

THE OUTER CIRCLE

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



LA FIN DE L'ISOLEMENT

(THE END OF ISOLATION)

A STORY FROM THE GREEN BOOK
TRANSLATED INTO FRENCH

PLUS:

- TRADITION TWELVE
- SHAME
- LIFE LINE PARTNERS
- MATH OF SERVICE





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 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.

January - February 2023

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Share *The Outer Circle* with your recovery friends in SAA and encourage them to submit their experience, strength, and hope (see page 31).

Feature Articles



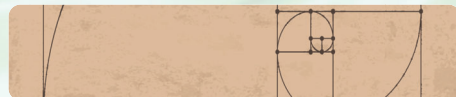
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FROM THE EDITOR

Service, Gratitude, and Change

BY DON S.
THE OUTER CIRCLE
EDITOR

*My entry into
service occurred
in AA and was not
voluntary.*

*Publisher's note: Jim L.
will immediately take
over as interim editor. A
search will soon begin
for a permanent editor.
If you are interested,
please write to [info@
saa-recovery.org](mailto:info@saa-recovery.org). A
formal announcement
will be sent out via the
ISO News Blast.*

The article on Tradition Twelve got me reflecting on my path in service. My recovery life started in AA. (It only took fourteen years of successful recovery from alcoholism for me to finally admit to my sex addiction.) My entry into service occurred in AA and was not voluntary. In my early recovery, I didn't do service. Long story. Several years into recovery, after a large AA meeting, I was standing around gabbing when a group member putting away chairs said, "Hey, Don, go in the kitchen and help Mike with the dishes." In retrospect, I wager she may have singled me out deliberately and deservedly.

So, I went to the kitchen and helped Mike. He and I had very different backgrounds and little in common except our alcoholism. But, as we were dumping ashtrays (the old days) and washing cups, a profound sensation came over me. I started to feel so light that I might levitate right up through the ceiling. After a few moments it settled down, but I was lighter than I had been before this. We finished the cleanup and I went home.

Some time later I grasped what likely happened. That moment dumping ashtrays with Mike was possibly the first moment in my adult life that I was not worried about what anybody thought of me or of how well I was performing my task, or what I might get out of it, or what I hope nobody finds out about, or even of some place else I wanted to be or something else I wanted to do. I was just standing there in that kitchen, dumping ashtrays with Mike. Not obsessing with myself, I was liberated for a brief moment.

My involvement in and commitment to service grew steadily after that, including this opportunity to edit *The Outer Circle*. And sadly, this will be my last entry here. My professional life has changed, and I am now unable to give this wonderful service job the time and attention it deserves. Thank you all for this wonderful experience.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

More Service, More Gratitude, and More Change

**BY TRACY R.
ACTING EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR, ISO OF SAA,
INC.**

*I want to thank
Paul for all he has
done for the ISO
and the fellowship,
and the Board
of Trustees for
selecting me to
serve as Acting
Executive Director.*

Paul has retired as Executive Director effective December 31, 2022. I am moving into service as the Acting Executive Director with hopes of assuming the Executive Director position in time. I have served as the Associate Director since mid-2021 and as the Project Manager since early 2019. Before joining the office staff, I served six years on LitCom (2011-2017). Service is an essential ingredient in my continued recovery.

I am incredibly grateful to be a member of this fellowship. Working and living the SAA program over the past fourteen years has truly transformed me as I continue my walk from shame to grace. I am excited about moving into this role and the things that lie ahead for the fellowship and me.

Thanks to you, members and groups, we have corrected our course financially and are now above our budgeted income, allowing us to revive PICPC projects that inform the public and the professional community about our program and the hope and help available here. We will be resuming the printing of our literature and expanding our outreach efforts. We are exploring options for a new meeting search with enhanced search capabilities.

I want to thank Paul for all he has done for the ISO and the fellowship. It has been great working for and with him for the past few years. I will miss his guidance and leadership. He has been a true trusted servant, always working for the good of the still-suffering sex addict. He will be missed.

I also want to give a big thank you to the Board of Trustees for selecting me to serve as Acting Executive Director. I look forward to working with the Board, the service committees, and all those who serve as we strive to stay true to the ISO mission to serve member groups by helping carry the SAA message of recovery to the sex addict who still suffers.

DEAR GRACE

Reaching out to other women

BY WOMEN'S
OUTREACH
COMMITTEE

*One of the best
ways to decide
if SAA is right for
you is to attend
meetings to see if
you identify with
other members'
stories.*

Dear Grace,

My therapist says that she doesn't think I am a sex addict. I think I am, but her doubt has me confused. How can I know if I belong in SAA or not?

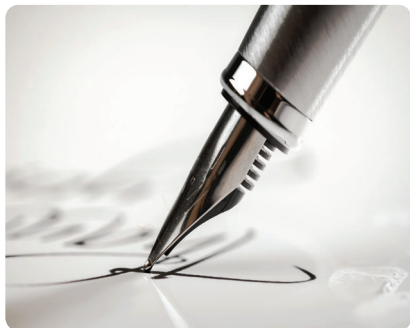
**Signed,
Confused**

Dear Confused,

Let us be clear that if you are seeking freedom from addictive sexual behavior, you are welcome in SAA, independent of your therapist's opinion. "All that is required for membership is the desire to stop addictive sexual behavior" (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 1). In SAA, we don't tell people if they are or are not sex addicts. "No one can judge whether or not another person is a sex addict or make decisions about someone's fitness for membership in SAA" (page 81). Every person decides for themselves if the program is right for them.

