

THE OUTER CIRCLE

**Guarding
Against a Slip**
How to stay on the
road to sobriety in
the new year.

PLUS

Defining Traditions

Delayed Recovery Reactions

Area Assembly 101





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.

January - February 2018

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FROM THE EDITOR

Why I Don't Make New Year's Resolutions

BY GARY T.

**Resolutions
create a fantasy
world of
expectations and
perfectionistic
thinking that our
addict loves to
live in.**

I've been in recovery long enough to become acquainted with the "New Year's Curse." Typically, the curse happens after members have made it through the stressful holidays of Thanksgiving and Christmas only to find themselves mysteriously relapsing on or around January 1.

I've never fallen victim to the curse, but I definitely relate to those who have because, even though I'm intellectually aware of the trap this holiday sets, I still find myself tempted to walk into it.

Why? It's not because of a curse, but rather because of addiction. With all its focus on reminiscing about the past year and making resolutions for the new one, this holiday is freighted with regret and expectation. Although it's only one day out of the year, it's the antithesis of one day at a time.

Resolutions are the perfect example of how this works. When people resolve to eat right, exercise more, or work their steps, it might seem like a useful way to provide some accountability.

But what it really does is create a fantasy world of expectations and perfectionistic thinking that our addict loves to live in. There's very little room for "progress, not perfection" in resolution thinking. That's probably why the vast majority of people who make resolutions fail to keep them — and why I don't make new year's resolutions.

Instead, when it comes to this holiday and all the trappings around it, I find it best to simply keep doing what I've been doing the other 364 days out of the year: living one day at a time, putting my faith and trust in a loving Higher Power, and letting tomorrow take care of itself.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Major Outreach Projects See Completion in 2018

BY JOE H.

My hope in 2018 is that many more suffering addicts find help through our website and SAA members.

I am so grateful for my years in recovery. When I entered the SAA rooms in 1998, I was broken, without hope, and did not want to live at times. I never imagined a life of serenity, peace, and joy. My hope in 2018 is that many more suffering addicts find help through our website and SAA members.

I am really looking forward to 2018 as the ISO has several long term projects that will be completed. The first is the launch of our new outreach website. When the Information Systems and Online Presence Committee (ISOPCom) began redevelopment of our website, we knew this would not be an easy task, since the project would be undertaken largely by volunteers donating their personal time and talents to the fellowship. With that, we thank everyone who contributed even the smallest bit into the website.

We had three primary goals for the new website: designing the website for the newcomer, enhancing our meeting search to make it easy to find meetings, and updating the technology to make our website work well on mobile devices. I think our volunteers did a great job and I am looking forward to launching the new website at the end of January.

I am also excited to be producing our new meditation book. This project has been in progress for over five years. We have all the meditations we need and are now creating the book. To everyone who submitted a meditation, thank you. We expect to have the book available by May 2018.

Our last project, started in early 2017, was producing an audio version of our Green Book. We expect to complete this book in early 2018. I want to thank the Literature Committee for their help in this project. And I wish everyone the best in recovery in 2018.

DEAR GRACE

What's the Best Way to Combat Isolation?

BY WOMEN'S
OUTREACH
SUBCOMMITTEE

Most often we have to act our way into different thinking, not think our way into different acting.

Dear Grace,

Isolation is something I struggle with all the time. I use tools like phone calls and outer circle activities, but inevitably I end up in isolation before I even know I am there. For me, I can isolate when surrounded by others just by not sharing my truth. What do you do to stay out of emotional isolation? How do you keep connecting with others on an emotional level?

—Isolated

Dear Isolated,

There are many tools you can use and some you have already listed. Most often we have to act our way into different thinking, not think our way into different acting.

For some of us this means sharing where we are on a daily basis with at least three people, checking in on how we are feeling and what is going on. If we commit to doing this, eventually it becomes habit and second nature to NOT isolate.

Step One on page 51 of the Green Book explains why regular contact is so important: “We also begin to learn how to ask for and receive help from other recovering sex addicts. Asking for help releases us from the toxic isolation that drives our addiction. As we receive help, we learn to let the walls down and to accept nurturing and care from others.”

Another way to break out of isolation is to use the tool of service — getting involved in the fellowship and being a part of it. However, some of us have found we can use service as a way of not talking about ourselves and our feelings.



Some of us have outer circle activities that get us involved in sharing with others on a regular basis. These can be based around exercise, food, art, hobbies, and community. Having a home group, a meeting that we commit to attending every week, helps others get to know us and who expect us to be there.

As the Green Book says on page 23, “As sex addicts, we are especially prone to isolating. Many of us acted out alone or in secret. Meetings are an important way of breaking this isolation. At meetings we discover that we are not unique. If we listen to the experiences and feelings we have in common, we will find that we are more alike than we are different. At meetings we learn that we can trust others to know who we really are, and

still be accepted by them.”

