

THE OUTER CIRCLE

Carrying the message of hope to the still-suffering sex addict since 1988

LIFE ISN'T FAIR! *(THANK GOD!)*



PLUS

- * Metaphors of Recovery
- * Half-Measures
- * Dear ISAAC
- * Tradition Eight





International Service Organization of SAA, Inc.

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The Outer Circle Mission

The mission of *The Outer Circle* is to provide information from the ISO and to share the experience, strength, and hope members have obtained from working the SAA program of recovery. As the first iteration put it in 1988, *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 page 30. To have an article considered for publication, see our Submission Guidelines on page 31.

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

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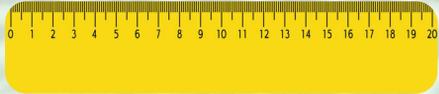
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FROM THE EDITOR

Assets and needs

BY DON S.
THE OUTER CIRCLE
EDITOR

Personally, I would relish the opportunity to edit articles from a rainbow of voices and perspectives – not necessarily about varieties of perspectives, but from a variety of perspectives.

Good golly, but one of my favorite rhetorical devices is (no, not a euphemism) a good metaphor, and this issue is chock-a-block with them. In the article on half-measures, I was personally struck by the time-honored metaphor of recovery being a journey, a road, and not a destination. So, the question is not, “Are we there yet?” but rather, “Where am I right now?” Am I “trudging the road of happy destiny” or am I in some fast lane, or the ditch, or up to the axles in mud, or stumbling through a game-trail in the woods, or locked out of my car, or ...? Aren't metaphors fun! My experience in recovery is that I am always in motion. I'm either getting closer to or further from acting out.

Another helpful recovery metaphor (ok, simile) is that recovery is like a sieve. As long as I keep putting stuff in, I'm ok. But all I have to do is stand still, and eventually there will be nothing left for me to draw upon when the going gets rough and I'm driving through a blizzard.

On the other hand, pretty much everything in this issue was penned by guys. Don't get me wrong, some of my best friends are guys!

I was taught that my sex is the physiology I inhabit, and that my gender is how I identify myself. For the most part, sex comes in just a couple models, but gender is a rainbow continuum of rich and diverse qualities and perspectives. And voices.

Personally, I would relish the opportunity to edit articles from a rainbow of voices and perspectives – not necessarily about varieties of perspectives, but from a variety of perspectives. We all work the same program, but we each have a unique lens on the journey. It would be great to see this fine journal exhibit the richness of voices and journeys that we have in our fellowship. So, I'm putting out the call:

More ES&H from more voices and more perspectives, please!

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Excitement up ahead!

BY PAUL M.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
ISO OF SAA, INC.

There are many things in the works at the ISO office.

Last issue I spoke about working the Steps and giving service to our community. Later this month we will have the 2022 ISO Convention. The workshops look like they are going to be great and I can't wait to go. Please join me by going to saa-convention.org. If you need the password, please call the ISO office.

There are many things in the works at the ISO office. We are working on getting our data into Salesforce, and also working on SAA Connect. SAA Connect will first be a public site where people can find us and search and read *The Outer Circle* issues, listen to some selected audios from past conventions, and even search and read from the *Tools of Recovery* and *Voices of Recovery*. The member section will be opened when we get Salesforce up and connected. Members will have their own log-on and access many different forums for discussion about service activities or even group discussion on the steps or sponsorship. Members will eventually be able to track their orders, donations, make changes to their meeting information, and many more things. We are looking forward to this finally coming to production, but it will still take some time to get it running.

One other thing we will install in Salesforce is the ability to text information to our members. This will be an opt-in service. More information about that service will be announced when it is ready.

So please join us at the 2022 ISO Convention where I will give more detail on all the things I have discussed here, and you can find great recovery workshops that will enhance your recovery and help others.

DEAR GRACE

The importance of attending meetings

**BY WOMEN'S
OUTREACH
COMMITTEE**

*In meetings, we
get to hear from a
variety of people
who are living full
lives in recovery,
who can help
guide us, and
who broaden our
support.*

Dear Grace,

Several people have suggested that I start recovery by going to meetings. Why can't I just work the Steps with a sponsor? I'm not able to go to meetings, but I really want to get going on recovery.

**Signed,
No meetings for me**

Dear No meetings,

It's great to hear that you're motivated to get started on your recovery! You're right: "The actual work of recovery is described in the Twelve Steps" (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 20). Also, "one of the most vital aspects of the program is sponsorship" (page 13). Addicts may find relief from their addiction solely through step work. However, meetings are also vital for many reasons.

Meetings can help in deciding whether SAA is the right program for you and can open the door to finding a good match in a sponsor. Both are crucial in our commitment to working the Steps. In fact, "many groups suggest that newcomers attend at least six meetings before deciding if the program is right for them" ("Getting a Sponsor"). Also, many of us went to a number of meetings before finding a sponsor who had the recovery we wanted.

Having only one voice or one guide in recovery is unnecessarily limiting. Sponsors share their own perspective and experiences. They may also share things they've heard from others in meetings and outreach calls. Sponsors are not perfect, and it can be difficult to know if your sponsor is a good fit for you without knowing any others.

In meetings, we get to hear from a variety of people who are living full lives in recovery, who



can help guide us, and who broaden our support. “Meetings are the heart of the SAA fellowship. At meetings we emerge from our shame, secrecy, and fear, into a community of people who share the common goal of freedom from sex addiction” (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 10) We read the SAA literature together and share our experience, strength, and hope with each other.

It can be helpful to explore what is holding you back from attending meetings to help find possible solutions. SAA offers so many different types of meetings every day that it would be hard not to find one that fits into our schedule. If there are no in-person meetings in your area, or if you face logistic challenges like care-giving responsibilities or limited transportation options, you may want to explore the many telephone meetings or online meetings listed on the SAA website.

