

THE OUTER CIRCLE

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

PLUS:

- CONVENTION UPDATES
- PORN AND THE POWER-SAW
- THE POWER OF TEXTING



TOOLS WE USE TO RECOVER





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.

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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).

FROM THE EDITOR

Tools from the fellowship

BY JIM L.

THE OUTER CIRCLE
INTERIM EDITOR

*All submissions can
be made online at
saa-recovery.org/toc
or sent to
info@saa-recovery.org
with a signed
release.*

The theme of this issue is tools of recovery. Response to the appeal for articles was gratifying. In fact, we received more submissions than we could print in a single issue. The articles we were unable to use this month will be published as space is available. Although none of the articles mentioned the ISO publication, *Tools of Recovery*, they all reflect interesting experiences and perspectives about the tools that support our recovery.

We were especially pleased to receive an article from one of our members in Italy, who describes the benefit found by discovering his outer circle. It stands as a good reminder that we are an international fellowship.

Another short piece offers a thought-provoking analogy of the recovery toolbox to the tools in his carpenter's tool belt. Yet another gives us a unique perspective from prison.

The theme for the July-August issue is gratitude. Personally, I have found that practicing 'active gratitude' is one of the most powerful practices I can apply daily to keep my thinking and actions in a recovery mode. Deliberate, conscious, intentional gratitude orients me properly with the God of my understanding and reminds me of the many blessings this program of recovery brings.

What is your experience with gratitude? Let us hear from you!

The deadline for the July-August issue is June 1. Submissions may be sent online from <https://saa-recovery.org/news-events/saa-newsletter/tocsubmission> or emailed directly to info@saa-recovery.org with a signed release.

We look forward to receiving another bounty of insightful articles to share with members of our fellowship.

...Jim L

Interim Editor

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Time is running out on convention registration!

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

*The SAA
convention website
is saa-convention.org. Call the ISO at
+1 713-869-4902
for the password.*

The time for the 35th Annual International Convention is fast approaching. The convention provides a fantastic opportunity to come together as fellows in recovery and to grow, enhance, and celebrate our journey together. I've been to many SAA conventions and have walked away from every one of them stronger and more committed to my sobriety.

The convention offers a variety of recovery workshops and is a great way to keep your program alive, add new tools to your sobriety toolbox, and share your own experience, strength, and hope.

Opportunities for fellowship with others abound. Seeing old friends and making new friends fills my heart with love, gratitude, and joy. For women in SAA, this can be particularly powerful since so many of us do not have regular in-person contact with other recovering women. The Women's Outreach Committee hosts a Women's Outreach Room to provide a space for women to gather.

There has been a decline in attendance since we resumed in-person conventions. I know I've had to readjust to getting out in the face-to-face world post-COVID. Since doing so, I've found a whole new level of love and joy in being with others, especially my fellow addicts.

We recover together from our addiction while we suffer alone in our addiction. I encourage you to come to the convention and join us as we live our recovery together – out loud and face-to-face!

I encourage you to register now before pre-registration ends on May 22. After that, all registration will be on-site and the cost will increase. You can contact the ISO Office at info@saa-recovery.org or +1-713-869-4902 for more information.

Finally, now is the time to start planning for the 2025 convention. We do not yet have a host for 2025. If your local community is interested, you can find more information on the service website at <https://saa-iso.org>. Please contact the ISO Office for the username and passcode. You can always reach out to the office with questions as well.

DEAR GRACE

Why we frequently make use of quotes

BY WOMEN'S
OUTREACH
COMMITTEE

*As a committee,
it's difficult for
us to write solely
from personal
experience, since
we naturally
have different
experiences.*

Recently, members of *The Outer Circle* review workgroup of the Literature Committee have voiced discomfort about the use (over-use in their view) of quotes in our columns. One member opined that our use of quotes gave an “authoritarian rather than compassionate” feel. Some have expressed a desire for us to share more from personal experience rather than drawing our responses from the literature. As always, we are grateful for feedback and would like to share our resulting reflections with the fellowship.

It is important to understand how our columns make their way into *The Outer Circle*. We start with questions posed by women seeking help. The Dear Grace workgroup works collaboratively on an answer, blending our personal journeys using literature to guide our focus on the solution. Each draft is brought to the Women's Outreach Committee for approval before sending *The Outer Circle* editor. We strongly believe that the final drafts sent to the editors—quotes and all—accurately represent the voice of women in recovery and genuinely reflect our Higher Power working in SAA.

As a committee, it's difficult for us to write solely from personal experience, since we naturally have different experiences. However, we'll share below a few that resonate.

- Women still often find themselves as the only woman in meetings, so it can be a challenge to share honestly. Sharing from a place of openness and vulnerability may bring concerns about our emotional and physical safety and our sobriety. Or we may find our shares are misunderstood, minimized, or dismissed. Adding in a quote from the green book may help others to understand.
- We may find our view or right to opinion being questioned. As one old-timer said: “I've learned through experience not to express an opinion



without first studying the book for guidance. It would actually be nice if all the men adopted that approach as well, but for women, it's sometimes crucial in order to be taken seriously."

- As women, we often rely on the Green Book, because our experience in the program has been contrary to what's written in it. For example, the book tells us that:
 - meetings are a safe place, but that's not always our experience.
 - meetings aren't a place to meet sexual partners, but women often share about encountering sexual advances within the meeting rooms.
 - all who seek help for this addiction are welcome, yet we still hear from many women that they have been turned away, referred to other S-fellowships, or otherwise excluded from meetings.
- **Sometimes, the only place women hear that they belong in SAA is through the literature.**
- As a women's outreach committee, we often rely on the book to lay out

*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.*

the expectations. The Green Book reminds us how healthy meetings operate, describes the ideals to which the fellowship subscribes, and explains the Twelve Traditions that guide us.