When we become a part of the fellowship, it becomes easier to interact with others and that feeling of isolation and loneliness slips away.

Blessings,

Grace

*Statement of Purpose for Dear Grace: to reach out to all women with a desire to stop addictive sexual behavior through this printed medium and share with the fellowship the types of questions the Grace e-mail (grace@saa-women.org) receives. *Names have been changed to protect anonymity.*

LIVING IN SOBRIETY

The Difference Between Abstinence and Sobriety

BY BEN B.

**Abstinence
is concretely
denying
behaviors.
Sobriety is
abstinence
combined with
personal and
spiritual growth.**

I am very happy and grateful to be a member of the SAA fellowship. This year, I celebrate eleven years of abstinence in SAA.

My journey started in in the mid-nineties. I came in to the rooms of SAA with long-term sobriety from alcohol and drugs, but a lot of delusion and confusion in relation to sex addiction. I worked a few steps in SAA and left the program.

After the breakup of a relationship, I came back to the program in 2001. It took me three years to get one year of continuous abstinence from my inner circle behaviors. During those three years I worked Steps One through Three over and over. But I didn't think I really needed to do a Fourth Step or the rest of the Steps, since I had done them all in the past through my alcohol and drug programs.

DELUSION!

During those three years I went to meetings, saw a therapist, and met with a sponsor. But my acting out kept progressing.

In 2004, it had reached a frightening place. My suffering seemed all-pervasive. I was in the realm of the hungry ghosts, the land of the living dead. I was confused and scared and thought that doing IV meth sounded like a good idea.

A Higher Power had a better idea.

I went to an inpatient sexual recovery program. It was not a lightweight program. But I had been suffering for so long from the negative consequences of sex addiction that I became willing to do anything that was asked of me. I signed a celibacy contract in treatment and began to experience withdrawal. Masturbation was part of the problem, and my

delusion was too great for me to admit it. For a while, my inner circle meant no sex with self or others. It was crucial to go through this period while working the Twelve Steps of SAA with a sponsor.

I found freedom from my addictive sexual behavior through the Twelve Steps of SAA. I sponsored others, and put together a plan with my sponsor and therapist for healthy sex.

But I don't confuse abstinence with sobriety.

Abstinence for me is concretely denying behaviors that I abstain from as part of my recovery. Sobriety is abstinence combined with personal and spiritual growth that focuses on the healing work of recovery. Sobriety is a process that transforms my sexuality, part of which is cultivating my sexual self. There is no recovery without sobriety.

The payoff for all this work is serenity and feelings of contentment and happiness that were impossible to imagine during the times I was acting out. I did not go from sobriety straight to serenity. I had to do a lot of work in connection with my sexuality. Nurturing my sexuality is an ongoing part of my sobriety.

Life is a celebration today. Sadness and joy all in one. One day at a time. I practice meditation, study recovery, and sponsor others. It's my job to keep my recovery fresh. I have to keep hearing

the message of recovery, contemplating the teachings of recovery and mixing them with meditation and prayer and service.

Today, I'm working on my life vision. My Higher Power is at the epicenter of all of this, constantly creating, giving and expanding. There is a lot of joy and energy that flows from my Higher Power.

I maintain my abstinence and sobriety by committing daily to recovery. It is a commitment to reality at all costs. The most powerful tool I have found is gentleness, and that's what most of us have lost our trust in. I believe that gentleness plus strength equals wisdom.

Some of the obstacles and challenges in my recovery have been complacency, spending my time in meaningless ways, or just passing time.

My recovery is about living the Steps and connecting to awakened energy, having a good strong life force, and being kind. I have come to realize that I am intact and whole, worthwhile, precious, valuable, and strong. I am so thankful to be a member of SAA!

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.

Guarding Against a Slip



What the Green Book says about how to stay on the road to sobriety

Editor's Note: All quotes in this article are from the SAA Green Book (SAA), pages 66-69.

BY KEITH G.

One of the most difficult and painful words for a sex addict is the word relapse. A relapse has the potential to derail my recovery, so I must treat the possibility of relapse very seriously.

The Green Book says it best: “Long-term abstinence is possible through the SAA program. Through the grace of God, we can find freedom from addictive sexual behavior. We don’t just act out less frequently or stop the worst behaviors while continuing others. We are abstinent from all of our inner-circle behaviors, one day at a time, over months, years, and decades. Many of us live this miracle every day, and it is possible for us all.”

So the Green Book tells me that relapse is not inevitable; it is not an expected or necessary part of recovery. And yet... it also says: “Our disease is powerful, baffling, many-sided, and deeply ingrained. It is no surprise that many of us have experienced relapse.”

The Green Book also tells me that relapse is common so I don't have to feel ashamed if it happens.