It can be helpful to know that SAA holds space for those of us who are unsure. "If we are having trouble with sexual behaviors that we can't seem to stop, we can reach out to SAA for help, and be guaranteed a place in the fellowship with no strings attached" (page 81). One of the best ways to decide is to attend meetings to see if you identify with other members' stories. You can listen to others, read the literature, and seek answers without the pressure of identifying as a sex addict or needing to know for sure. "Although it has become customary for members to identify as sex addicts in meetings, it is not required that we do so" (page 82).

In meetings, we often hear our stories reflected in the voices of others in a way that only we can understand. One member wrote of their first meeting: "After hearing just one share, I knew I was home" (*Voices of Recovery*, page 10). Meetings also allow us to talk



about things that we might not have felt comfortable sharing with our therapist yet – the thoughts, feelings, and urges that we know are addiction. “The freedom from judgment...helps us feel safe to open up and share about addiction, many of us for the first time in our lives” (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 82).

It can be especially challenging when a therapist’s or other professional’s opinion is not the same as our own. Some mental health care practitioners are hesitant to label excessive sexual activity as a disease, since sex addiction is not (yet) listed in the book that professionals use for diagnosing. Some professionals may have a bias against Twelve Step Recovery programs. Others may simply see your behaviors as not “bad” enough or “egregious” enough to fit the definition they have of “addict.”

It might be a good idea to have a deeper conversation with your therapist, where you ask them to share their reasoning. Part of therapy and Twelve-Step recovery is learning how to have difficult conversations with people. In the process, you

*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.*

may find that this particular therapist might not be the best fit for you. Conversely, by having the conversation, you may deepen your relationship and trust in this counselor.

In the end, the real question may be, “Will SAA help me?” Answering this requires honest reflection: “If we can look inside and honestly say that we have a problem with any sexual behaviors, then the help SAA has to offer is meant for us too” (page 81). Working the Steps of Sex Addicts Anonymous will lead to a new way to live without relying on those behaviors.

In any event, we welcome you to continue to attend meetings for as long as it takes to determine whether or not SAA is right for you.

**In service,
Grace**

Disclaimer: We cannot guarantee that this advice will be equally applicable to every woman, although it is our hope that such will be the case.

– SAA Women’s Outreach Committee



The Journey from Shame to Grace

BY ANONYMOUS

We talk about shame a lot in this fellowship. After all, our motto is “from shame to grace.” That is the path recovery takes as we work the SAA program.

When I was new to SAA, I wanted to skip over the shame piece in my rush to get to grace. Shame seems to have a very bad reputation in SAA. However, I have found that a certain type of shame does serve a purpose and thus has a place in my recovery. For me, the shame had to come before the grace. The shame of my addiction drove me to SAA, launching me into a new way of life defined by grace.

I can easily confuse shame and guilt and fail to differentiate healthy shame from toxic shame. At times, especially early in my recovery, in my desire to be free of toxic shame, I would attempt to deny my healthy shame. Healthy shame, like guilt, can show me where I am wrong or have acted outside my personal values, ethics, or beliefs. It tells me I have made a mistake. Toxic shame serves no useful purpose. Toxic shame tells me I am a mistake – that I am bad, unworthy, horrible, disgusting, etc.

Much of my addiction involved running from my pain. In my recovery I have learned to face my pain, to feel it, and so move through it. When I act outside my values, especially when my actions cause harm to myself or others, I need to experience my guilt, I need to know in my gut that my behavior was wrong. This

is healthy shame and it spurs me to become different, to become better. This vital change occurs as I work the Twelve Steps and apply the spiritual principles they embody.

AA's Twelve and Twelve states that "pain [is] the touchstone of spiritual growth... the pains of [acting out] had to come before sobriety, and emotional turmoil before serenity" (*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, page 93-94). I would not have the sanity and sobriety I enjoy today were it not for experiencing the guilt and healthy shame stemming from my addiction.

When I work with sponsees and others, I do not try to take away their shame. Rather I encourage them to face it and learn from it. I find that I am doing them and other newcomers a disservice when I deny or minimize a relapse into inner-circle behaviors or a slip into middle-circle behaviors. I need to allow others to experience and integrate their healthy shame and to help them learn from it and move into new behaviors that alleviate or eliminate this shame. I have found that working through the healthy shame helps them release the toxic shame. If I try to make them "feel better" or try to move them straight into grace by bypassing their shame, I am potentially short-circuiting their journey.

I often hear the phrase "progress not perfection" used in reference to relapse. The full quote in the AA Big Book is, "We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection" (*Alcoholics Anon-*

ymous, page 60). While relapse is not unusual, it is not required. When I use phrases like this to brush off a relapse, I am giving the impression that sustained sobriety is unusual. It is not. It is possible for all who embrace and work the SAA program.

I was a chronic relapser and I primarily work with chronic relapsers today. At some point, usually when working Step Three, I strongly suggest they take acting out off the table. This does not mean I expect them to gut-up, white-knuckle it, and stop acting out. That does not work. What I am asking is that they use all of the tools at their disposal as they continue working the steps and endeavoring to "find a Power greater than [themselves] which will solve [their] problem" (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, page 45).