- We appreciate that men are often eager to hear the experience of women sex addicts because they find our perspectives helpful. We offer a reminder that no one is entitled to hear about another's personal experiences. When we feel moved to share and comfortable with doing so, we do in the manner that feels right for us.
- Approved literature is the official text of our program. While we all have different experiences, the literature of our program is what ties us together and remains consistent for all of us. In our columns, we use quotes to discuss how common themes apply to our lives in recovery. To write from personal experience, we draw on the voice of SAA, as written in our literature.

**In service,
Grace**

Tools of Recovery



BY MIKE P.

Like many of us, I knew I couldn't stop my acting out. But when you're an addict, knowing something is bad for you and choosing to do something about it are two entirely different mental spaces. I battled inside those mental spaces with myself, not understanding that my choices and the events of my past steadily guided me down a path to a place called "Rock Bottom." I had no understanding of where that was, let alone how to find my way out of it.

A Place Called Rock Bottom

I thought I hit rock bottom when I was waiting to walk in front of oncoming traffic. I was wrong. I thought I hit rock bottom as I sat in a police cruiser for six hours, my life falling to pieces while my home was searched by six state police troopers. I was wrong again. I thought I hit rock bottom as I sat in the basement of a residential treatment facility and contemplated how best to hang myself from the pipes running across the ceiling. I have since learned that rock bottom is not a vertical place on a ladder with happiness at the top and despair at the bottom. It is actually a matter of perspective. I was choosing to walk in circles at the bottom of a mental state of defeatedness.

Climbing up from rock bottom actually came after the police investigation and my time in residential concluded. Having returned home to rebuild, I began to encounter rejection I never knew could exist. While in full-blown active addiction, I self-isolated in a distorted effort to protect others from the consequences of my actions. When I began recovery, I experienced forced isolation as rejection came from friends, family, church, people I knew for a lifetime, and people I had never met. It was a ninety percent fail rate.

Reaching out felt like throwing a rope from the bottom of that pit and hoping it would catch on something solid to pull me up, only to have it fall right back down every time, catching on nothing. Or in this case, no one outside my pit would help by grabbing the rope I was throwing, let alone pull me up. I felt incredibly alone, believing no one could possibly fathom where I was or even remotely be able to help.

That's when I began to use the tools of recovery. For me, the three of most effective were those centered around connection—attending meetings, using the telephone (reaching out), and writing.

Attending Meetings

Two weeks before that police raid on my home in 2021, I went to my first SAA meeting. From that meeting, I discovered a list of online meetings I could attend. I became part of a fellowship. Through that fellowship, I learned the meaning of progress not perfection. I had been trying to stop compulsive sexual behavior on my own, while condemning myself when I returned over and over to a life of self-bondage to pornography and criminal behavior.

I truly believe it was through fellowship with SAA members that I survived the darkest time in my life. The darkness at the bottom of the pit I had dug felt so heavy and suffocating. And then there was light. Through the help of complete strangers, I was finally able to admit I was powerless over addictive sexual behavior—that my life had become unmanageable. I chanced upon a group

that met daily at noon. They directed me to groups specific to my particular behavior. They extended hands of friendship when I was feeling like a leper.

Using the Telephone (Reaching Out)

Before recovery, I self-isolated. Now I reach out every day either by phone call or text. I keep in contact across the country with my support network—real-life people who understand the depth of what I experienced. This brings me hope and optimism. Names like Jovial Jeff, Dedicated Dan, Conor the Clown, and Journeying Julian fill my weekly roster of individuals from my time in treatment who understand my journey best. With their help and weekly contact from many others, I moved from the depths of depravity to the rebuilding of my life and making amends to those I had harmed. Reaching out to individuals who do not judge when I stumble has offered more healing than I ever thought was possible.

Writing

Writing has become a great benefit to my recovery. I have learned that I can express thoughts and feelings with an intensity and exactitude that is impossible when speaking. I can also edit my words and phrases based on feedback from my chief consultants (wife and friends).

For me, it has been the most impactful recovery tool—chronicling my recovery journey. I post on a personal website, and I have received positive and constructive feedback, while bringing awareness of sex addiction and the effect

battling for sobriety has had on my life. I welcome every comment, as it allows me to help others see the danger of not using recovery tools.

Without these tools of recovery, I would not be celebrating a sobriety date of December 2021. They have helped me when I have felt alone. They have helped me with I have felt rejected. They have most certainly helped me when I felt apathetic towards my sobriety. I know I have to release my past, while using these tools makes it possible to transform my present into a better future. ☺

Finding a Way - Bruce M.

There is an old adage that I get out of something exactly what I put into it. That holds true for recovery. In order to reap the benefits of the SAA program, I have to do more than just attend meetings. I need to work the Twelve Steps of SAA and use the tools of recovery. Here is what has worked for me.

Of course, meetings are the simplest way to stay connected to the fellowship. But what happens when I leave the rooms and am alone? The answer for me was to employ tools consistent with my lifestyle, my personality, and my needs. That meant daily meditation, reflections on the writings in *Voices of Recovery*, quiet time, direct contact with others in the program, and reading helpful material.

My prescription would be the following: Each morning, whether before or after the first cup of coffee, I take five short minutes to just be quiet. I try to empty my mind of all thoughts by concentrating on my breathing and the normal noises around me. I try not to think of what happened yesterday or what has to be done today. I just try to be.

I read the daily meditation in *Voices of Recovery* or some other inspirational source. Then, I actually reflect on the meditation. A person who practices a particular religion can take some time to pray, or, if like me, simply spend some time in solitude and quiet contemplation.