Still, I do not have to sit and wait for relapses to occur. I can take action that will enable me to be abstinent from all my inner circle, obsessive, uncontrollable behaviors. It is possible for me to avoid relapse.

How is that possible? How can I be abstinent from these obsessive behaviors, especially after a relapse? The Green Book addresses how to get back into recovery after a relapse. But it strikes me that these same questions and ideas for what to do after a relapse are exactly what I should do to prevent a relapse.

Here's what the Green Book guides us to ask ourselves: "Do we find ourselves returning to slippery situations or places? Are we attending meetings regularly, or are we finding excuses to do something else instead? Are we listening at meetings? Do we judge what others are saying rather than trying to relate to it? Are we being honest when we share? Do we have a sponsor, and have we been keeping in touch with our sponsor? Have we been fully honest with our sponsor? Are we using all of the tools of the program? Are we making phone calls? Are we praying and meditating? Are we working the Twelve Steps? Are we stuck on a particular step? Are we avoiding a step? We need to work all of the steps if we want to continue our progress."

As I work the SAA program of recovery, to prevent relapse I should contemplate the preceding questions and discuss them with my sponsor.

If I don't continue working the steps, all bets are off. Working the SAA twelve-step program will enable a power greater than me to lift the obsession so that I am no longer compelled to act out. There may be no reliable relapse-prevention program without continuing to work the SAA Twelve Steps.

The Green Book says it best: "When we have been abstinent for a length of time, complacency can become a stumbling block for us. We can't take recovery for granted."

This complacency may be the greatest danger for a recovering sex addict. Any period of successful recovery — a month, a year, several years, whatever — can lead me to slack up on my step work. If I slack up on my step work, I'm inviting a relapse to occur. Relapse is not inevitable in recovery, but relapse is much more likely for me if SAA step work loses its priority — especially if I stop working the steps altogether.

There is another word that is vital to relapse prevention: sanity. The Second Step tells me that I need to be returned to sanity, that I am insane. But Step Two tells me that working the rest of the steps is the key to being restored to sanity.

Being restored to sanity means exercis-

ing good judgment when facing tempting situations. It means contacting my sponsor for help when some obsessive thoughts return. And it means avoiding situations where I could be pulled toward relapse.

If that's not how I'm living my life, then sanity has probably not yet returned. Being restored to sanity is a strong rationale for working the steps with my sponsor with as much speed as possible – which is actually how twelve-step recovery was intended to be worked.

I need to reach some level of sanity as quickly as is reasonably possible. The sanity that is possible for me is a daily sanity, depending on my spiritual condition – not permanent sanity regardless of my spiritual condition. But sanity is possible.

Until sanity returns, it is extremely important that I continue to progress. I should implement some tools of recovery (phone calls, book-ending, boundaries, etc) to establish speed-bumps that can reduce the likelihood that I will act out.

Ultimately, I need to work the steps with a sponsor so I can get to the point where I am inventorying my actions through the day (Step Ten), improving my contact with God (Step Eleven), and helping/sponsoring other addicts (Step Twelve). I need to continue to progress, because to prevent relapse, the biggest help is probably the return of my own sanity. ●

Signs of Addiction

By Anonymous

I find it useful to create a list of middle-circle behaviors that remind me that I am still an addict. It allows me to score myself on my progress — or non-progress — in eliminating these behaviors. If I ever get to feeling overly-confident that I have “conquered this thing,” then I sit down and add a fresh batch of character defects to work on, because I never want to fall asleep again and drift back into these precursors to acting out.

Here's the beginning of the list I use as monitoring indicators, from the past and present, that I am an addict:

>>I'm driving to work and see a woman on a side street walking a dog. I think about changing, or actually do change, my route so that I drive past her. Or I drive around the block to see her twice.

>>There's an attractive woman whom I've seen working in the yard from time-to-time. I sometimes intentionally drive past her house, and intentionally or not, I always look to see if she is out in the yard.

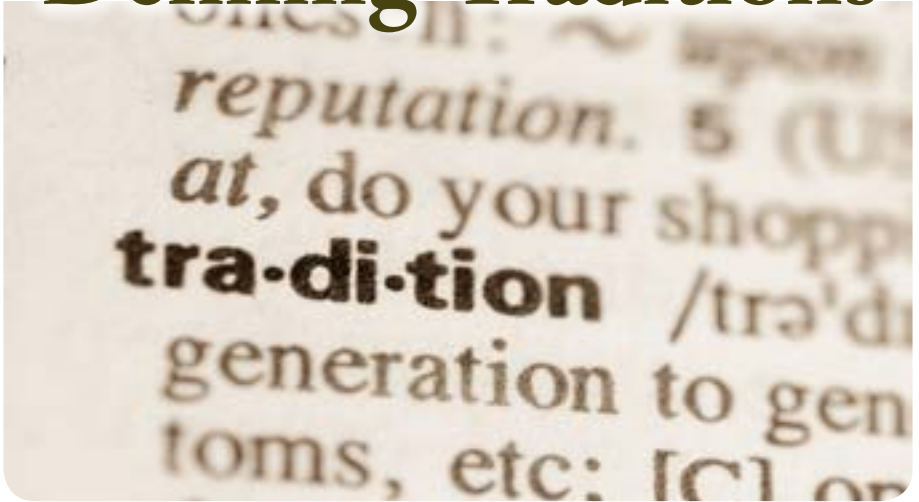
>>At a stoplight, I often look at the person in the car next to me. If she is attractive, I may stare a little bit, look back again repeatedly, or vary my speed so that she and I pass each other repeatedly.