Our Green Book says "if we want to actually experience recovery in our lives, there are no shortcuts. We have to work the steps to experience the fruits of working the steps" (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 99).

I want to encourage others to work this program and discover the joy of sobriety. In order to do this, I need to let them have their pain, just as I had my pain, and lead them in transforming that pain as they walk through their shame and into a life filled with grace. ☺



BY FRENCH TRANSLATION COMMITTEE / GREEN BOOK

J'ai travaillé les Douze Étapes pendant sept ans avant de venir aux DSA. J'ai admis mon impuissance face à l'alcool, j'ai eu une expérience spirituelle, et on m'a rendu ma vie. Trois ans plus tard, j'étais à l'université dans ma ville natale en Angleterre et j'ai découvert des bandes dessinées pornographiques sur l'Internet. A plusieurs reprises, j'ai passé des heures à regarder ces dessins animés sur les ordinateurs de l'université, préférablement les plus insolites et abusifs. Un an plus tard, j'ai déménagé à Londres et j'ai vécu en colocation dans un appartement où il y avait un ordinateur dans la pièce principale. Malgré son endroit non privé, je suis resté debout un certain nombre de nuits de travail des heures durant, à chercher et regarder de la pornographie.

Mon utilisation d'Internet est devenue plus compulsive lorsque j'ai déménagé aux États-Unis, où j'avais mon propre appartement et mon propre ordinateur portable, et où du porno hardcore de tous types était facilement accessible. J'ai aussi découvert les groupes de discussion sur Internet où le matériel SM et de travestissement était facilement accessible, ainsi que les salons de discussion "cybersexe" et les sex-shops. Je restais debout des nuits entières, à regarder la pornographie sur papier et sur Internet et à m'engager dans le cybersexe. J'ai aussi expérimenté la masturbation auto-mutilante, comme l'auto-asphyxie. J'avais honte quand j'allais au travail en pensant aux images que j'avais regardées et aux choses que j'avais faites, mais en même temps j'avais hâte de juste m'enfermer dans ma chambre et vivre dans mon monde imaginaire.

J'allais toujours à des réunions pour mon alcoolisme et j'essayais de travailler les Douze Étapes, mais je savais que je reculais spirituellement, physiquement et émotionnellement. J'espérais qu'en priant et en travaillant le programme, ma Puissance supérieure réduirait ma convoitise, que je considérais comme un défaut de caractère, ou du moins me rendrait prêt à la faire disparaître. Mais mon passage à l'acte s'aggravait au lieu de s'améliorer, et je suis devenu alarmé de constater que la pornographie sur laquelle je naviguais devenait de plus en plus extrême. Au début de chaque semaine, je me promettais de me contrôler davantage, mais à la fin de la semaine, je m'étais inévitablement laissé tomber.

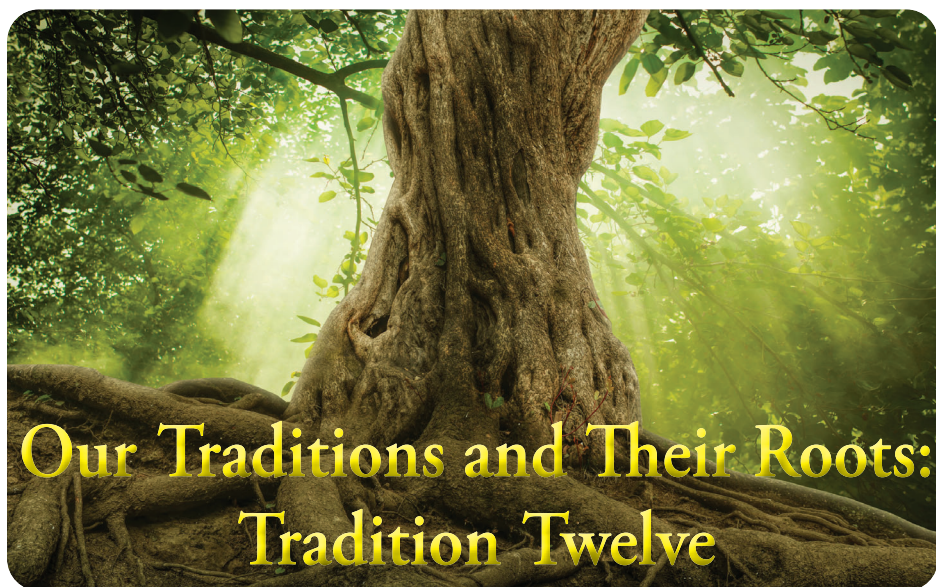
Finalement, mon parrain a dit que j'étais tellement hors de contrôle que j'avais besoin d'aide extérieure, que ce soit par le biais d'une thérapie ou d'une fraternité comme les Dépendants sexuels anonymes. À cette époque, j'étais retourné en Angleterre. J'ai commandé toute la littérature des DSA sur le site web et la plupart des cassettes. J'ai réalisé que j'avais besoin d'admettre que j'étais aussi impuissant face à la pornographie et à la scène sexuelle sur internet comme je l'étais de l'alcool.