Later, I reach out by phone to at least one fellow addict, even if just for a few seconds to hear his voice. I make it an intentional daily routine.

Practicing these tools regularly takes commitment, because our busy lives can get in the way of a daily practice. But when we are committed to using our tools, we will find a way to do it. We will then experience the benefits of the program and enjoy the sobriety we are looking for.



Finding My Outer Circle

Marco F.

I am fortunate to have a sponsor who is genuinely interested in my recovery and who told me about the program's tools of recovery. He particularly emphasized the importance of the outer circle.

I must confess that in my addiction I have had depressive attacks. I have brooded over my past, accusing myself of the bad things I've done and the good things I haven't done. I have felt like I was parked, just waiting for a breakthrough.

I see friends in recovery playing sports, dancing, practicing judo, boxing, hiking in the mountains, sailing, paragliding, and simply going to the theater. I seem to have no hobbies or passions. And I had a nervous breakdown due to stress at work. When I got home, I would eat everything I could find, connect to an online meeting, and then go to bed. I would talk to my wife until sleep overtook us.

And then another day with the same rhythm. I get tired, wearing my nice suit and tie and running to work where I do my best until late at night, as if I want to silence the negative voices that chase me.

Also at work, I have had disturbing memories and intrusive sexual thoughts, so that in the middle of a working dialogue, I would have sexual fantasies about the person in front of me. While I talked about work, I would sexualize everything and everyone.

I know it's not the introduction one might expect, but I wanted to emphasize the danger of not having an outer circle. Even as a boy, I was introspective, profound, and poetic—a thousand light years away from my peers. In addition, I didn't play sports, I had a complex relationship with my body, I assumed a "poor me" attitude, and I excluded myself from team sports—volleyball, football, and soccer. As a result, I inevitably found myself in the company of melancholy, which pushed me more and more toward addiction.

The outer circle is not optional. It is essential for the person's balance. It is where I re-discover the pleasure of living—free from addiction, able to love my life, and building a great wealth of beneficial opportunities.

For me, the outer circle has been the most difficult to achieve. I have lived for a lifetime in my inner circle which has devoured me like quicksand; I suffered terribly. Still, I did not know another possible life.

What is the outer circle to me?

- It's being alive.
- It's getting out of self.
- It's building bridges.
- It's a strong belief that addiction doesn't have the final say.

Without the outer circle, our lives are like kites mistreated by the headwind—all torn, with cord entangled in the brambles, wounded, with no future.

The outer circle is self-care, remembering, giving back, making life more beautiful than before, and returning to free flight.

For me, living through depressive moments is accepting the delicacy of my Higher Power's caress and seeing opportunities I would never have otherwise chosen in my state of mind.

For example, last week, I was in Venice with my wife for an international meeting of recovering couples. We had booked it seven months in advance. The week before leaving, I felt terrible, with headaches and obsessive-compulsive thoughts. I worried about the journey. Fear gripped me. When time came to leave for the station, my wife and I met a sister who was traveling with us, and joy was already beginning to overcome the melancholy.

Once in Venice, we were enraptured by the beauty of this ancient city—its hospitality and its colors of celebration. We went to the convent that would host us, and immediately smiles and hugs took over. There were brothers and sisters from Europe, the United States, and Mexico.

How nice to be there together! How nice to forget about myself!

In recovery, I have heard stories of pain, of struggle, of tears. I have heard stories of miracles, of how flowers are born during storms. I have shared our story honestly, not being afraid of being intimate. The climate was that of a great fraternity where everyone feels part of a single body.

It was amazing! It was wonderful to live this experience with my wife, to experience the magic of Venice, and to meet brothers and sisters from many different countries.

On Sunday morning, my wife and I walked to Piazza San Marco, watching the city as it was waking up, walking the alleys lined with canals, going over the distinctive bridges, and smelling the water. What a unique feeling! I was alive, immersed in the heart of my Higher Power, feeling loved. It was a miracle. I experienced a weekend away from my couch, my junk food, and my depressive thoughts.

We returned on Sunday, and I went to work on Monday. Surprise! The trip did not kill me. Instead, I experienced my outer circle—having experiences that took me up like a hot air balloon, leaving on the ground the ballast that had prevented my life from blossoming.

The outer circle is breathing deeply into the heart of our Higher Power, being enchanted by a walk along the sea or by a sunset. For me, choosing the outer circle is choosing life and growing in freedom from addiction.

My prayer is that all of us will experience our outer circle—not as an escape from the inner one, but as love for life. ☺

» REFLECTION: ON BEING A CARPENTER, FRED K.

I associate tools of recovery with the tools in my tool belt I wear as a carpenter.

When up on a ladder, I want all the tools I might need to be already in my tool belt, so they are readily available.

Recovery tools are not different to me. They are things I might need at a moment's notice, and I need to retrieve them instantly to deal with any situation that arises.

Used often, they are worn and rusty, comfortable and familiar, cherished and valuable. And they get the job done *if i use them*.



From Prison: On Tools

BY BRIAN G.

Today with the help of twelve-step programs including SAA, I can now see a vision of healthy emotions and spirituality among men at this facility and myself. Today I'm a seven-year veteran on how I use the tools of the program to stay in healthy sexual sobriety.

The first three steps were mind boggling to me. I had problems giving myself up. I was shameful, cold, passive, and somewhat cynical. Very slowly, I'm learning to be as honest as possible. Expressing myself is vulnerability. By giving myself to a higher power, I feel a certain genuine desire to be kind and considerate to others.