>>I notice there are a couple of songs with triggering lyrics in my phone collection that remind me of a specific past acting out incident or partner. Despite the fact that these thoughts cross my mind, I choose not to delete the songs from my music.

What's on your list? ●

Adapted from The Check IN, the newsletter of the Indiana Intergroup

Defining Traditions



What's the best way to view the Twelve Traditions?

BY ROBBIE H.

The question of the Twelve Traditions of Sex Addicts Anonymous comes up frequently at our local group conscience meetings, at intergroup meetings, and with any international service. Our understanding of them, as individuals and groups, as well as a fellowship, seems to impact SAA at every level.

Recently, I was included in an email chain (including members and a representative from the ISO office) discussing use of the word “violate” in relation to the traditions. One email indicated that “our traditions are just guidelines and not laws. You can be in violation of a law but not guidelines.”

That really got me to thinking. If the traditions are just guidelines, does that mean they are optional? What does it mean for the still suffering sex addict and SAA as a whole if an individual or group do not follow the traditions? What really does it mean to have traditions? Are they rules, laws, guidelines, tips?

Sex Addicts Anonymous (the Green Book), on page 76, speaks to the vital

role the traditions play in our individual and collective recovery. “Just as the steps teach us the spiritual principles necessary for healthy individual recovery, the Traditions embody the spiritual principles necessary for the healthy functioning of our groups. Adhering to these principles safeguards our fellowship, thus protecting the recovery of each individual member.”

Even with this clarity about the magnitude and importance of the traditions, I was still left questioning that email and the words behind our traditions. So, I turned to my trusty dictionary to gain a better understanding.

Tradition: a long established or inherited way of thinking or acting; a continuing pattern of culture, beliefs or practices: heritage, law, or custom.

Violate: to break, infringe, or transgress (a law, rule, agreement, or promise).

Laws: principles and regulations established in a community; any written rule prescribed under an authority; code, covenant, precedent, principle of behavior.

Guideline: any guide or indication of a future course of action; code, ground rule, instruction, protocol, rule, standard procedure.

Just: only or merely.

Principle: an accepted or professed rule of action or conduct; a fundamental, primary, or general law or truth from which others are derived.

Necessary: being essential or indispensable.

Adhering: to be devoted in support or allegiance; to hold closely or firmly.

Considering what SAA’s literature says about the traditions and how they safeguard our fellowship, defining them as “just guidelines” just does not seem to fit.

SAA’s traditions are based on what we know works best. They are in our DNA, and not really a suggestion for future course of action. They are *our* traditions — always have been, always will be. Additionally, “just” undermines the fact that the traditions embody the spiritual principles necessary for the healthy functioning of our groups. Without these principles, SAA as we know it does not exist. SAA becomes some other group, offering some other message, and possibly something other than recovery from sexual addiction.

Our basic text speaks to the gifts that result from adhering to the spiritual principles embodied in the traditions.

The traditions are sacred. It is through them that our fellowship exists and continues to offer hope to the suffering (and recovering) sex addict. The traditions protect the fellowship and make recovery possible for all of us, through the Twelve Steps.

The traditions are not a separate document for or from the fellowship. They are the spiritual foundation of our program and cannot be violated, like a rule, or a policy, or a law. The traditions are more than that. They are absolute, to be followed, honored, and cherished.

The traditions do not rule the groups. They don't tell SAA what to believe, or how to behave. Rather, the traditions tell how we believe and how our groups carry the SAA message of hope and freedom through the Twelve Steps. They are not an external force imposing their will on the groups. The traditions are the internal source of our Higher Power's will for our groups. They are the foundation of the groups — all groups.

When all is said and done, it seems the best way to refer to the traditions is both simple and profound: as traditions. Anything less minimizes their value in our recovery and anything more minimizes God's role in our lives. ●

My Addiction, Summed Up in a Phone

By Bill T.