Perhaps fear is holding you back from embracing meetings. Through courage in facing that fear, we are set on a new path in our lives. “Attending our first SAA meeting is a crucial step in moving away from isolation into

*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.*

fellowship, and ultimately into recovery” (page 10). While it may seem scary, many of us find a new freedom through our connection with other sex addicts. “We need the support, encouragement, and sense of belonging that meetings give us, in order to make the dramatic changes in our lives that recovery brings” (page 11). Ultimately, meetings can enrich our recovery and strengthen our sobriety. Even our pamphlet, “Getting a Sponsor,” stresses the importance of both sponsorship and meetings. “It is a proven practice, handed down through generations, that recovery from addiction can only take place with others. We recover as individuals, but we do not recover alone. We recover together. We recover when we help others and when we allow others to help us. Meetings, outreach calls, fellowship, and sponsorship are all important tools used in our recovery.” We invite you to join us in taking advantage of all these tools.

In service,
Grace

Recovery Metaphor



BY JIM L.

Word pictures, such as metaphors, are often helpful to enhance our understanding and appreciation of a particular situation or process. During a recent conversation with a program friend, who is a homebuilder, we realized that renovation of an older home held many similarities to the twelve-step program of recovery.

A major renovation project begins with questions, plans, and decisions. What changes are desired? Are the proposed changes possible? Can I trust my builder to carry out the proposed changes? When convinced, we turn the project over to our builder.

Sound familiar? It sounds a lot like Steps One, Two, and Three. We enter the SAA fellowship with a desire to make changes. We are not sure that such changes are possible, but we come to believe that they are. We then make plans, perhaps obtain drawings (blueprints), and then, when convinced that we want to proceed, we decide to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understand God. To direct the on-site logistics and scheduling, we enlist the aid of an experienced supervisor (sponsor).

The renovation work then begins. The very first thing that happens is a large dumpster is delivered to the site. Experienced builders know that there will be a considerable amount of old items and a lot of scrap wood and materials that will need to be discarded and hauled off. Builders often encounter hidden rot

that was unknown or buried—damage that needs to be dealt with before renovation can be continued. As the cleaning out of the old begins, we watch load after load being hauled away. We realize we are now totally dependent on our builder to restore our home to a functional abode. Steps Four, Five, and Six resemble the cleaning out of the old in preparation for the new. We catalog our moral failures. We identify how the nature of our wrongs is related to our addiction, and then we explore the character defects underlying those old behaviors. As with a renovation project, we often find our own hidden rot—significant issues that we were completely unaware of, issues that need attention in order for our recovery to progress.

It becomes increasingly clear that we have to give up any illusion of perspective or control, so, in Step Seven we ask God to remove our shortcomings. We can't do it, but we come to believe that God can and will if we trust and let go.

At this point, our builder goes to work to restore our home. If all goes well, we gradually see our dreams for a new living space begin to take shape. Frequent visits assure us that we are on the right track, and with every passing day we realize the new is becoming a reality.

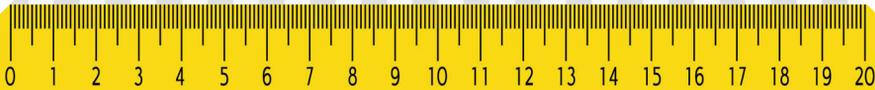
In our recovery program, we make frequent “visits” to make sure we are on the right track—praying and

meditating regularly, calling our sponsor, attending SAA meetings, reading program literature, and listening to recovery recordings. We offer amends to people we have harmed and, when possible, restore damaged relationships. We begin to recognize that, having surrendered our will and our lives to the care of the God of our understanding, God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves. The promises of the program begin to be a reality.

When the major renovation is complete, we move back into the house at the same address, but we experience a whole new way of living. We enjoy many new conveniences, comforts, colors, and challenges. We gradually adjust to the new space, and we are delighted with the result.

In Steps Ten, Eleven, and Twelve of our recovery, we embark on a whole new way of living. We adopt a new daily routine. We enjoy a new happiness that we had never experienced before. As we pursue conscious contact with God in our desire to stay spiritually fit, we are filled with gratitude, and we discover contentment. Out of gratitude and humbleness from our new-found way of living, we want to share our experience with others, and we make ourselves available for those seeking to remodel their lives.

Perhaps each of us can ask, “How is my spiritual renovation project going?” ©



How I Ran Out of Half-Measures

BY SERGIO C.

"Half-measures availed us nothing. We stood at the turning point. We asked [God's] protection and care with complete abandon" (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, page 59).

I started in Sex Addicts Anonymous in November, 2010. From my first meeting, I experienced a human openness and warmth that I did not imagine possible in the midst of my compulsive behaviors. It also didn't take me long to realize that the Twelve Steps and the SAA fellowship were the place for me.

I took my first three steps with a sponsor, assumed small service positions, and experienced positive changes in my life. But despite my good intentions, my identification with this new community, and the examples of those who received me, time would show me that my addiction had more reserves than I would have liked to admit. My efforts so far were not enough for me to avoid my rock bottom.

After eight years in the program, my illness finally came to collect its outstanding bills. My half-measures had not been able to prevent the most bitter drink of my existence. My partner demanded a separation because I had not stopped my compulsive behaviors. I only managed not-very-long periods of abstinence followed by more acting out. She felt that it hurt both our relationship and our young children.

That is the closest I have come to feeling deprived of liberty – having my heart in one place and my body trapped in a different place. I don't wish it on anyone. This was the suffering that finally ended my half-measures and brought me to a definite turning point. I would like to share a few things I did that I feel have made a significant difference in this stage of my recovery.

It doesn't matter where you are on your road of recovery. I appreciate that you can have this newsletter in your hands, and I pray this little story can affirm you on your path just as writing it affirms me on mine. If others have been able to recover, I can, we can.

1. I kept coming back. My addict loves to talk about my three and a half years of sobriety and the recovery that I enjoy today. He doesn't like talking so much about the eight years it took me, nor that I was kicked out of my home. However, I am

convinced that those years were not in vain. I worked the program to the best of my ability at the time. And maybe the best thing was that I kept coming back no matter what.