One of my first tools in working the first three steps is expressing emotions. We, as sex addicts, cannot hold on to negative emotions. We can't retreat to a cool basement. We have to become more confident and comfortable putting ourselves out there where we take risk of rejection. We cannot worry about a future we can't control. So today becomes the first day of the rest of my life. Our Higher Power is ready when we are. We can't do it alone again. In the past we were very quick to recognize faults in others. We were unable to face the faults in ourselves. No one wants to face one's painful and humiliating past acts.

The second tool in a healthy toolbox is avoiding blame. Blame can never solve any of our past problems. Pride isolates us from others. We can no longer justify our acts. We failed in relationships. But now focusing on our own issues, we become more comfortable being open and honest. Taking the risk of being rejected is something we can accept.

Tool number three is recognizing that no one is perfect. We can live a gentle journey that will help us face our fears easier. The “me” is eliminated from our conversation. We can be challenged by Steps Four, Five, Six, and Seven instead of instead of beating ourselves up. We can look at the whole picture, not just an incident, and we can set goals with compassion and hope. We can now face Steps Eight and Nine with wisdom and hope for a better life. We can appreciate the saying that humility is not thinking less of yourself but thinking of yourself less.

The next tool for a recovery toolbox is forgiveness. We forgive anyone who has wronged us, and we hope to receive forgiveness. We also need to forgive ourselves for the harm we have caused. Our goal in making amends is to create loving relationships and responsible living. We search the past; we

use letters, phone calls and, when possible, in-person meetings to make amends. We try to avoid hurting them. When done, we can move forward in a positive way. We try to build a new house on a solid foundation—one block at a time. If we backslide, we take the remedy needed to change it positively.

Our Higher Power is ready when we are. We can't do it alone again.

The final tool is self-control. We try to walk firmly with good thoughts for everyone around us. For example, I have used this to accept where I am at this time. We will want to help people—not harm them. Taking daily inventory of ourselves and journaling can help us know where our thoughts are.

All this learning from the program has prepared me for the day of testing, the day when I am free and back on those streets. I must continually remember what we learned and study it over and over again until it is a part of me.

Can we think of wasted moments in our lives? Maybe we have been stubborn, or maybe we are having troubles at work. Whatever it is, we now have solid tools to do the next

right thing. With our higher power, we are never alone. I'm not free of faults, but I am now alert even in dark times. My confidence and hope come from my Higher Power. Now I can play it safe by ignoring temptations and approaching my Higher Power boldly.

As long as we own up to our part and make the changes we need to make, we are doing our part. Often the pain of our wrongdoing will ease, showing that we have grown by using our tools. Many people in this twelve-step program have found strength to obtain wisdom beyond themselves and have experienced peace. A miracle is at our fingertips. ©

During the pandemic, did you wish for the time face-to-face meetings would resume?

Did you look forward to fellowship with your friends in recovery?

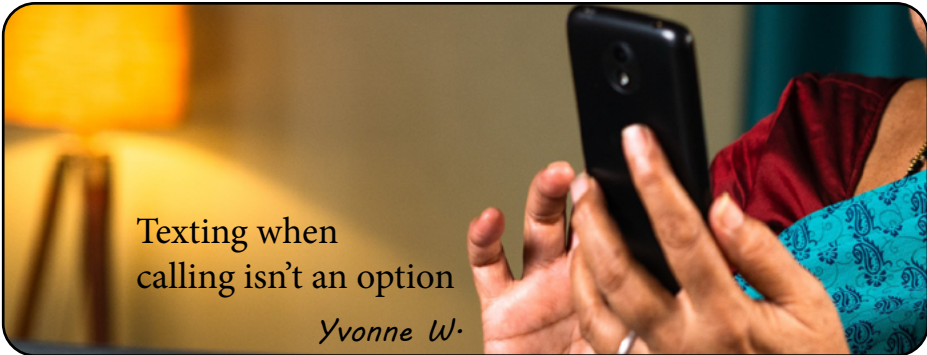
Did you miss in person retreats and conventions?

Yes? Then why haven't you signed up for the 35th Annual International Convention?

Pre-registration ends May 22. After that, registration is on-site only. There is no on-site registration for meals.

To sign up, go to saa-convention.org.

Call 713-869-4902 or email info@saa-recovery.org for the password.



Texting when calling isn't an option

Yvonne W.

I am triggered the most often and most intensely when I am in public. In fact, early in recovery, I was triggered virtually every time I left my home!

One tool I have learned to use is bookending—calling someone in the program before doing something potentially triggering, sharing my sobriety plan, and then calling them again afterwards. Early in recovery, though, I struggled to remember to use it, so I would constantly find myself surrounded by people and in a panic. Texting became a necessary tool for my sobriety.

The first time I used it, I was surely about to act out, but instead I picked up my phone, and sent a quick text like, “I’m worried. I’m about to act out” to 3–4 people in the program, hoping one of them would respond ASAP. But what I realized was, it didn’t matter how soon they responded. I knew that at some point they would see that message and ask me how I was doing. That accountability and relieving myself of the secret of wanting to act out kept me sober.

Now that I have this habit in place and can text more calmly, I can include more purpose in my texts. As an example, “I’m at ____ (the store, gym, work, an event, etc.) and feeling triggered right now. I am committed to my sobriety and will stay focused on the reason I am here, will maintain the 3 second rule, and will say a prayer.”

As a bonus, I get to connect with others in the program. I’ve never received a negative response—only care, concern, and opportunities to develop more friendships. Texting has become a valuable tool when I am at home too, because I live in a small space where my family could hear me talk from anywhere within our home.

