- » Approved the hotel contract for the 2018 ISO of SAA Conference.
- » Approved policy that the ISO will only have one hospitality suite at the annual convention.
- » Approved policy that the ISO will not pay or reimburse SAA members for travel-related expenses incurred for attending the annual convention except in the case of members traveling on ISO approved business.
- » Approved the 2019 convention logo and theme.

Audio Book Costs, Hurricane Harvey Cause Budget Deficit

In the month of September we had a deficit of \$11,620.08. We had budgeted for a deficit of \$5,850. The increase in the deficit was due in part to the deposit of \$3,900 we made on the production of our audio book which was not budgeted for in our 2017 budget. We also spent another \$954.07 for carpet cleaning due to some water leaks due to hurricane Harvey which was not budgeted for in our 2017 budget.

Our SAA Green Book sales were below our estimate by \$1,120.58 in September. For the year we are at 99.9 percent of our estimated SAA Green Book sales.

Our pamphlet and booklet sales were below our estimate by \$930.64 for Sep-

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tember. For the year we are at 91.2 percent of our estimated pamphlet and booklet sales.

Our bronze medallion sales exceeded our estimate by \$235 in September. For the year we are at 114.7 percent of our estimated bronze medallion sales.

Our total sales for September were below our estimate by \$2,150.49. For the year we are at 98.5 percent of our estimated sales.

Individual donations exceeded our estimate by \$247.26 for September. The first southeast, Michigan “Giving Thanks” event was held and raised \$3,105.00. For the year we are at 96 percent of our estimated individual donations.

Group donations exceeded our estimate by \$3,043.60 in September. For the year we are at 105 percent of our estimated group donations.

Our product inventory is valued at \$72,772.35.

Our expenses exceeded our estimate by \$6,613.49 in September. For the year we are at 102.4 percent of our estimated expenses.

Our operational reserve is at \$142,694.00.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

In Your Service,

Joe H.

Executive Director

Pamphlets Now Available to Read Online

The International Service Organization of SAA is announces the availability of SAA pamphlets on the SAA website (saa-recovery.org). The pamphlets may be found by following the “SAA literature” sub-tab from the Home page. Also included are the pamphlets in Spanish and the “Pathway to Recovery” pamphlet in French.

This milestone has been accomplished by the combined efforts of the ISO Literature Committee, the ISO office, and the ISO Board of Trustees and its committees, specifically the Online Presence Committee and the International Development Committee. We believe that ready access to SAA literature online will greatly en-

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hance the capacity of member groups and individual members of the fellowship to carry the SAA message of recovery more effectively and more efficiently. As before, the printed pamphlets are available for purchase from the ISO - either through the online SAA Store or by telephone or postal mail from the ISO office. Don't forget to ask about our volume discount.

This development is a good example of how the ISO is working to support members of the fellowship and member groups. As you benefit from having access to the SAA pamphlets online, please remember that the ISO is totally dependent on financial support from members, member groups, and intergroups to offer and maintain this type of service for the fellowship.

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: 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:

Office

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

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The Outer Circle

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

Intermountain

Board: Bob H.; Alternate: Allan B.
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LitCom: Vacant.; Alternate: Vacant
LitComIM@saa-litcom.org

North Central

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BoardNC@saa-recovery.org
LitCom: John W.; Alternate: Vacant
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LitCom: Don R.; Alternate: Valerie G. (secretary)
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North Pacific

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BoardNP@saa-recovery.org

LitCom: Les J.; Alternate: Charlie K.
LitComNP@saa-litcom.org

South Central

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BoardSC@saa-recovery.org
LitCom: Vacant.; Alternate: Vacant.
LitComSC@saa-litcom.org

Southeast

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BoardSE@saa-recovery.org
LitCom: Garrett I.; Alternate: Byard B.
LitComSE@saa-litcom.org

Southern Pacific

BoardSP@saa-recovery.org
LitCom: Carole D.; Alternate: Dwight B.
LitComSP@saa-litcom.org

At Large

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BoardAL@saa-recovery.org
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.