2. I took my recovery out of the closet. For a long time, I did my recovery discreetly, too discreetly. When my wife and I separated, I understood that if my program happens to be one more of my secrets, it is not that different from my addiction. Anyway, people would ask me the reason for our separation, so I decided to be completely honest about who I am. I am a recovering sex addict. I was separated because of my compulsive use of pornography. That was the reason for my separation, and I wasn't going to hide it.

As an act of delicacy with myself, I do not announce it in public. But for that same delicacy, I have integrated it into my life. The people I love know that I am in recovery: my family, my wife's family, my closest friends, my peers from support groups, my community of faith, and anyone who needs help. I choose the when, where, and the level of detail I disclose, and I trust my higher power to guide me. I have experienced deep healing in feeling accepted after sharing. I'd never allowed myself to experience anything like this before.

3. I carried out my Fourth Step. This is another of the medals for which I do not claim a lot on my own merit. My higher power put several factors in sync that achieved a magnificent result with just a little of my good will. At the

same time as I separated from my wife, I lost my job, and this welcomed me to a quiet and spacious place. Fortunately, I also kept working with a sponsor. I was able to dedicate all that free time and space to my program which, at that time, was Step Four. I honestly don't know if I would have completed it if these events had not coincided. My higher power likes to work overtime for me.

4. I worked with an addiction therapist. At the time of separation, my wife and I agreed to eventually seek professional help as a complement to my recovery program. In line with my newfound honesty, I sought out an addiction specialist. At another time I might have rationalized a refusal to take such an action. Why an addictologist? Isn't a general psychologist more than enough? Is it? But it was the kind of thing I had no interest in doing anymore.

Few things have been as arduous in my process as the first sessions with this therapist. In front of my wife and listening only to my origin story, the therapist told me my favorite consumables and my possible reasons for consuming them. Until that very moment, those two factors had been divorced for me. Linking my personal history with my addiction with that degree of depth marked a before-and-after in my life. Eventually, the therapist recommended that I visit a psychiatrist because she suspected that I had dysthymia, a mild, long-term depression. That was

a challenge in itself. I was hoping to feel like a normal guy at some point, and this did not help. Then very wisely she told me, "Just try it. If you don't like the results, you can quit." That has helped me greatly.

5. I followed my sponsor's suggestions. Over time, my sponsors had given me suggestions that I ignored:

- Don't put anything before my recovery because the illness will take it away from me.
- Go to at least two meetings a week.
- Make the program a lifestyle.

Now I see how much ego is behind every suggestion that I did not heed. And it is not that I didn't pay attention to the suggestions, but that alone was not enough. A sponsor whose suggestions I don't take cannot help me.

6. I made friends in the program. For a long time my program stayed with the meetings I attended and the literature that I read. Little by little I was opening up and sharing outside the classrooms. A lunch, a coffee, a retreat-style walk. Those personal connections and my own openness to cultivate them have made a huge difference.

7. I stopped waiting for someone else to do it. I absorbed the Twelfth Step intensely. When my group needed a secretary, I volunteered. When the meeting format was damaged, I typed and laminated a new one. When the ISO asked for a General Service Representative, I again volunteered. Until then I had avoided highly exposed roles.

Being a secretary brought some friction. I made mistakes. When I realized it, I admitted it. I spoke to whom I knew I should speak to, and I apologized to whomever I knew I should apologize to. But despite all this, it seemed healthier to me than keeping quiet and giving in just to avoid conflict.

Today I am more aware of what my actions imply. I learned that not everything is on my side. Others are free to make their decisions as much as I am. I learned that an isolated group is not basically healthy, and that the group is much more than a role or any one of us alone. That is powerful. ☺

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» More on page 30



Life Isn't Fair

BY ANONYMOUS

I wrote my first Fourth Step in AA. Somehow, I had the presence of soul to include all my sexual partners with whom my motives were not clean (which was all of them). When I first tried giving my Fifth Step to a pastor whom I did not know, he referred to the sexual portion of my Fourth Step as “your magnum opus.” I was yet to look at my use of pornography and compulsive masturbation, and it would be well over a decade before I actually admitted to sex addiction and my powerlessness over it despite being very involved in my recovery through the Twelve Steps and service. The awareness of my selfishness with others, however, allowed me to get “cash-register honest” about my sex addiction, and no longer manipulate other people to get sex.

I moved several times in early recovery, but I finally got and used a sponsor, and was able to give a real Fifth Step. After Steps Six and Seven, when I started writing my Eighth Step. I used the same approach as with my Fourth Step: I would block out time – usually thirty to sixty minutes. I would sit down with pen and paper, and for the allotted time, have no distractions – no music or TV or eating, not even coffee; just pen and paper. If nothing came of it, I could stop at the end of the time period. If the time was up but I was on a roll, I would keep writing until the emotions went from painful to overwhelming. My life was very full and busy in those days, and it took about two months to complete my Eighth. Again, my sexual transgressions figured prominently. A few weeks after finishing the step, I happened to pick it up and

flip through it. Just glimpsing the pages of fear-based, runaway selfishness hit me like a punch in the chest. I closed the notebook and stood there stunned. Then a still, small voice said, “But, you’re not doing this anymore.” It was enough for me to go about my day. It was also a signal victory in that, for the first time in my life, I was able to face all that I had done without recoiling in shame only to commit the same transgressions again.

A few months later, as I was getting ready for work, I was standing at my toaster when, in a flash, the contents of my Eighth Step shot through my mind in one overwhelming burst. My knees got wobbly and I had to grab the kitchen counter to steady myself. The thought crossed my mind that I didn’t know how I can go on living, given the sum of the emotional wreckage I had generated. Once again, a still, small voice broke in and said, “But look at your life now. You have a job, it’s meaningful work, you enjoy it, you’re good at it, and, (perhaps strangest of all) your bosses like your work and have given you a promotion.

All I had really done was get off the merry-go-round and accept help. The mercy of my Higher Power had done much of the rest.