After a few years in the program, I can still walk into a room realizing I forgot to bookend or make a plan and fell panicky. I can feel overwhelmed with triggers. But then I can pick up my phone, send out a few text messages, and feel almost instant relief. I still prefer to use bookending, but texting has saved me. ©



Porn and the power-saw

BY ANONYMOUS

A powerful recovery metaphor I use today springs from a lesson I learned from my father more than fifty years ago. Among my dad's many power tools was his basement table saw, a fearsome beast manufactured in the 1940s. When I was a little kid, it frightened me, with its high-pitched screech that rose and fell, as Dad sliced sheets of plywood and two-by-fours.

Dad respected the whirring 14-inch circular blade with its nasty, jagged teeth. As we grew older, he taught us how to line the wood up against a sliding barrier, then shove it steadily through the blade, your fingers hiding safely behind the guard. One of my brothers once grabbed at a piece of cut wood with his fingers, earning a stern rebuke.

As the years went by, I truly came to appreciate Dad's rules, when, sadly, two of Dad's best friends lost chunks of fingers on their own table saws. I tried not to stare at Mr. Sander's stumpy thumb or the missing fingertips on Mr. Lindquist's right hand.

I occasionally used Dad's table saw—ever so carefully—to accomplish some essential do-it-yourself task, and I still have all ten digits.

But what has done lots of slicing and dicing to my mental health is the whirring blade of pornography. My fingers may be intact, but I believe there has been some serious damage in my brain where addictive pathways have been deeply grooved. A person with a normal brain may appreciate an image of a woman in a bathing suit, for example, but for me, gazing at even some PG-13 image kicked off a craving for more, more, more.

My first look inside a men's magazine was at age 10, and I became instantly obsessed. At age 17, I used my older brother's ID to get into an X-rated film. The magazines had become my whiskey, and these moving images were pure heroin—a massive overdose of endorphins, adrenalin, anxiety, and shame.

And I always wanted more.

For the next 15 years, until I sought help at age 32, I maintained a normal-appearing life. I completed school, held jobs, had committed romantic partners, and eventually married. But in secret, my addiction progressed, aided and abetted by the ever-developing technology. When I started in on hard-core, I had to go downtown to some sleazy establishment to get my fix, but soon the neighborhood video store carried VHS versions of hard-core films.

Then in 1988, I found recovery in the fellowship of SAA. By joining with others who had similar problems, and by shifting my spiritual understanding from a harsh, punishing God to a loving power greater than myself, in March of 1989, I was granted freedom from the bondage of almost-daily use of pornographic imagery.

Today, decades later, I never turn on a power saw, but I do use a powerful, high-speed tool in my daily work. I don't know how I'd make a living without it. It's my computer, and it's a marvel. It allows me to draft sentences like the one you're reading now, and work on a wide variety of projects. Plus, my computer silently reaches out from wherever I am, sending and receiving messages, accessing information from every corner of cyber-space.

Recently, however, I noticed a worrisome trend, something I have in common with the recovering buddies with whom I've shared decades of recovery. Although no one has fallen back into the daily, progressive slavery from whence he came, staying away from toxic middle circle activity, or even the inner circle, has become much more challenging.

I then saw that my old recovery strategies had not kept pace with technology.

Back in early recovery, I removed the triggering imagery from my immediate environment. To replenish my stash, I'd have to leave my house. Today, provocative words and images troll along the bottom of regular news sites, and lingerie ads appear in the middle of a dry essay on economics. And each click can be an invitation into the infinitely branching, ever-ensnaring web that promises—well, everything. Every day I work with a powerful, high-speed machine that is buzzing with dangerous addictive possibilities.

My Dad knew that every time he turned on that table saw, its blade was sharp and rotating at thousands of RPMs. The tool never changes; it's always dangerous. So the operator needs to be sober-minded and alert whenever the machine is running.

I now use these specific guidelines:

- Don't open up the computer when tired, angry, or under emotional stress.
- Maintain boundaries, either have a focused task to accomplish, or a time limit.
- Some entertainment use is fine, but only with a plan and time limits.
- No screens after 9 pm.

And most effective of all, my desktop wallpaper is now the logo of one of my Dad's favorite brands of power tools. ☺

DEAR WILL

Are the steps necessary?

BY WILL

The Steps are more than a means not to act out, as working them can lead to a spiritual transformation, a new relationship with ourselves, our Higher Power, and others.

Dear Will-

I hope you can help me figure out what to do in my situation. I have been attending SAA meetings for about six months now. I have managed to stay away from my inner circle behaviors for the last four months. Attending meetings, along with making outreach calls when I am triggered, having filters on my electronic devices, and reading SAA literature have all been a big help. I do not have a sponsor, so I have not formally worked the Steps. Since I've been able to stay sober without the Steps or a sponsor, is it really necessary for me to do so?

Dear Best Life,

Congratulations on your abstinence. That is an achievement worthy of celebration. Like you, I too found a lot of support through meetings, phone calls, and other tools of recovery. Tools can really help us stay grounded in recovery and stay connected with others who are working the SAA program of recovery.

While getting a sponsor and working the Steps is a personal choice, not getting a sponsor and not working the Steps is not a decision I would support. SAA is a twelve-step program, not a 'twelve tool' program. The tools can be helpful in our journey, but according to our literature, my personal experience, and the wisdom of many in the fellowship, true freedom and recovery come from working the Twelve Steps of SAA.

The Steps are more than a means not to act out, as working them can lead to a spiritual transformation, a new relationship with ourselves, our Higher Power, and others. The Steps provide that “blueprint for full and successful living”—the spiritual principles upon which we live, that make the difference for many addicts. Recovery means practicing the principles outlined in the Steps, and it seems that the best way to learn how to live by the principles is to practice them through working the Twelve Steps of SAA.