I recently had to replace my old reliable flip-phone, and it looked like I was going to have to move into the 21st century and get (gasp!) a smart phone. Such access offers a lot of advantages, but for it also opened up a dangerous possibility for acting out — one I'd had problems with in the past.

While I was dutifully investigating which phone made the most sense, and what sort of upgrades to our service plan would be required, my wife found that, joy of joys, our carrier still had flip-phones available. We could use it without having to change our grandfathered service plan, and, as she said, "Lead us not into temptation."

Now, I've had a pretty good run of sobriety, and I've been able to use a number of Internet connected devices with web access without problem since I've gotten into recovery, so my first reaction is one of defensiveness and resentment. "I can handle the web access" I said, and thought, "How dare she not trust that my recovery is solid!"

Ah yes, the old cries of the addict, "I'm in control, I can handle this." I've been fortunate to have my sobriety, but I've had problems with complacency. This was another situation where I shouldn't drop my guard.

My addiction, summed up in a phone: denial, complacency, and resentment. I've got my new flip-phone, and a better appreciation of the nature of recovery. ●

Delayed Response



Why addicts need to think long-term when it comes to recovery

BY MIKE C.

A

ddiction could be described as the “gift that keeps on giving.” I suspect that many a newcomer to our program is only searching for support to stop acting out, so that life can resume its previous path. The thinking might go, “Once I stop acting out, every-thing will be fine; my life will be back to normal.”

Unfortunately, addiction does not work that way because not all of the consequences of addiction are immediate or predictable. An addict who runs afoul of the law and is arrested may suffer the immediate consequence of public humiliation, legal expenses, loss of employment, or alienation by friends and family.

Years later, even after paying his debt to society and diligently working a strong recovery program, that same addict may be turned down for a promotion or a new job, based on having a criminal record.

An addict who is a father may lose the opportunity to walk his adult daughter down the aisle at her wedding, even though the daughter was only a child at the time the family was torn apart by her dad's addictive behavior.

Physically, an unknown STD, contracted from an acting-out partner, may surface years later, causing serious injury or even death.

Emotionally, after all of the smoke has cleared and the addict has begun rebuilding his life, he may find that his acting-out behaviors have left him unable to cultivate a loving, caring relationship with a new significant other.

It may be that newcomers who attend SAA meetings for a short time and then disappear have achieved an "acceptable level of misery," which seems to have mitigated the immediate consequences of their bottoming-out experience.

If and when they show back up at a future meeting, it may be because the long term consequences

The rationale behind 'Keep Coming Back' is that all of the consequences of one's addiction do not necessarily manifest immediately.

of the addiction have reared their ugly heads.

A common slogan heard in many Twelve-Step meetings is, "Keep Coming Back." The rationale behind that adage is that all of the consequences of one's addiction do not necessarily manifest immediately.

So, when the lingering effects of the addiction present themselves, it is good to have a safe place to go and to have developed a strong support system to help weather the storm.

An ongoing commitment to recovery benefits the addict, his group, any sponsees he may have and those in his circle of family and friends. It also provides a lifeline for when any lasting consequences of his addiction arise. ●

Reprinted from The Check IN, the newsletter of the Indiana Intergroup

A close-up photograph of a red pushpin stuck into a map. The map shows various colored lines representing roads or geographical features. The background is slightly blurred, focusing attention on the pushpin and the map it's on.

Area Assembly

A closer look at area structure

BY JIM L.

B

elow is a summary of why the fellowship is moving to a new area structure and what you can do to help this process. The Area Coordinating Committee (ACC) encourages readers to print out the summary and take it to their meetings to begin a discussion about how the group can participate in the area formation process.

The two main goals for Area formation are:

- 1) Increased participation in discussion and votes that matter to SAA as a whole.
- 2) Manageable international conferences that will nonetheless be representative of the fellowship as a whole.

Here's a closer look at Goal 1:

Areas will hold area assemblies to discuss and vote on the same business motions that will be voted on later that year at the annual meeting of the conference. This means:

- » Every group that chooses to can send a Group Service Representative (GSR) to participate in the decision-making process by attending an area assembly.
- » GSRs at each area assembly will each elect a conference delegate to carry the area conscience in matters before the conference.

Most areas will be based on geography and will likely have the advantage of reasonable driving times to area assemblies.

Of course, this will not be the case for areas based on electronic meeting modality or common language or geographically large areas. These areas may choose to meet electronically for their assemblies.

Here's a closer look at Goal 2:

Currently, each of the nearly 1,800 groups can theoretically send a delegate to the conference. A meeting of hundreds of delegates could be highly unmanageable and inefficient because:

- » Though the exact number of areas is not yet determined, it is likely there will be less than 100 areas initially, with each able to provide a delegate to the conference.
- » There will also be voting members from the the ISO Board of Directors, the ISO Literature committee and the ISO staff. An annual meeting of the conference of this size will allow for more participation by and interaction between delegates.