J'ai eu la chance d'être présenté à un autre dépendant sexuel qui cherchait à se rétablir. J'ai partagé la littérature avec lui, et nous avons créé un groupe de DSA. Bientôt, un troisième et un quatrième membre sont arrivés. C'est à travers mon groupe d'appartenance que je fais mes étapes et mon service. Ceci constitue une base pour ma sobriété sexuelle. Depuis le jour où j'ai admis mon impuissance et mon incapacité à gérer la situation, et j'ai mis mon problème dans les mains de ma Puissance supérieure, je suis resté sexuellement sobre. C'était il y a presque deux ans.

Ma consommation de pornographie hardcore était totalement compulsive. De moi-même, je ne pouvais pas imaginer être capable d'y résister. Cependant, en admettant que je ne pourrais jamais résister, et en utilisant les étapes, j'ai trouvé facile de ne pas passer à l'acte. Cela n'a pas été une lutte. C'est étonnant d'être protégé d'une compulsion aussi intense. Cela démontre la puissance de ce programme.

Mon image des femmes a changé quand je suis resté sexuellement sobre, et j'ai commencé à sortir avec des femmes et à faire partie du monde normal des hommes et femmes. J'ai cessé de me sentir isolé du monde des familles et des relations. Je ne me dégoûtais plus de ce que je regardais sur l'Internet, et ne me sentais plus trop honteux pour faire partie du monde sexuel normal. J'ai fini par rencontrer une femme et nous avons commencé une relation engagée qui m'apprend continuellement à mieux me connaître. Je suis capable de grandir spirituellement à nouveau, de grandir sexuellement, et de grandir en tant que partenaire d'une autre personne. Je suis plus heureux et plus stable que je ne l'ai jamais été. ☺

Office note: The first one hundred pages of the Green Book have been translated into French and will be released as an e-book soon. The stories are in progress.



Our Traditions and Their Roots: Tradition Twelve

“Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.”

Editor’s Note: This is the thirteenth 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

There’s that word again—anonymity. But this time it’s of a different kind—spiritual anonymity. So what might that be?

The Twelve Traditions come, of course, from Alcoholics Anonymous. The concept of anonymity evolved in the early years of AA culminating in this, the final tradition.

And as an historical note, the Twelve Steps were developed by Bill W., co-founder of AA. The Steps were derived—by distilling and expanding—from the tools in alcoholic-helping predecessors to AA.

The Twelve Traditions, on the other hand, were only penned by Bill W. They were actually developed by the fellowship, through trial and error, from the first fifteen years of AA’s existence. Lots of trials, lots of errors.

As I understand, the evolution of anonymity was in four stages:

1. ME. Fear-based self-preservation. I don't have to give you my last name, so I don't have to worry about my secret being made public. It makes sense that this first stage was built around what we addicts do best—make everything about ourselves. But it provided a sense of safety that helped keep us coming back.

2. YOU. What goes around, comes around. If I want you guys to protect my identity, then I better make sure I do the same for you. The other side of the coin from the first type of anonymity, it is also a baby step away from my self-consumption and toward a spirit of humility and service.

3. US. I am responsible. This is where Tradition Eleven comes in (see previous issue of *TOC*). The other extreme of being self-consumed is to broadcast me-centered accolades about SAA and my recovery. The danger is that my trumpeting may prove hypocritical and thereby undermine the integrity of our organization. It's not about me, I am not an expert, I'm just an addict who's found relief and a meaningful life thanks to the Twelve Steps and the program of Sex Addicts Anonymous. Even more humility required.

"These experiences taught us that anonymity is real humility at work. ... Moved by the spirit of anonymity, we try to give up our natural desires for personal distinction" (*Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*, page 134).

4. LIFE, THE UNIVERSE, AND EVERYTHING. In terms of service at any level—individual to executive—my personal preferences don't factor in.

It is anonymity, the spirit of selfless service, that reminds us ... to always base our actions and deliberations on spiritual principles, putting aside any personal considerations in favor of a higher good (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 96).

That same page in the Green Book clearly states that we don't lose our personalities. On the contrary, our personalities evolve, grow, and become richer and better defined as a result of recovery.

For me, as an individual, there are people in and out of SAA that I don't like. Not many, but that's part of having a personality. However, we are not called upon to like everybody, we are called upon to practice loving service. As the Al-anon suggested-closing so wonderfully puts it: "And though you may not like all of us, you will come to love us in a very special way—the same way we already love you."

Some of the ways this spirit of selflessness has manifested in my recovery include:

- More than once in meetings, someone I dislike has said exactly what I needed to hear. I had to humbly let go of my opinion about the personality and focus

on the principle. (Net result: my spirit and mind become more open and less constrained → lighter.)

- When my sponsor suggests a plan of action, I now consider it and usually, eventually, give it an honest, open-minded try, regardless of my opinion. (Net result: see above.)
- As a sponsor, I must be careful to set aside any personal preferences for how or when a sponsee “gets it.” If they do the footwork to the best of their ability, good enough.
- Part of humble service is making sure that others have a chance to be of service. This means not taking more than one service position. I’m not the service person; we’re all the service person.

For me, humility and service have brought me the greatest gifts a person can have — a sense of belonging, community, and friendship.