I would encourage you to speak with others in the fellowship, those whose recovery you respect, and find out from them the impact of working the Twelve Steps.

Finally, what do you have to lose by working the Steps? What do you have to gain by working the Steps? What’s the risk of not working the Steps, and is the risk worth it?

Will

*If you have a question for Will,
please send an email to
Men4SAA@saa-recovery.org.*

Contact the ISO:

- » Phone: 713-869-4902
- » Email: info@saa-recovery.org
- » Board: board@saa-recovery.org
- » Literature Committee: litcom@saa-recovery.org
- » Conference Steering Committee (CSC): csc@saa-recovery.org
- » TOC Editor: toc@saa-recovery.org
- » 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

STORIES OF SERVICE

Be the Beacon!

BY JIM P.

*I am certain my
Higher Power wants
me to give others
what was so freely
given me. That is
why I do service
work.*

Walking into my first SAA meeting twelve years ago was one of the most frightening moments of my life. The preconceived notions of my wild, addicted imagination conjured up a host of bizarre and twisted thoughts and visions. Only utter desperation led me to the door of recovery.

I am so grateful to the kind, courageous men and women I met that day who extended the hand of fellowship and service at that first meeting and every other meeting since. And I finally found my recovery home, filled with other broken, struggling people. People that were just like me. I found it ironic that instead of shame, I felt somewhat angry at that first meeting—angry that there had been help, and maybe a solution out there all this time, but I had no idea it existed.

Shame and sex addiction are so intertwined for most of us. It is hard for any addict to walk through the door of their first twelve-step meeting, but it is brutal for sex addicts.

As terrifying as it was, I never want to forget how despondent, scared, and desperate I was that first night, because I suspect that is exactly how the typical newcomer feels. I am certain my Higher Power wants me to give others what was so freely given me. That is why I do service work.

Service work can be so many different things—from shoveling the sidewalk before a meeting, to writing letters to local therapists

and health care organizations about how we can help, or carrying the message into jails or institutions.

When I find myself getting comfortable or complacent in my recovery, I write letters to my sponsees through the ISO prison outreach program. Given the limited resources of the correctional system and the sensitive nature of our collective affliction, an encouraging letter from another addict may be the one of the few positive, encouraging messages an inmate may receive. But the hope, encouragement and inspiration I get back more than repays my small investment in time.

Another way to get involved is to consider submitting your service resume to ISO for a position on the Board of Trustee or on one of the other elective committees—Literature Committee, Conference Steering Committee, Area Coordinating Committee, or Conference Nominating Committee.

SAA needs diverse enthusiastic volunteers to help maintain and grow our organization so that we can carry our message to the sex addict who still suffers. Learn more about international service at <https://saa-iso.org/svc/index.php>.

You can be the beacon of light and hope that helps the newcomer cross the threshold “from shame to grace.”

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

FROM THE BOARD

Call to serve: Reaching Underserved Communities

**BY KAREN S.
BOARD MEMBER**

*We value your
input. Email the
board at*

board@saa-recovery.org

Pause. Take a moment. Look at a map of the world and ask yourself: where do I think SAA has a presence across the globe? Sadly, outside of the USA and the UK, the answer is not in many places. We still have a long way to go to reach the still suffering sex addict in most of the world. Nor do we have the luxury of claiming to be the new kid on the block. We can and need to do more to fulfil our primary purpose.

This is where the work of the recently formed Reaching Underserved Communities Committee comes in (a real mouthful, so referred to hereafter as the RUCC).

The RUCC has been set up as part of the Board strategic goal to reach underserved communities, which is a key priority for the ISO and the fellowship. We acknowledged that there is much work to be done, and establishing the RUCC is one of the vehicles to achieve this goal.

November 2022 was the start date for the new committee. However, despite publicity, membership on the committee is small—a small group of interested members who meet monthly. There is simply too much work to be done for so few to manage.

So far, the RUCC has looked at the data we could readily access and can see that our website receives a significant number of visits from people across the globe. Sadly, this still has not resulted in receiving contacts nor in requests for help to establish meetings.

The urgent need now is more willing volunteers to support the work of the RUCC. No matter how small your contribution, any participation counts. So, if you are looking to invest in your recovery by doing service, this is an opportunity for you.

There are many ways to help, such as:

- Join and attend the committee meetings – bring your enthusiasm, ideas, and experience.
- Do you speak a language other than English? Can you offer to translate materials and messages?
- Are you from a country that has no or limited SAA presence? Tell us about the challenges and what we can do to help.
- Do you know others in the fellowship who can help us in this work?

We would love to hear from you!

ISO NEWS

7TH TRADITION

The LifeLine Partner Program by Gil R.

Becoming a Lifeline Partner in SAA was a decision that came from a personal place for me. As someone who struggled with sex addiction for much of my life, I understand the feeling of isolation and hopelessness that can come with it. I also understand how hard it can be to ask for help and to find the support you need to overcome your addiction.

When I first came to SAA, I was scared, desperate and alone. I wasn't sure that a group of strangers could help me overcome my addiction or that I had anything to offer them. Ten years ago when I first walked through the doors, I was out of options and willing to ask for help. As I started attending meetings and working with the steps with my sponsor, I began to see the power of the program and the value of this fellowship.

Over time, I had a way out of addiction as I worked my program. My life got better and that I could contribute to the well-being of others. When I first heard about the Lifeline Partners program, I wasn't sure if I had the resources or the means to join. I realized that even a small donation could make a big difference in someone else's life.