You’re also getting an education, paying your own way and getting good grades. You don’t have much money, but you have a car that starts and it’s paid for. Though nothing fancy, you have a clean, dry, warm place to sleep, and you have enough to eat. You are active in service and are actually contributing to the healing of others. You have a community of friends who trust you – friends whose trust you have earned.” I was able to eat my breakfast and get to work on time.

As an aside, though I had always felt there was a loving intelligence behind our universe, I was later to see this moment at the toaster as a vivid demonstration of that loving intelligence, not so much in what was said, but in the facts behind what was said. All I had really done was get off the merry-go-round and accept help. The mercy of my higher power had done much of the rest.

Later, when I was able to consider the contents of my Eighth Step more coolly, the thought crossed my mind that, if life were fair, I’d be dead. Multiple times over.

Several years later I was hanging out with a couple recovery friends on a warm summer evening. We were going to see a band in a club and we had found a retaining wall near a store where we could sit and wait for the club to open. One of my friends was

relating a situation he was going through. With all the understanding I could express, I uttered, “Yeah, life isn’t fair.” The third member of our group immediately chimed in with, “Thank God!”

Many of us in SAA are victims of childhood sexual abuse. Though I have no memories, a series of written assignments for a therapist indicated to her, singly and unambiguously, that I had been sexually abused by a woman, probably my mother. Though it is a possible genesis for my sexual acting out, it in no way diminishes my responsibility for all I had done. But all I had to do was get off the merry-go-round and make room for my higher power to start the healing. In my journey of recovery, I have found the universe to be, ultimately if not immediately, loving and forgiving. My biggest challenges continue to be suspending judgement and getting out of my own way. As I seek Higher Power’s guidance, many doors are closed, but some open. And that is another story, but, when I entered the room with the open door, I experienced the axiom that my higher power really does want me to be happy, joyous, and free.

So, dear friends, in addition to the wonderful, life-saving slogans we have, I have added a slogan as an antidote to self-pity, a reminder of where I have come from, and a source for humility and gratitude:

Life isn’t fair, thank God! ©

LIVING IN SOBRIETY

Cultivating a daily spiritual connection

BY KEVIN C.

REPRINTED FROM
THE OUTER CIRCLE
MAY – JUNE 2016

I am now enjoying more than eight and a half years of sobriety, one day at a time, 'contingent on the maintenance of my spiritual condition.'

In the course of being battered and pummeled by sex addiction for some 35 years, I could occasionally muster as many as five or six days of freedom from compulsive masturbation. But I could never have imagined living into the five years of steady sobriety required to write this column. By the grace of the Higher Power of my understanding, I am now enjoying more than eight and a half years of sobriety, one day at a time, “contingent on the maintenance of my spiritual condition,” as the AA Big Book puts it.

I actually came into SAA twenty years ago after having found good recovery in two other Twelve Step programs and about ten years after having heard our founder speak at a professional workshop. (Some of us are slow to get a clue!) What a surprise to finally walk into that church basement for my first meeting and discover the attendees weren't a bunch of weirdos after all — at least no weirder than I! That was actually the first of many surprises I would find in my SAA recovery journey, including learning to integrate my sexuality as one part of a rich and healthy life, rooted in a loving relationship of joy rather than the desperation and futility of addiction.

Living in sobriety today starts with cultivating a daily spiritual connection and being open to the variety of ways this unfolds. Paradoxically, this takes the onus of responsibility off my shoulders and, at the same time, empowers me to take full responsibility for my own recovery. So I become willing to go to meetings regularly and share honestly, to work the steps to the best of my ability, to sponsor and be sponsored, to read and grow emotionally and spiritually, to practice early intervention whenever I stray into fantasy and intrigue and objectifying — I still get plenty of opportunities to practice this — and to do my part to keep my marriage healthy, mutually fulfilling, and joyful.

One of the best hands-on (or, more accurately, hands-off!) tools I use often is to pray for anyone I find myself sexualizing or objectifying or intriguing about, to pray for her (in my case as a heterosexual) well-being, for her happiness, for her relationships and significant other, etc. My partners in recovery remind me that she is someone's daughter or sister or spouse or mother, in other words, a real person who doesn't deserve to be ogled. Cultivating empathy is enormously helpful in derailing the addictive train. Would I want someone looking at my daughter or sister or spouse inappropriately? Would I want to be on the other end of cheating? Would I want to be exploited by a person in a position of trust?

Laughter, in meetings and in all areas of my life, plays a critical role in helping me not take myself too seriously and to feel good about myself and life in general so that I'm less likely to want to practice my sex addiction in any of its potential manifestations. This is part of the repertoire of outer-circle activities and foci that enlarge my life and help me be of better use to my program sisters and brothers and in the larger community and world. Surprise!

Working my SAA program and living in sobriety ends up making me a better person than I would have been without the gift of recovery.

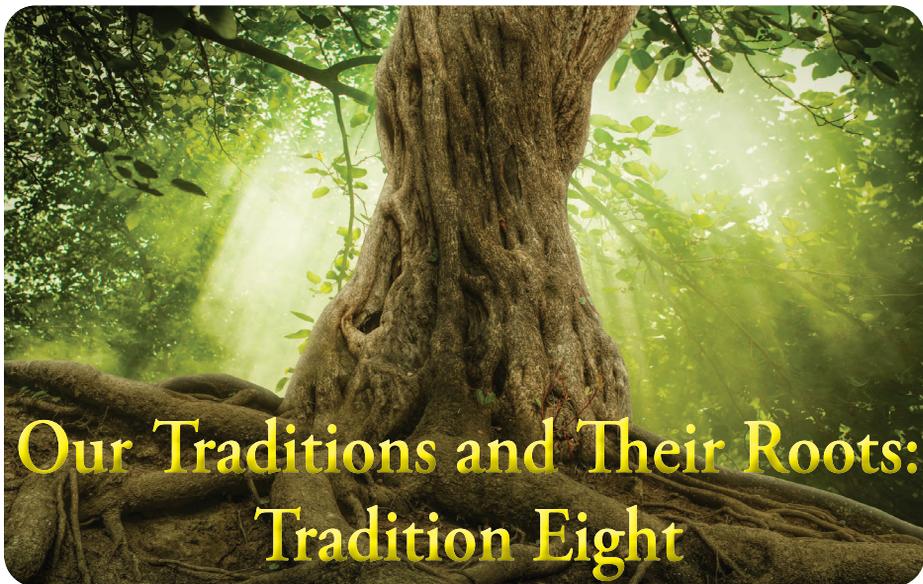
Like many in recovery, I have had significant struggles with self-esteem... or the lack thereof. Living in sobriety gives me the daily gift of self-respect, and I am

more and more able to like the person I see in the mirror. This change in self perception makes me less likely to be looking for affirmation through addictive behavior and less vulnerable to the persistent and persuasive voice of the addict doing push-ups in the corner. Another surprise is how good it feels to simply move through a day in sobriety and to be trustworthy in all kinds of circumstances.