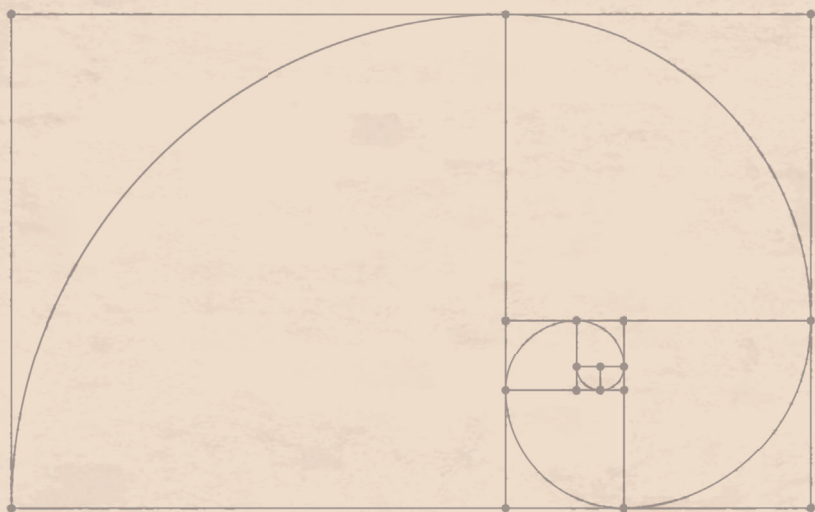
Next issue: Conclusion ©

Contact the ISO:

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- » Submit literature to LitCom: saa-recovery.org/submit
- » Submit to *The Outer Circle*: saa-recovery.org/toc
- » Find a meeting: saa-recovery.org/meetings
- » More on page 30

This space is reserved for your experience, strength, and hope.

For more information, see page 31.



BY ANONYMOUS

The Surprising Math of Service

There is a connection, an interlacing between sobriety and service. They combine and interact in a way that brings more to my life – more joy, more peace, more love, more freedom.

I came into SAA fairly selfish and self-absorbed. Even though I had some experience and even recovery in another fellowship, it was still all about me – how I felt, what I wanted, what I thought I needed. I knew the value of service, of getting out of myself, but I did little to apply it.

Then I worked the Twelve Steps in SAA and it all came together: Sobriety + Service = Serenity = Freedom = Joy.

I always thought that if I gave something away I would have less. That may be the equation outside of recovery – I don't know. What I do know is that in recovery, if I give something away, even and especially if it's something I really want to hang on to and keep for myself, I invariably end up with something better, with something more. I have found that giving adds rather than subtracts, multiplies rather than divides.

Today I clearly see the role of Step Twelve, where “we tried to carry this message to other sex addicts,” and its intersection with Tradition Seven, where we become “fully self-supporting.”

“In Step Twelve, we put our awakening into practice by serving others. With spiritual

awareness comes the responsibility, the desire, and the need to help other suffering sex addicts, just as help was freely given to us. This impulse springs from selfless love and gratitude, but it is also essential to our own sexual sobriety and spiritual growth” (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 59).

The discussion of Tradition Seven in the SAA Green Book states, “As addicts, we were often all too ready to shirk responsibility and allow others to take care of us, clean up our messes, and attend to the necessities of life. In the program, we learn instead to be accountable for ourselves and our recovery” (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 87).

I spent most of my life in active addiction. Now that I am sexually sober and have “had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps,” I no longer want my life to be all about me. I want to share the numerous gifts and the new way of life I have found in SAA. I want to help the still-suffering sex addict—both those who have not yet found SAA and those who have found SAA but have not yet found freedom from the pain of this addiction.

They say, “service helps keep you sober.” And it does. But it does much more. As I get out of my comfort zone and stretch myself in service, I enhance my personal and spiritual growth. The more I stretch, the more I grow. I do not have to know the answers or exactly how to do something before I can do service. I can and will learn as I serve. Those who have gone before me will show me the way just as they showed me the way to live sanely and soberly. All I have to do is show up and be willing.

AA’s responsibility statement declares, “I am responsible – when anyone, anywhere reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA always to be there, and for that: I am responsible” (Al S., 30th Anniversary AA Convention).

As an SAA member, I am responsible for doing my part to see to it that SAA continues to exist to provide hope and help for me and the countless sex addicts in need of recovery. If everyone expects “someone” to do what is required to sustain our fellowship, no one will do so. Those of us who have found sanity and sobriety by working the Twelve Steps of SAA have an obligation to ourselves and to those who still suffer to step up, step out of ourselves, and step into service. ☺

Host city still needed for 2024 convention!

The ISO is still in need of a host city for its 2024 convention. Local groups, intergroups, and areas need to step up and place a bid, otherwise there may not be a convention in 2024! To learn more or to place a bid, email info@saa-recovery.org or call 713-869-4902.

LIVING IN SOBRIETY

Experiencing the Cycle of Recovery

BY JOHN W

*This article has been
reprinted from the
January – February 2020
issue of The Outer Circle.*

*Being abstinent
frees me to
become sober;
sobriety brings
serenity.*

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

Believing I had God's okay made me feel like a sophisticated insider. Enjoying porn with a twist was no different from liking gourmet cooking. Lost in my self-centeredness, I had no time to notice anything wrong in my life.

It took me a very long time to realize that I did not want to expose my family to porn. How could I explain that and risk computer viruses that could attack my family's financial security? Efforts to nuance my computer use with my wife just earned me membership in the lying-sex-addict-club with a lifetime renewal clause attached.

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

A call to an SAA intergroup hot-line gave me a sense of relief. But it still took me two months of white-knuckling and my wife's intervention before I attended a Sunday night meeting. From then on, I never missed my Sunday meeting.