So I decided to become a Lifeline Partner to SAA. For me, it was a way to give back to the community that had given so much to me. It was a way to help others who were struggling with sex addiction, just like me. It was a way to see how our experience could benefit others. And it was a way to be a part of something bigger than myself.

Becoming a Lifeline Partner has been part of my ongoing amends work to pay it forward. It has allowed me to connect with others who are going through similar struggles and to offer them support and guidance. It has also given me a sense of purpose and meaning, knowing that I am contributing to something that is making a positive impact in the world.

I am proud to be a Lifeline Partner to SAA and to be a part of this incredible community. If you are considering becoming a Lifeline Partner, I would encourage you to do so. It is a decision that can change your life and the lives of others in ways you never imagined.

Host City Needed for 2025 Convention

The ISO is still in need of a host city for its 2025 convention. Local groups, intergroups, and areas need to step up and place a bid so there will be a convention in 2025. To learn more or to place a bid, email info@saa-recovery.org or call 713-869-4902.

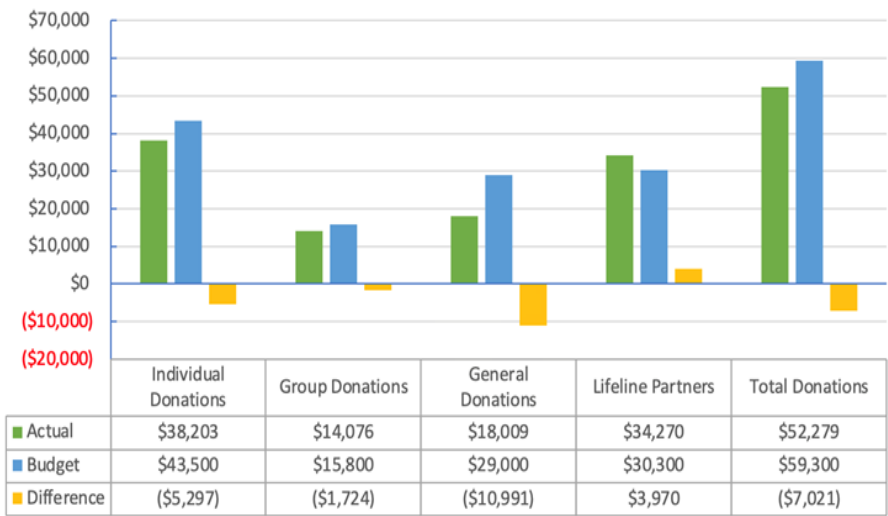
Approved Board Actions

February

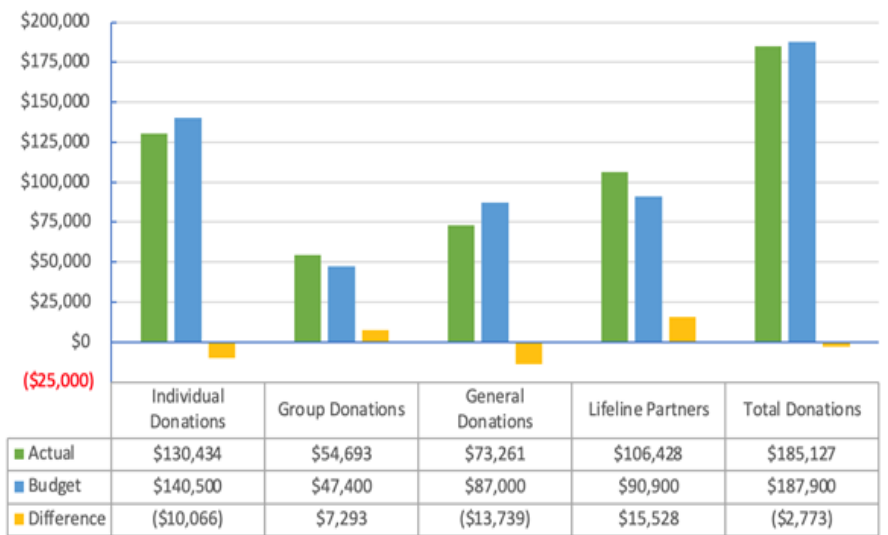
- Accepted bid for 2024 convention contingent upon further logistical and financial analysis.