Living in sobriety means "suing up and showing up" in all realms of my life, practicing recovery in tasks that aren't recovery related per se and yet play a part in maintaining sobriety. So, I am practicing recovery whenever I: put on new license plates before the old ones expire, pay bills on time, follow up on routine car maintenance, or deal with mountains of recycling that piles up. And I am practicing recovery whenever I face the things I don't want to do and do them anyway, maybe even first!

Finally, it's imperative that I remain humble and not become complacent, remembering to be grateful each day for the amazing gift of sobriety and being willing to do whatever it takes to keep living in sobriety.

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



Our Traditions and Their Roots: Tradition Eight

“SAA should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.”

Editor’s Note: This is the ninth in the series that looks to the Green Book’s exposition of each Tradition, along with the history of the problem each Tradition sought to address from AA source material. Authors have varied across the series.

BY ANONYMOUS

I have a soft spot in my heart for the ISO’s project to create core pieces of our literature in other languages. To me, that’s where spirituality and money meet our primary purpose.

Tradition Eight seems very simple and straightforward; however, upon study, the tradition carries important and deep reminders about the hazards of declaring ourselves experts.

The two sentences preceding the Traditions in the SAA Green Book clearly frame the purpose and anticipated benefit of the Traditions:

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. We have found that they also help us to act with integrity in our personal relationships and as responsible members of society (Sex Addicts Anonymous, page 76).

This prelude also emphasizes that the Twelve-Step program and our meetings are built on numerous spiritual principles working together. For that reason, any

one tradition is best understood in the context of the other traditions. For example, Tradition Eight needs to be applied in light of Traditions Six and Nine. In Tradition Six, we avoid relationships with other enterprises, relationships that are almost inevitable in professional organizations. In Tradition Nine, the fellowship (SAA, as such) limits the structure of our organization to service bodies responsive to the fellowship. A principle that is fundamental to jurisprudence might be applied here to our benefit, the principle that the interpretation of laws, rules, guidelines, and suggestions should always be based on plain and ordinary language—not on the basis of nuance or personal agenda. With that principle in mind, let's examine the main words in Tradition Eight.

“SAA” refers to the fellowship—not to the International Service Organization (ISO). The fellowship is global, without boundaries, defined only by members with a desire to stop addictive sexual behavior.

“Should” is a strong word. It implies obligation. It is not just a suggestion. It is a strong recommendation.

“Nonprofessional” reminds us that we are not experts. We do not claim expertise in sex addiction. Although over the years we do gain a lot of practical knowledge, our program is not built on an understanding or application of medicine, neurology, neurochemistry, psychiatry, or psychology.

We function on the basis of experience from practicing the program—a methodology that has proven to work for us. And from that experience, we offer acceptance and understanding for others seeking to be free from sex addiction. We share our strength and hope gained from working the SAA program of recovery. We offer dimensions, tools, and support that professionals cannot offer.

“Service centers” primarily refers to the ISO, which provides vital services – communication, publication, outreach – that individual member groups would not be able to provide on their own.

“Special workers” acknowledges that special expertise is needed in technology, communication, publication, etc.

Simply put, the service center (ISO) and the special workers (employees and many volunteers) provide essential and highly desirable services that are not feasible for local groups or even intergroups to provide.

So, the final analysis of Tradition Eight leaves us with profound gratitude for our nonprofessional status, for the ISO and its employees, and for the many volunteers who support the activities and programs of the ISO. We are not subject to many tendencies that professional societies experience; namely, to become exclusive and to impose requirements on membership and participation.

That is a blessing, indeed!

Next issue: Tradition Nine. ©

DEAR ISAAC

Problem of disconnection

BY INTIMACY AND
SEXUAL AVOIDANCE
AWARENESS
COMMITTEE

*Before recovery,
many of us
responded to
our “true selves”
with shaming,
blaming, and
angry inner
dialogues.*

Editor’s note: Instead of Dear Will this month, we feature “Dear ISAAC,” a column by the Intimacy and Sexual Avoidance Awareness Committee.

Dear ISAAC,

My Fourth Step inventory showed me that I have been so disconnected from myself that I was unable to know my truth and speak up for myself. It kept me in situations that my gut didn’t feel right with, but I was not aware of it, nor capable of saying anything. Now that I know this is a problem, how can my recovery help me increase my ability to tune in to my gut, speak my truth, and care for myself?

**Signed,
Speechless**

Dear Speechless,

You are not alone! Many of us have needed to apply the principles of the steps to this particular challenge. This, of course, is not an overnight process, but there are a number of tools that helped us to grow in this area.

Many of us have found it helpful to cultivate nurturing behaviours to make a start on this part of our recovery. Before recovery, many of us responded to our ‘true selves’ with shaming, blaming, and angry inner dialogues, which some of us learned in childhood. We were not used to – nor had the tools – to meet ourselves with compassion and care, resulting in an “inability to accept nurturing and care from ourselves, our Higher Power(s), and others.” (“First Step to Intimacy – A Guide for Working the First Step on Intimacy and Sexual Avoidance or Sexual Anorexia”) Today, we take action to cultivate gentle, nurturing behaviours. Some examples

suggested in the First Step to Intimacy pamphlet are: “eating nutritious food, getting enough sleep, exercising... using positive affirmations, attending SAA meetings, and making outreach calls.” Some of us have found that it can be helpful to put these actions, and any others that feel right to us, into our outer circle to remind us to utilise them on a regular basis.