Later, I even added a weekday meeting as a back-up for a Sunday night that might be impossible.

This has been the key to maintaining my abstinence for more than thirteen years: faithful participation in weekly meetings.

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

So after many years of trying to sober up on my own, I now live each day abstinent as a gift from my Higher Power. Being abstinent frees me to become sober; sobriety brings serenity based on doing the best I am able.

More importantly, perhaps, sobriety allows me to focus on the addict who still suffers and the ones in full recovery. Each day is better when I intentionally look outward, which ironically serves to make me keenly aware of how self-centered I can be.

Having many years of sobriety one day at a time teaches me recovery often comes in small steps. Mostly, all I have to do is make sure those steps are on the path to recovery.

Some personal results: I no longer have

to white-knuckle to be abstinent. I can work the steps in a more relaxed way to create a better life for others and me. I get more freedom from saying “I am wrong” than explaining how I am right. I find recovering addicts have a funny bone. For example, when my group was struggling with a concept, I realized I had forgotten I knew something relevant, so I exclaimed, “I am an idiot.” Before I could get to the point, another sex addict said, “Sorry, that meeting is down the hall.” The laughter that followed was shared medicine.

On exceptionally clear days, I see that a troublesome person I know is human.

More embarrassingly, that person’s faults often embody my own character defects. (Is irony flattened-humor?) I remember that all information is good if used rightly.

Just as plants use humus, whence comes the word humility, to grow strong, being grounded in modesty does not mean keeping clean, but rather getting down and dirty in humble service.

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.

DEAR WILL

Disagreement with sponsors over three circles

BY WILL

*According to our
literature and
based on my own
experience, there
aren't sexual
behaviors that
automatically
belong in the
inner circle.*

Dear Will:

I recently changed sponsors and am having a bit of difference of opinion with my sponsor. He wants me to move masturbation into my inner circle as he says it is addictive behavior and does not lead to intimacy with others. I am conflicted about this as I do not think masturbation was part of my addictive sexual behavior, yet I do not want to be oppositional to my sponsor's suggestions. What do you think?

Dear Conflicted:

Thank you for writing. It seems that many people in SAA have strong feelings one way or another about masturbation and the three circles. According to our literature and based on my own experience, there aren't sexual behaviors that automatically belong in the inner circle without first exploring my relationship with that behavior. I would suggest that rather than just discussing the inner circle, it may be helpful to identify your sexual behavior in all three circles: the inner, or addictive sexual behaviors, the middle, or slippery/triggering behaviors, and the outer, or healthy behaviors including healthy sexual behaviors. This may help you and your sponsor better understand your relationship with masturbation, or any sexual behavior, and how to define what is and is not acting out for you. Below you will find a listing I got from a workshop at our recent convention in Atlanta. It may help you determine where a sexual behavior belongs for you.

Inner Circle

The inner circle may include:

- addictive sexual behavior
- compulsive sexual behavior
- behavior with negative consequences

- behavior that is harmful to ourselves and/or others
- putting people at risk
- illegal behavior
- violating boundaries, values, beliefs
- behaviors/attitudes I want to stop
- being part of an addictive pattern
- causing trouble in our relationships
- inability to stop/control

Middle Circle

The middle circle may include:

- being unsure about it
- using it to avoid feelings, obligations, self care
- “slippery” behaviors
- being secretive
- knowing I’m stealing a surreptitious hit

Things to consider about the behavior:

- how I feel during
- how I feel after
- my motivation for that behavior... character defects, selfishness, anger, fear,

- if it’s not Outer Circle but not acting out
- condition, situation, location
- frequency, duration, intensity

Outer Circle

The outer circle may include:

- acts that are healthy, safe and beneficial to our recovery
- acts of self-nurturing, bringing meaning, fulfillment, serenity and joy into my life
- enhancing my life, my recovery, my connection to others (and myself), and my spiritual life
- true intimacy
- emotional, spiritual, physical congruency
- makes my life more meaningful and enjoyable

Will

Editor’s note: The specific elements of each circle in this article may not apply to all. Please explore the SAA pamphlet “Three Circles” to help inform your circles.

If you have a question for Will, please send an email to

Men4SAA@saa-recovery.org.

STORIES OF SERVICE

Feeling Comfortable for Service

BY ANONYMOUS.

*The prospect of
service in SAA
has the power to
overwhelm every
addict.*

I am an introvert. This does not mean that I am shy, though I certainly can be at times. A shy person avoids social interactions, sometimes to the point of a phobia.

An introvert, however, will freely and willingly engage in social interaction, though often reluctantly. Such interactions leave an extroverted person feeling energetic, whereas an introverted person feels drained of energy.

Here's the rub: the prospect of service in SAA has the power to overwhelm every addict, both extrovert and introvert, shy and outgoing, all genders, all races, all sexual orientations, all ages, all everything.

I've read the stories in this column; I know that this is true.

I've been to meetings and listened to shares; I know that this is true.

I've hesitated at the thought of our own service; I know that this is true.

I also know that it is possible to get over the jitters.

I know that it can be easy or it can be hard.

I know that countless fellows have testified to the blessings that service has brought.

I know that countless fellows have testified that service has increased their connections with other members, their friends, and their family.

I know that countless fellows have had their abstinence lengthened and their sobriety strengthened as a result of service.