Sooner or later, a restructuring will be necessary. The fellowship has decided that the time is now. There are some deadlines looming soon. This is where you come in.

The ACC needs your help!

The ACC is coordinating the area formation process, which is designed to be group-driven. This means driven by you, the members of the fellowship! What areas make sense to you?

There are only a handful of groups/members that have put together area proposals and submitted them to the ACC. The ACC needs service-oriented members to step up and help by getting involved in the area formation process. Here are some ways how:

- » Become an Area Advocate: start contacting members of different meetings in your vicinity or with a common electronic meeting modality or language and start a discussion;
- » Even if you can't spearhead the effort yourself, you can raise the issue at your next intergroup meeting, start a discussion at the meetings you attend, and/or recruit other service-minded members to get involved;
- » Become a GSR and encourage other meetings to elect GSRs. These will be the representatives at future area assemblies.

For more information and forms, go to saa-iso.org and log into the ACC link, or email questions to acc.feedback@saa-iso.org. ●

DEAR WILL

How to Deal With Problem Sponsees

BY WILL

**If you don't
hear from them
as often as you
would like, let it
go and find the
next one.**

Dear Will,

I'm a year and a half sober and I'm now being of service more to those who are struggling with sex addiction. I'm disappointed that several ask for help in the program, but do not seem to want to always follow my suggestions or to be accountable or honest. I've let several sponsees go recently because they tell me they want help, but I perceive they are not willing to go to any lengths for their recovery. And I'm becoming concerned about my own sobriety. What do you suggest?

Frustrated Helper

Dear FH,

First of all, congratulations on your sobriety and for your willingness to work the Twelfth Step.

I have two questions for you. The first is, "But you stayed sober, didn't you?" How many times have I heard (and said) the phrase "You are helping me more than I am helping you"? The second is, "What response did you get from your own sponsor?"

It is not my place to tell you that you may be being too hard on your sponsees, especially since I haven't seen you and them in action. However, it is not always possible to find the ideal SAA member in each person who comes into the program and certainly not in each person who comes to you for sponsorship. Folks accept the program at different paces.

What really puzzles me is that you are worried about your own sobriety because the folks with whom you are working do not seem to really want it. One expression that I hear with some frequency is, "It's about the other person and not about me."

Do you think your sobriety is somehow not valid if the persons you are sponsoring may not be as ready for the program as you were when you came in? Even when you encounter the one who grabs onto the program from day one, it is once again about that person. You are “merely” a channel for the Higher Power to work through.

The fact that you have “fired” several sponsees recently causes me to wonder if maybe you are being too quick to fire them. I suggest that you try a different tack: that of letting your sponsees fire themselves. If you don’t hear from them as often as you would like, let it go and find the next one. If a week or two go by without your hearing from this or that sponsee, pick up the phone and make a short call to say hello and let the sponsee know that you haven’t forgotten the relationship.

In that way, you are being of service as you state at the beginning of your letter, and that is what the Twelfth Step asks; it doesn’t say anything about results. Please remember that there are plenty of ways to be of service besides formal sponsorship. That’s why God created the phone or the text message, although I am old and curmudgeonly enough to believe that a text message doesn’t offer the heart-to-heart connection that hearing the voice of another does. There is never a shortage of people who just



want to be heard, and being the one to listen offers its own different but no less satisfactory rewards.

Not only is there more than one way of being of service, but there is more than one way of being in the outer circle. Maybe the relative desert of sponsees you are experiencing now is your Higher Power’s way of encouraging you to spend some time taking better care of yourself.

Finally, I do believe that the sponsees who are genuine about the program are out there. I have seen too many of them to believe otherwise. To quote one more expression I hear fairly frequently, “don’t quit before the miracle happens.” Good luck to you in your sobriety and your work with others.

Will

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

STORIES OF SERVICE

Ask Higher Power How You Can Be Of Service

BY LAURA T.

I have come to believe that my Higher Power had a plan for my life before I even had a grain of an idea.

A few months ago, while cleaning my apartment, I discovered two old flyers that I had tucked away under a bowl on top of my refrigerator the year before. One of them said, “Save the date for the international women’s retreat!” and the other one said, “Write for The Outer Circle.”

I just couldn’t believe it: within that year, I had begun a major service project in women’s outreach and sponsorship and I was regularly proofreading “The Outer Circle.” I was literally “bowled over!”

Bit by bit, I have come to believe that my Higher Power had a plan for my life before I even had a grain of an idea.

These two projects continue to enrich my recovery in so many ways and strengthen my commitment to the program. Not only did I start proofreading the newsletter, I read and absorbed it (twice!). I’ve also penned several articles for *The Outer Circle* and received wonderful feedback from them.