An essential tool – but one that many of us have struggled with – is meditation. “Some of us felt resistance when we tried to meditate. ... We may be disturbed by unpleasant thoughts and feelings rising to the surface.” (Sex Addicts Anonymous, page 57). Those of us who have been avoiding ourselves (often for years) can feel very fearful at the prospect of sitting quietly with our thoughts for any amount of time! One member shared they were terrified to be alone with themselves, because before recovery, this had only ever led to acting out or avoidance. As it says in Sex Addicts Anonymous, “We can be gentle with ourselves, gradually getting used to the experience of being still and attentive.” (Sex Addicts Anonymous, page 57). One fellow chooses to “book-end” meditation practice, contacting another member before and afterwards. This “allows [them] to enter [this] challenging situation feeling less alone.” (Tools of Recovery, page 23) However we choose to meditate, it gives us an opportunity

to develop our intimacy with ourselves and our Higher Power(s), resulting in greater connection with our truth.

For many of us, even when we came to know ourselves more intimately, being able to act authentically with others felt impossible. Before recovery, many of us had developed “an inability to trust and rely on others, believing that people will always let us down and it is safer if we just do things on our own.” (“Intimacy Avoidance – Another Aspect of Sex Addiction”) We realised that this lack of trust often translated into fear about how others may react to the ‘real’ us and, at times, it felt better to avoid the possibility of any negative reactions. One fellow shared that they found their relationship with their sponsor was a good place to start practicing sharing authentically. Their sponsor helped them feel they were not alone and supported them to identify their feelings and communicate their needs. Their sponsor helped them identify their boundaries and gave them a space to practice applying them. We can also practice sharing openly and honestly at meetings, as it says in Sex Addicts Anonymous. “At meetings we learn that we can trust others to know who we really are, and still be accepted by them.” (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 17).

One member who had experienced great rejection in childhood felt such intense fear at the prospect of sharing

© Continued on page 23...

STORIES OF SERVICE

The concept of service

BY JOEL D.

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MAY - JUNE 2005

*So we give back
freely because this
feeling of joy was
freely given to us.*

Many of us came to the fellowship feeling defeated and hopeless. Giving back to the fellowship by way of service work was not a gift we thought we possessed nor an action we were capable of undertaking. After our initial meeting, Oldtimers welcomed us, and eventually, we heard that we were helping them with their sobriety just by showing up at a meeting and sharing about our experience with sex addiction. This, we learn, is our first duty at service work: sharing ourselves and our experience with others. We are made useful.

Surprisingly, we do not have to wait to work Step Twelve to carry the message to other sex addicts. We can do this by sharing our experience with working Step One. Working the Steps, we have found, has uncovered the obstacles that keep us from a power greater than ourselves, and it is that power that removes those obstacles. With the removal of those obstacles, we may be surprised to find ourselves with more responsibilities, especially within the fellowship. These responsibilities can be opening or chairing a meeting, sponsoring other members, meeting newcomers, and being a group delegate. There are many more. When we do service work, we feel a part of the fellowship because we are contributing ourselves to it rather than feeling apart from it.

With sobriety, we find this fellowship to be important in our lives. We give back to the

fellowship because, to many of us, this fellowship has helped us save our lives from destructive behaviors of sex addiction, which rendered us virtually ineffective and useless in our jobs and our relationships with people. Service work becomes fulfilling for us as individuals, which benefits the fellowship as a whole, and most important of all we become a light of hope for those sex addicts who come into the fellowship feeling much like we ourselves have. So we give back freely because this feeling of joy was freely given to us.

Stories of Service inspire others to be of service. Send your 250-300-word story to toc@saa-recovery.org.

© ...continued from page 21.

themselves with others that they felt paralyzed and unable to open up – even to a sponsor or at meetings. This individual was reminded of Step One and realized they were powerless over their inability to share themselves. They decided to work the steps on this particular area of powerlessness. We are grateful to share that this same member turned their will and their life in this area over to a Higher Power of their understanding. With the power given to them by their Higher Power, they are now well on their way to sharing their truth in all areas of their life and taking every opportunity to share their experience, strength, and hope with other fellows in recovery.

So, by doing things like nurturing ourselves and treating ourselves with respect and gentleness, practicing meditation and being still and open to our thoughts and feelings without judgment, and sharing from the heart in emotionally safe situations like meetings or with a sponsor or fellow recovering sex addicts and sexual anorexics, we are becoming increasingly able to sense our inner truth and access courage to share it. May the same be true for you.

**Sincerely,
ISAAC**

FROM THE BOARD

SAA in three decades

BY WAYNE K.
BOARD MEMBER

*We value your
input. Email the
board at [board@
saa-recovery.org](mailto:board@saa-recovery.org)*

What do you do to plan for the future? For a major purchase, most of us will consult our life partners and families. I was once going to buy a Subaru, but my 150 lb. Newfoundland dog would not fit comfortably so I ended up with a full-size van. The Subaru showroom staff now has the story of a lifetime about the guy who brought his humongous dog into the showroom to see if it would fit. It is hard to do that with things like SAA Connect, the website, new literature, or all committee ideas. With a smaller family, sometimes decisions are made faster than with a large family. Do any of you have family of origin issues that could make decision-making harder?

Take all of that and now let's make potential life-altering, long-range decisions with ten strangers. Okay, not total strangers, but acquaintances who meet monthly.

Somewhere between the two could be a description of the SAA Board of Trustees. COVID-19 has made having any face-to-face Board meeting impossible until this past February. I knew some Board members from prior committee work and of course the ubiquitous Zoom meetings! It is a different thing to sit down in a conference room, for a day or two, with those ten people. You can make the same argument for both the convention and the annual meeting of the Conference. Most experiences are better in person.