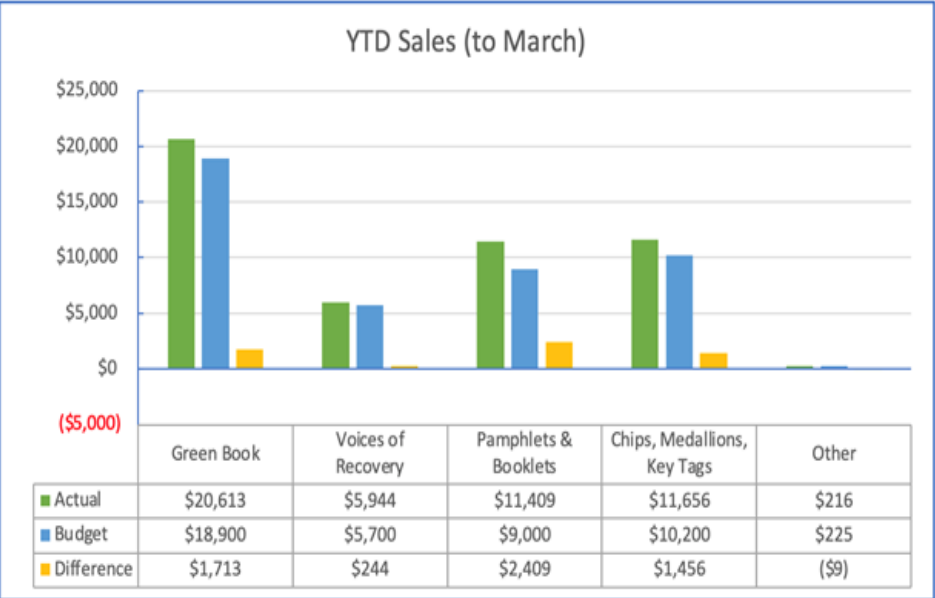
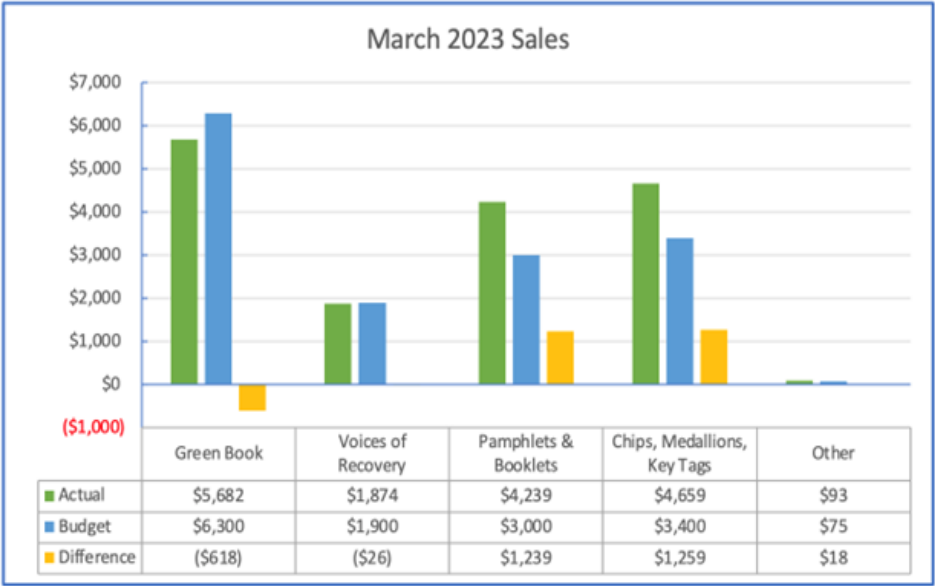
FINANCIAL SUMMARY

March 2023 Donations



YTD Donations (to March)



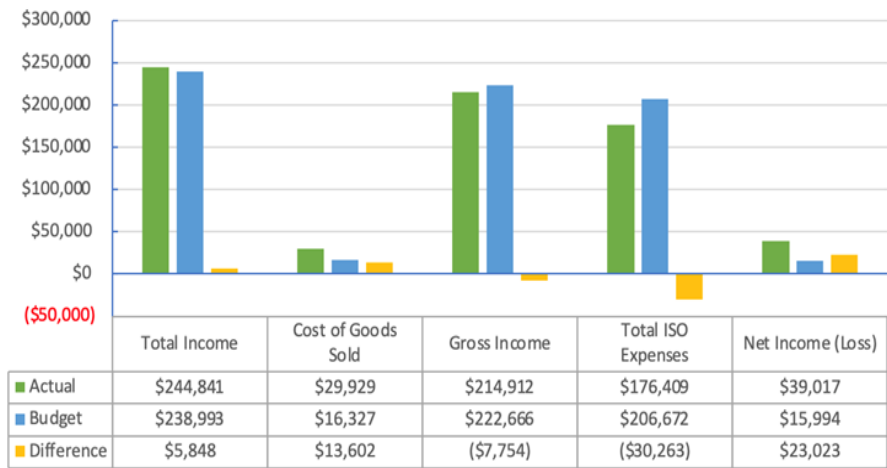


FINANCIAL SUMMARY

March 2023 Net Income



YTD Net Income (to March)



Financial Summary

Total donations fell below budget in March, and, except for LifeLine partners, donations fell below budget in all categories for March. Donations have been declining since January, resulting in the year-to-date contributions coming in slightly below budget.

Green Book and *Voices of Recovery* sales are down in March. However, we have not received sales data from our outside sales outlets. This lack of data may be skewing the sales numbers to be lower than they actually were for the month. All other sales were above budget for March. All sales remain above budget for the year-to-date.

While our net income was below budget for March, we remain slightly above budget for the year-to-date. Total ISO expenses are below budget in part because we have one less staff than we are budgeted for. We will be hiring a new staff person soon, which will increase expenses to be more in line with the budget. If donations continue to decline, our income will soon be below budget for the year-to-date, which could result in ISO having to decrease services.

Tracy R.

Executive Director

Congratulations to Tracy R, who has been promoted to *Executive Director* from *Acting Executive Director*, and Alex B who has been hired as the new editor of *The Outer Circle*!

Welcome, Alex!

CONTACT THE ISO

Office

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Phone: 713-869-4902

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The Outer Circle e-mail: toc@saa-recovery.org

Website: www.saa-recovery.org

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director@saa-iso.net

Associate Director and Publications Manager: Cody S
Public Information, Cooperation with the Professional
Community, and 7th Tradition Manager: Phillip B
Information Technician and Prison Outreach Manager:

Jonathan C

Information Technician: DJ B

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

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

Board: board@saa-recovery.org

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; Stephen P; Zach R., Jim L
(TOC Editor).

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.

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 AND TWELVE TRADITIONS

The Twelve Steps of SAA

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.

The Twelve Traditions of SAA

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon SAA unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority — a loving God as expressed in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for SAA membership is a desire to stop addictive sexual behavior.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or SAA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose — to carry its message to the sex addict who still suffers.
6. An SAA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the SAA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every SAA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Sex Addicts Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. SAA, as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Sex Addicts Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the SAA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, TV, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.