And my work with women sponsees and being part of a renaissance of women in SAA who are visible again brings me such joy and hope. I encourage everyone to ask your Higher Power how you too can be of service and be “bowled over” by the answers.

Stories of Service are 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

Don't Discount How Much AA Has Contributed to SAA Sobriety

This letter is in response to the From the Board article in the Sept-Oct issue of The Outer Circle, titled, "Do All Groups Carry the SAA Message?"

Maybe we take for granted that AA literature originally created a proliferation of strong SAA sponsorship family trees. These are still an unshakable source of strength for the still- suffering sex addict.

The Green Book states on page 21: "There is no one correct or SAA-sanctioned way to complete the Twelve Steps. Most of us learned how to work the steps from our sponsors. Many of us have also gained insight from books or adapted methods from other twelve-step programs."

Maybe we should be asking the questions, how much sobriety and how many groups, individuals, sponsorship family trees and regions of SAA society are rooted in using the AA basic texts?

Also, how much did we exclusively (pretty much?) use AA resources in our history, story and foundation over the decades and decades beyond our pamphlets before our basic text came out five years into this century? What is our true story and usage of literature among all our groups from the beginning?

I think our current state of literature should be named from a definite source, not just what has been "heard" among who's grapevine. Maybe it's mixing apples and oranges to lump AA's influence with other S groups' literature coming in now.

We have had the chance over the decades to use other S group's basic text literature and have chosen in many instances to use our founder's AA way as written in the in SAA's first personal story. Is it broken?

Trav N.

Portland, Ore., fellowship

Letters to the editor are welcome. Please send your feedback to toc@saa-recovery.org. Letters may be edited for space and content.

FROM THE BOARD

SAA Meditation Book Nears Completion

**BY MIKE L., AT LARGE
BOARD MEMBER.**

**All of the
meditations carry
the SAA message,
starting with the
initial quote that
comes from our
literature.**

Some very exciting days in the growth of SAA literature are upon us. We are about to repeat the thrilling experience that took place at the SAA convention in New Orleans in 2005 when the Green Book was introduced.

Those of us who were around back then remember that the fellowship was by no means ready to rest on its laurels once the Green Book was released, and requests for our own meditation book began to increase. Formal plans for putting together a meditation book subcommittee began in mid 2007. There were many things to consider in those early days: did we want just one editor or more than one, what things would be included in the editor's job description, and what was the typical length of meditations in other books, to name just three.

Word got out to the fellowship that the process of creating an SAA meditation book had begun, and proposed meditations began to trickle in. By mid 2010, we had enough meditations that we felt confident to start taking editor applications, and it didn't take us long to get quite a few of those as well. I was fortunate to get to serve, along with three other wonderful individuals, on the committee who would select the editor.

By early October of 2010 the four of us had unanimously selected our editor who has been with us through the entire process of putting the book together. Between then and now. There have been many monthly teleworkshops where folks could write meditations, as well as one or

two workshops at each convention (and recordings of those), not to mention the many who wrote and submitted meditations independent of these group settings. And in the last month or two, we finally passed 366 meditations that were approved by both the Meditation Book Subcommittee and the Literature Committee. So it will not be long now...

Because of the enthusiasm of the fellowship to have a meditation book, the Meditation Book Subcommittee, supported by the Literature Committee, decided not to wait until the complete book was finished before letting the fellowship see some of the finished meditations.

In March 2014, we issued the famous “raspberry sorbet” booklet of 52 meditations on Steps and the Traditions, and in January 2016 we followed that booklet up with the “lime” booklet of 52 more meditations on topics and tools. Two years’ worth of meditations to tide the fellowship over until the release of the meditation book. The “raspberry sorbet” booklet has been out of print for a while now, although copies can probably still be found at some meetings.

If your group hasn’t yet taken the

opportunity to use some of the wonderful meditations in the booklets at your meetings, I encourage you to give them a try. Many SAA members have contributed to the book, and the Meditation Book Subcommittee has striven to retain the individual voice of each member. All of the meditations carry the SAA message, starting with the initial quote of each meditation that comes from our literature.

Other than the Green Book, the SAA meditation book is the most ambitious piece of literature our fellowship has so far produced. While I fully expect that we will continue to produce these larger pieces of literature, along with the booklets and pamphlets that have been produced all along, there will probably not be another piece of SAA literature that reflects the experience, strength and hope of so many members of the fellowship; well, at least not until such as we decide to produce a second meditation book.

I hope you will have a chance to take a closer look at the booklets. As the nicknames for the two booklets indicate, they give a wonderful “taste” of what is in store for the fellowship when the actual book comes out, not too long from now.

ISO NEWS

Nominating Committee Accepting 2018 Service Resumes

Take your Twelve Step service to a new level in 2018!

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.