Anyone curious about service can peruse through *The Outer Circle* archives at saa-recovery.org/toc. There are many stories to tell. But I will tell my own.

As I said, I am an introvert. So while I could and would serve, it worried me, and exhausted me. Early on, my forms of service were to chair the meeting, both in person and online, and get literature for my local group.

Any type of service is exhausting to me. Scratch that. Any type of activity, no matter how much I like it, is exhausting to me.

At first, I found service exhausting, mentally, physically, emotionally. Yet I kept doing it because it was a good work that needed to be done.

My main form of service now is through an online text group. In a live meeting, we may raise our hand and say that something someone says is triggering or inappropriate. But because this meeting has an asynchronous format, the trusted servants look for things that may be triggering, offensive, or violate the group's boundaries; or which others have expressed concern.

In many ways, I am more comfortable here. But this position requires more time and energy throughout the day and week than my face-to-face commitments do. It still leaves me feeling exhausted. But hey, at least I don't have energy left for acting out!

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

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."

7TH TRADITION

A LifeLine Partner Story

BY CAROL ANN M.

SAA MEMBER AND
LIFELINE PARTNER

As a Lifetime
Partner, I pledge
a fixed monthly
donation that is
pooled with those
of many other
members from
around the SAA
fellowship.

Hi, my name is Carol Ann M., I'm a sex addict, and I've been asked to share about my Lifeline Partner participation. When I reflected on why I originally became a Lifeline Partner, there wasn't much to it – I joined for the usual reasons. However, the last few years have been anything but “usual.” So, I'd like to share about how and why my Lifeline-Partner giving has changed in response to the recent urgent needs of the ISO.

First, I have a practice of giving a base amount per year of sobriety on my recovery birthday. Although my individual annual donation has grown with each passing birthday, the ISO cannot reliably count on that money in a budgetary sense. Giving Thanks events are larger scale versions of the same thing. They occur annually in a lump sum fashion, and the amounts vary from year to year.

As a Lifetime Partner, however, I pledge a fixed monthly donation that is pooled with those of many other members from around the SAA fellowship. The funds provide a consistent funding stream that allows the ISO to plan and provide services in a predictable and sustainable way.

To me, the Lifeline Partner program puts Traditions One and Five into action, as well as Tradition Seven. Pooled Lifeline Partner funds reflect the Tradition One unity of the SAA. Further, Tradition Five-based services funded by Lifeline Partners are not theoretical. They affect real human beings in the world who are suffering with sex addiction. When any funds are inconsistently given – or are withdrawn - due to the impacts of global-scale outside issues, there is a ripple effect that puts the ISO's ability to provide services at risk – and real, human, sex addicts are impacted.

7TH TRADITION

Knowing this, when the ISO let the fellowship know there was a downturn in contributions and, in accordance with the Seventh Tradition, asked SAA members for support, I increased my monthly Lifeline Partner contribution significantly. And I also encouraged my SAA friends and associates to do the same.

In SAA, we do not have awards dinners or red-carpet events, so I am not telling you about my contributions for accolades. We have none. We all do this out of gratitude. If we have a dollar, we give some portion of it in gratitude to the support of the group. If we have time, we give some portion of it in grateful service. It is the Twelve-Step way.

While the fellowship's response to the ISO's initial appeal was effective, it was not enough. Cuts were made to services such as Prisoner Outreach and Public Information / Cooperation with the Professional Community (PI/CPC). This means the needs of incarcerated SAA members and still suffering sex addicts are going unmet.

If this troubles you, as it does me, I encourage you to become a Lifeline Partner – or, if you already participate, by increasing your monthly contribution. In this way, per Tradition One, we will unify; per Tradition Seven, we will be self-supporting; and, per Tradition Five, we will carry the SAA message to the real, human sex addicts who are very much suffering.

» Poem by Anonymous

I've been a bad actor.
I've been a bleeding deacon.
I had to lock the place up
When I finished speaking.

My will was not sufficient.
The book was on the shelf.
When I looked inside of it
It said to look outside myself.

How quickly I forgot!
I thought it was all me.
I had forgotten gratitude
And humility.

I cannot let successes
Keep me from being sensible.
I practice love and tolerance
And follow spiritual principles
in all areas of my life.

FROM THE BOARD

Hope for the changing future

BY LES J.

BOARD MEMBER

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

This is my last year as a Board member. It is about time I expressed myself. I am not an accountant, but I think we will pull through financially. Some “wizardry” by the Finance and Operations Committee (often referred to as “F&O”) helped a lot, but especially your recent onslaught of donations—we thank you. Still, we have challenges. We really took a hit from the pandemic. It changed people’s lives, including our own.

The conference was virtual, and the convention in Atlanta lost a chunk of money. The upcoming convention in New York City may be a test of our resilience. With Paul M.’s resignation, we have had a change of leadership. Tracy has begun serving as Acting Executive Director. I have known Tracy for a number of years. She is a valuable asset to our organization.

Looking ahead, we on the Board will endeavor to realize our strategic goals. There are five of them, and they cover a lot of territory. Personally, I have taken on number five, which is about improving the skill sets of us Board members. Again, I am not an accountant, but I would like to understand how to look at a budget and decide which way is up.

I look forward to a prosperous and spiritual road ahead!

Les J.