Someone once told me in a meeting that boards can be of three types. 1. The “do-nothing, laissez-faire,” board that thinks that everything is on an even keel with fair winds and good sailing so they do not do anything to upset the path they are on. 2. The activist board wants to leave a legacy of

FROM THE BOARD

change. Their actions are the opposite of the do-nothing board. For the activist board, it is all about change, sometimes for the sake of change. 3. The measured response board responds to challenges as they arise. This board is the medium flavor of the first two. In reality, there are no absolutes but a continuum that each board is on. The continuum is best measured over time, not one subject or one meeting.

What do you suppose SAA will look like in twenty or thirty years? When I started attending meetings there was no Green Book. There was very little Conference Approved literature. Now, twenty-five years since my first SAA meeting, one can find all our current literature on our website.

When the SAA Board of Trustees met in Houston in February, one of the questions asked was “what will SAA look like in thirty years?” Why isn’t sex addiction as accepted as alcoholism? How do we carry the SAA message of recovery to underserved communities? How do we create a culture of service within SAA? What can we do to promote more communication? How can we train new committee members to get up and running faster? If you have ever heard things like PI/CPC, ISOPCom (alternatively, OPCOM), ICC, or other acronyms and wondered what they were, then imagine that and a dozen more in a meeting with a new person who has that deer in the

headlights look. Someone in the last year suggested that we create a glossary; great idea! It has not been done yet, but it should be a tactic for the communication goal team.

What if some great ideas start bumping into our Twelve Traditions? The meeting room in Houston was papered with flip chart paper. Almost two entire walls were covered with big flip chart paper filled with suggestions, ideas, and goals. A couple of times I got up and walked into the hallway to stretch my legs and converse with another Board member because “they” were not doing it my way! Someone once compared these very long goal meetings to making sausage. You take all these different ingredients, blend them together, squeeze the daylights out of them, and put them in a package to be cooked to make delicious sausage. I have been in a sausage factory. It gets messy and the floor gets slippery. I happen to like many different types of sausages, so this analogy works for me.

At the end of the day, the conference room had the look of hard work! Flip chart paper was decorating the wall. Empty coffee cups, water bottles, and soft drink containers reminded me that the fuel of creativity has not changed.

This is where you, The Outer Circle reader, come in. Board and committee members have a shelf life. We are not going to be able to do this forever. SAA

ISO NEWS

needs new committee and Board members. I have been in several Fellowship Internal Standing Committee (ISC) meetings and heard all the complaints that one can think of. How come the Board doesn't provide X, Y, or Z? We need more resources, diversity, inclusion, literature, ideas, etc.

You, dear reader, are the answer. You are the winds in the sails of SAA. Step right up and grab the tiller and rudder because you are the next generation of leaders. Please submit your service resume to <https://www.saa-iso.org/svc/index.php>.

Approved Board Actions

February

- Established Board goals for supporting groups and Board operations

March

- Finalized plan to implement and achieve goals

Get involved in International Service!

Would you like to give back to our fellowship? International service is a great way to get more involved in the SAA fellowship, deepen your recovery, and help reach suffering sex addicts worldwide.

The Conference Nominating Committee (NomCom) presents a slate of nominees at the annual Conference meeting in October to fill open positions on the Board of Trustees, Literature Committee, Conference Steering Committee, Conference Area Coordinating Committee, and Conference Nominating Committee. If you are interested in serving on any of these committees and you meet the guidelines for international service, we encourage you to fill out a service résumé!

For more information about the positions and for a copy of the Guidelines for International Service, please visit the service website saa-iso.org and click on the International Service tab. Contact the ISO office via phone, (713) 869-4902, or email, info@saa-recovery.org, for the username and password to access these documents.

Have you filled out a service résumé in the past? We encourage you to fill out a new resume each year before June 30th, 2022. All applicants will be entered into a raffle

ISO NEWS

to win free convention registration to the 2023 convention.

Completed service résumés should be emailed to info@saa-recovery.org or mailed to Nominating Committee, ISO, PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270.

Carry the message where desperately needed!

Writing and sponsoring prisoners by correspondence continues to be the mainstay of the ISO prisoner outreach program. In addition, the Prisoner Outreach Committee has encouraged members of the fellowship to consider the possibility of starting SAA meetings in a nearby prison. As a result of the pandemic, a new possibility has emerged—namely, meeting by video-conference.

While face-to-face remains the preferred meeting modality in most situations, recent experience in Arizona suggests that meeting by video-conference can open new opportunities to carry the SAA message of recovery into prisons.

PI/CPC (Public Information/Cooperation with the Professional Community)

The Twelfth Step says that, “we tried to carry this message to other sex addicts and to practice these principles in our lives.” At the ISO level, this is done through the work of the Public Information/Cooperation with the Professional Community (PI/CPC) committee. If you would like to work the Twelfth Step at the ISO level, contact PhillipB@saa-iso.net or call the ISO at 713-869-4902.

Represent Your Intergroup or Group in the Intergroup Communications Committee (ICC) and Help Your Local Meetings

In the spirit of the First Tradition, the ICC “exists for the purpose of facilitating communication amongst intergroups, encouraging groups to carry the SAA message to the sex addict still suffering—our one primary purpose—sharing best practices, helping new intergroups to become established, and recommending changes to the SAA *Intergroup Guide* and SAA *Group Guide*.”

Learn how other intergroups and groups engage in outreach to still-suffering addicts, including special populations like prisoners, women, LGBT, and BIPOC addicts; learn how intergroups and groups conduct retreats and practice the Seventh Tradition; and share your experience, strength, and hope in service to others.

If you would like to take part in this collaborative effort and learn from others about how to improve your intergroup and group activities, email your request to info@saa-recovery.org.

ISO NEWS

Do you have computer skills?

The Information Systems and Online Presence Committee (ISOPCom), a joint committee between the Literature Committee, Board, and the office; seeks volunteers who are able and willing to help with the ISO's technical computer needs. These include, but are not limited to, web design (especially JavaScript, CSS, and PHP), database management, and security. If you are skilled in these or similar areas and would like to use your skills to serve the fellowship, email info@saa-recovery.org.