Board Approves Translation Cap, Face-toFace LitCom Meeting

The Board of Trustees had a busy October and November that included approval of several financial decisions related to translation and the fellowship's 2018 budget. Here's a look at the Board's actions:

October

- » Approved motion to cap the Literature Committee Translation/project reserve account at \$50,000. When the reserve account goes below \$50,000 replenish the account using the previous formula approved by the board (See below for the board motion and formula). Move the current funds in excess of \$50,000 to the ISO checking account.
- » Approved motion to cap the capital reserve account at \$10,000. When the reserve account goes below \$10,000 replenish the account as soon as possible.

ISO NEWS

Move the current funds in excess of \$10,000 to the ISO checking account.

- » Approved motion to open an ISO of SAA, Inc. brokerage account to accept securities donated to the ISO by SAA members and only accept shares in street name (i.e., transferred through brokerage accounts). Amendment: Upon receiving such securities, they will be liquidated promptly and the funds transferred to the ISO bank account.
- » Approved motion to change the endowment fund type we have with the Greater Houston Community Foundation to allow the Board of Trustees of the ISO of SAA, Inc. to request grants of any amount at any time of the year.

November

- » Approved the ISO of SAA Inc. 2018 Budget.
- » Approved funding for up to twelve Literature Committee representatives (which includes the editor of TOC) for face-to-face meetings that coincide with the 2018 Conference. Alternates who take the place of a voting member would receive full funding, if the voting member were not able to attend.
- » Approved funding for up to ten Conference Steering Committee (CSC) representatives or alternates to fully participate in meetings and activities of the annual delegate meeting of the ISO to be held on October 12 & 13, 2018, at Houston, TX. This funding shall allow representatives or alternates to:
 1. Participate in two full days of pre-Conference meetings of the CSC, to be held on October 10 & 11, 2018, at the Conference venue.
 2. Participate in two full days of the annual meeting of the Conference of October 12 & 13, 2018.
 3. Participate in one day of post-Conference meetings on October 14, 2018.

Standard travel reimbursements are requested for seven days (five service days and two travel days) and six nights. Travel days will be 9 October and 15 October 2018. Representatives and alternates can begin travel the afternoon of Sunday, 14 October 2018.

ISO NEWS

Individual Donations Exceed Expectations, But Remain on Target

In the month of November our net income was \$5,916.94. We had budgeted for a net income of \$2,286.

Our SAA Green Book sales were below our estimate by \$1,337 in November. For the year we are at 98 percent of our estimated SAA Green Book sales.

Our pamphlet and booklet were below our estimate by \$1,572.45 for November. For the year we are at 91 percent of our estimated pamphlet and booklet sales.

Our bronze medallion sales were below our estimate by \$75 in November. For the year we are at 110.8 percent of our estimated bronze medallion sales.

Our total sales for November were below our estimate by \$3,062.09. For the year we are at 96.9 percent of our estimated sales.

Individual donations exceeded our estimate by \$8,284.69 for November. For the year we are at 98.5 percent of our estimated individual donations.

Group donations were below our estimate by \$706.79 in November. For the year we are at 104.1 percent of our estimated group donations.

Our product inventory is valued at \$66,405.77.

Our expenses exceeded our estimate by \$2,161.14 in November. For the year we are at 101.9 percent of our estimated expenses.

Our operational reserve is at \$167,694.00 and is fully funded.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

In Your Service,

Joe H.

Executive Director

LGBT Outreach Committee Seeks Interim Chair

The LGBT Outreach Committee of the ISO is looking for an interim chair, to fill the current one-year term, following a resignation due to health issues.

ISO NEWS

Suggested qualifications for international service, leadership, sobriety, and commitment to Twelve-Step service are all important; there are no gender or sexual-orientation preference requirements.

The term runs until the next international conference in Houston, in 2018. Duties include chairing the monthly LGBT telemeeting.

For information and to contact the LGBT committee, contact the ISO office at (USA / Canada): 1-800-477-8191 or (anywhere): +1-713-869-4902.p.

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

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

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

The Outer Circle

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

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.
BoardIM@saa-recovery.org
LitCom: Vacant.; Alternate: Vacant
LitComIM@saa-litcom.org

North Central

Board: Dawn S (vice secretary).; Alternate: Thea L.
BoardNC@saa-recovery.org
LitCom: John W.; Alternate: Vacant
LitComNC@saa-litcom.org

Northeast

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

North Pacific

Board: Cliff G.; Alternate: Howard C.
BoardNP@saa-recovery.org

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

South Central

Board: Paul M. (Chair); Alternate: Vacant.
BoardSC@saa-recovery.org
LitCom: Vacant.; Alternate: Vacant.
LitComSC@saa-litcom.org

Southeast

Board: John J. (Treasurer); Alternate: Vacant
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

Board: Lisa S (vice chair).; Bob L.; Mike L. Ray L.
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.