ISO NEWS

Let's Talk Resumes for 2023!

We would like to invite you to join our next session of the “Let’s Talk” forum, which will take place on Saturday, January 21st at 1:00 PM CDT (11 am PT)(12 pm MT) (2 pm ET)(6 pm UTC), via Zoom.

Since this is our first “Let’s Talk” session for 2023, it is an excellent opportunity to start with the basics. Thus, the proposed topic for our session will be:

“What is the role of a Group Service Representative (GSR)?”

If you are a GSR, considering taking this service role in your local group. If you are a representative looking to help develop your meetings, you will benefit from joining this session. The GSR is still a relatively new role in SAA, but it is essential because it represents the building block of our service organization. GSRs bring the group’s voice to their area, and the assembly of area delegates makes up the ISO Conference. The GSR, in turn, receives communications from the ISO and keeps the group informed of initiatives and services that concern SAA as a whole.

Come to listen to experienced SAA members on this topic, or come to share your own experience, successes, and challenges. Either way, please join us on January 21st – we look forward to having you there for a lively one-hour conversation.

If you would like information on how to attend, please email info@saa-recovery.org.

List your SAA Event on the SAA Website

Is your group, intergroup, or area planning an SAA retreat, workshop, or other event? You can have it listed (and view other listings) on the SAA outreach site at <https://saa-recovery.org/news-events/>. A link to the form to submit your event is just above the “Events” section. After submitting, please allow up to five days (excluding weekends) for your submission to be reviewed and approved.

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

ISO NEWS

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 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.

Financial Summary

Our total SAA Green Book sales were below our estimate of \$8,300 by \$2,744 in November. Our HCI sales (October's numbers, a month behind) were \$2,327 lower than budgeted. Findaway audio sales were \$4 above our budget of \$300. For the year we are 79.37% of our estimated sales.

Our book *Voices of Recovery* sales for November were \$805 lower than our budget of \$2,400 for November. The ISO sales were \$324 below budget while the HCI sales were \$481 lower than budget. For the year we are an average of 75.76% of our estimated sales.

Our pamphlet and booklet sales were above our estimate of \$2,200 by \$505 in November. For the year we are at 137.06% of our estimated sales.

Our plastic chips sales were below to our estimate of \$1,200 by -\$158 in November. For the year we are at 95.46% of our estimated sales.

Our bronze medallion sales were below our estimate of \$2,100 by \$42 in November. For the year we are at 90.83% of our estimated sales.

ISO NEWS

Our total sales for November were below our estimate of \$16,355 by \$3,229 in November. For the year we are at 90.02% of our estimated sales.

Individual donations were above our estimate of \$46,000 by \$30,082 in November. We continue to be very grateful for the fellowship's response to our financial issues. For the year we are at 113.41% of our estimated individual donations. The general donations were \$28,313 above our budget of 12,000 and the LifeLine Partners amount was \$676 above our budget of \$29,000. Our goal is \$50,000 per month.

Group donations were above our estimate of \$11,600 by \$6,666 in November. We continue to be very grateful for the member group's response to our financial issues. For the year we are at 163.34% of our estimated group donations. General group donations were \$6,380 above our budget of \$6,800 and group LifeLine Partners are \$79 above our budget of \$2,800.

Our total donations were \$36,735 above the budgeted amount of \$57,600. For the year we are at 122.83% of our estimated donations.

Our product inventory is valued at \$56,018.

Our 2023 operational reserve is fully funded at \$183,701. Our 2022 estimated 3-month reserve is \$175,691.

Our total expenses were \$18,772 lower than our budget of \$80,512.

Our Net Income was \$52,267 above our budget of -\$10,655

For November of total income was \$109,530, our cost of goods was \$6,178, resulting in a gross profit of \$103,352. Our total expenses were \$61,740 resulting in a net income of \$41,612 which was \$52,267 higher than budget. For the year we are at \$115,827 above our budgeted net income of -\$109,782, which is -5.51% of at the end of November.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

In Your Service,

Tracy R

Acting Executive Director

CONTACT THE ISO

Office

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Jonathan C

Information Technician: DJ B
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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

Bill I; BJ M; Bob H; Bob L (Chair); Carl D;
Eddie N; Jim L; Karen S; Les J; Michelle W;
Wayne K

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

Literature Committee

Cara A; Chris D; David C; Deb W; Jackie J (Vice
chair); Jim P; Juan K; Maud D (Secretary); Mike K;
Rachel R (Chair); Ruth UK; Stephen P; Zach R.

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 in part 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.

Don't worry if you're not a writer. Tell us your story and we'll do the rest. If we have any questions, we'll contact you.

There are three ways to submit your story.

- First, you can submit online at saa-recovery.org/toc. This is the easiest for most people.
- Second, email toc@saa-recovery.org. If possible, include a copy of the release form below.
- Third, mail your submission, with the release form, to ISO of SAA, PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270.

Requested deadlines and suggested topics are below. Email toc@saa-recovery.org if you have any questions.

Deadlines for Submission and Topics		
Jan/Feb:	"Boundaries"	Dec 1
Mar/Apr:	"Outreach"	Feb 1
May/June:	"Tools"	Apr 1
July/Aug:	"Gratitude"	June 1
Sept/Oct:	"Spiritual Awakening"	Aug 1
Nov/Dec:	"Fellowship"	Oct 1

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.

UNION J