Financial Summary

Due to some accounting issues, we do not have our usual financial report. We have corrected the January report that was published in the March – April issue of The Outer Circle.

Our total SAA Green Book sales were above our estimate of \$8,300 by \$7,049 in January. Our HCI sales (December's numbers, a month behind) were \$6,672 higher than budgeted. Findaway audio sales were \$27 below our budget of \$300. For the year we are 184.93% of our estimated sales.

Our book "Voices in Recovery" sales for January were \$56 lower than our budget of \$2,400 for January. The ISO sales were \$74 below budget while the HCI sales were \$17 higher than budget. For the year we are an average of 98.5% of our estimated sales.

Our pamphlet and booklet sales were above our estimate of \$2,200 by \$409 in January. For the year we are at 111.89% of our estimated sales.

Our plastic chips sales were above our estimate of \$1,200 by \$235 in January. For the year we are at 119.56% of our estimated sales.

Our bronze medallion sales were below our estimate of \$2,100 by \$437 in January. For the year we are at 79.18% of our estimated sales.

Our total sales for January were above our estimate of \$16,355 by \$7,113 in January. For the year we are at 143.49% of our estimated sales.

Individual donations were below our estimate of \$41,000 by \$1,466 in January. For the year we are at 96.43% of our estimated individual donations. The general donations were above our budget by \$3,521 and the Lifeline Partners amount was \$6,018 below budget of \$29,000. Our goal is \$50,000 per month.

Group donations were above our estimate of \$9,600 by \$2,325 in January. For the year we are at 124.22% of our estimated group donations. Group Lifeline Partners are \$674 below above our budget of \$2,800 and general donations for groups were \$2,624 above our budgeted estimate of \$6,800.

Our total donations were \$859 above the budgeted amount of \$50,600. For the year we are at 101.7% of our estimated donations.

ISO NEWS

Our product inventory is valued at \$57,723.

Our operational reserve is fully funded at \$179,585. Our estimated 3-month reserve is \$175,691.

Our total expenses were \$27,533 lower than our budget of \$68,880. This is mainly from accrual of the first pay period being paid in December.

Wages & Benefits were -\$29,126 below the budget of \$47,731. This is mainly from accruing the January 01-15 pay period wages in December that was paid in January. This resulted in only one pay period in January, while there will be three next December.

Our net income was \$38,764 above our budget of -\$5,944.

For January of total income was \$77,261, our cost of goods was \$1 374, resulting in a gross profit of \$77,261. Our total expenses were \$43,067 resulting in a net income of \$32,820 which was \$38,764 higher than budget.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

In Your Service,



Paul M.

Executive Director

CONTACT THE ISO

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Administrative Assistant: Jerry B.
Administrative Assistant: Evan E.
Administrative Assistant: Harvey A.

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: board@saa-recovery.org

Board of Trustees and Literature Committee

Board

Andy M; Bill I; Bob L (Chair); Carl D; David H;
Eddie N; Karen S; Les J; Melissa W; Richard S;
Wayne K

Board: board@saa-recovery.org
CSC: csc@saa-recovery.org
LitCom: litcom@saa-recovery.org

Literature Committee

Cara A; Carole D; David C; Don S (TOC Editor);
Deb W; Don R; Doug S; Jackie J; Jim L (Chair);
Jim P; Maud D (Secretary); Mike K; Rachel R,
Stephen P

Calendar

The most up-to-date committee schedule and information about joining any ISO Committee can be found at saa-iso.org.

Prisoner Letter Writing Program

Writing and sponsoring prisoners by correspondence continues to be the mainstay of the ISO prisoner outreach program. In addition, the Prisoner Outreach Committee has encouraged members of the fellowship to consider the possibility of starting SAA meetings in a nearby prison. As a result of the pandemic, a new possibility has emerged—namely, meeting by video-conference.

While face-to-face remains the preferred meeting modality in most situations, recent experience in Arizona suggests that meeting by video-conference can open new opportunities to carry the SAA message of recovery into prisons. If interested in learning more—whether you are in the free world or in prison—contact the ISO office by telephone (713-869-4902), email (info@saa-recovery.org), or postal mail (PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270).

PI/CPC (Public Information/Cooperation with the Professional Community)

The Twelfth Step says that, “we tried to carry this message to other sex addicts and to practice these principles in our lives.” At the ISO level, this is done through the work of the Public Information/Cooperation with the Professional Community (PI/CPC) committee. If you would like to work the Twelfth Step at the ISO level, contact PhillipB@saa-iso.net or call the ISO at 713-869-4902.

LifeLine Partners

LifeLine donations provide steady income that allows the ISO to operate and help groups carry the SAA message. Become a LifeLine partner today by calling 713-869-4902 or by going to saa-recovery.org and clicking “Contribute.”

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Get Your Story Published in *The Outer Circle*

The *Outer Circle* newsletter relies on submissions from the SAA fellowship. It's a great way to carry the message to other sex addicts in the spirit of Step Twelve — and be of service! Articles may be submitted to toc@saa-recovery.org or to the ISO office. Please submit articles via email in Microsoft Word format with the **RELEASE FORM** at the bottom of this page.

Deadlines for Submission and Topics		
Jan/Feb:	“First Three Steps”	Nov 5
Mar/Apr:	“Taking Action”	Jan 5
May/June:	“Changes, Hope”	Mar 5
July/Aug:	“Celebration and Exploration”	May 5
Sept/Oct:	“Letting Go, Giving Back”	July 5
Nov/Dec:	“Prayer and Meditation”	Sept 5

Here are some general writing guidelines:

Living in Sobriety: For those with five-plus years of sobriety. 750-900 words on how you got sober and what you're doing to stay sober.

Stories of Service: 300-500 words on why you do service and how it helps your recovery.

Feature articles: 650-1,200 words on any of the topics listed above. 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 in recovery as it relates to the steps or traditions.

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.