

THE
OUTER CIRCLE

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

*SPONSORSHIP:
A RECOVERY RESOLUTION*





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.

© Copyright 2024 International Service Organization of SAA, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Except for the purpose of redistributing *The Outer Circle* as a whole, *The Outer Circle* may not be downloaded, copied, reproduced, duplicated, or conveyed in any other way without the express written permission of the International Service Organization of SAA, Inc.

* Registered Trademark Sex Addicts Anonymous and the SAA logo are registered trademarks of the International Service Organization of SAA, Inc.

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.

CONTENTS

Columns

- 4 From the Editor
- 5 From the Director
- 6 Dear Grace
- 18 Dear Will
- 20 Stories of Service
- 22 From the Board
- 24 Financial Summary

Departments

- 2 TOC Mission
- 23 ISO News
- 24 Financial Summary
- 30 Calendar
- 30 Contact ISO
- 31 Submissions
- 32 Twelve Steps
and Twelve Traditions

Feature Articles



- 9 The Way to Peace



- 10 Unlocking the Program



- 12 A Word from a Sponsor



- 16 Growing Through Sponsorship

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

Sponsorship

BY ALEX B.

THE OUTER CIRCLE
EDITOR

*If you feel inspired
to share your story,
remember they
can be submitted
online ([https://
saa-recovery.org/
news-events/saa-
newsletter/](https://saa-recovery.org/news-events/saa-newsletter/)) or via
[toc@saa-recovery.
org](mailto:toc@saa-recovery.org).*

The New Year is approaching as I write this letter, and I find myself thinking about resolutions and promises I make to myself. Some of these are familiar—spend more time with my children, be more present at home—and some are topical, related to work or my recovery program.

This year, I resolve to use the gift of sponsorship in bigger and bolder ways. If I catalyze my relationships with my sponsees, the promises of our program will materialize more quickly for them. If I turn to my sponsor in a time of need—or even when things are sailing smoothly—then I communicate to him that I see him and value his place in my life.

These gifts are bigger than me; they represent my higher power in action. Small wonder that our program depends on these gifts to bring sobriety and recovery to those who are still suffering.

It should come as no surprise that the topic of “sponsorship” inspired a flood of stories of experience, strength, and hope. The stories you will read in this issue are personal, heartfelt, and get to the core of our program. I hope you enjoy them—and I hope they inspire some resolutions of your own.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

2023 in review, 2024 in preview

BY TRACY R.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
ISO OF SAA, INC.

*The first phase
of updates to the
meeting search
and database
will be completed
during the first
quarter of 2024.*

In 2023, the ISO Conference approved five new pamphlets geared toward fellowship members and four new pamphlets related to Public Information and Cooperation with the Professional Community (PICPC). The Literature Committee approved a video on writing to prisoners, an area handbook, and a new pamphlet on communication.

PICPC members attended four national, three international, and seven local professional conferences. We sent fourteen mailings to professionals. We coordinated seven Google Ad campaigns (two international and five local) and made seven presentations to non-SAA organizations.

You have been asking for improvements to the saa-recovery.org meeting search. We hear you, and we are making progress. The first step, phase one of our new meeting and contact database, will be completed during the first quarter of 2024. The new database is required to feed the new meeting search. The existing database does not have the flexibility required to provide the requested filtering and searching capabilities. We have found a possible out-of-the-box solution, but it will require some customization, so we will be looking for a vendor to provide that service.

SAA Connect (<https://saa-connect.org>) has been live for some time now. You can search *Voices of Recovery* and *Tools of Recovery* on that site, which can be very helpful when looking for a meeting topic or working with a sponsee. We will soon be adding more newsletters, which will also be searchable. Select audio recordings from past conventions are available on the site as well.

The ISO Convention will be taking place in June. Attending the convention can be a wonderful SAA experience, revitalizing individual and collective recovery via shared experiences and solutions. Registration is now open, and the convention committee is looking for workshop presenters, speakers, and other volunteers, so there's no need to wait to get things in motion to attend.

DEAR GRACE

How to feel safe at meetings

BY WOMEN'S
OUTREACH
COMMITTEE

*Safety for all
members is a
core value of our
fellowship.*

Dear Grace:

I'm new to the fellowship and have been to two in-person meetings. It's a mixed group but it's all men. I thought I belonged because I identify with how they feel about their addiction and the carnage it has caused in their lives. But they have told me that my clothes are triggering and aren't appropriate for SAA meetings. I feel so ashamed and judged.

When I talked about it with the women's fellowship, they said they would also feel unsafe there. A group of men who can't control their thoughts about my body are not safe for a woman to be around. Maybe the ones with long sobriety might be, but how can I be sure? They are also telling newcomers and those who have relapsed that a relapse is the woman's fault. Are they all sitting there thinking toxic thoughts about me, thinking about their addiction and what they would do "because I'm triggering them?"

Am I safe in meetings? What if they follow me home? What if they get angry? Whatever happens or doesn't happen, I just don't feel I belong here—but the women I speak to tell my story. I am desperate as this addiction is going to kill me, but I'm also afraid and want to leave.

What Do I Do?

Dear What Do I Do,

I hear you. You are not alone in feeling conflicted at the beginning of your recovery

*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.*



journey. Many of us are desperate and badly want recovery but are also fearful and want to quit. It's especially tough when you're trying to get better, but the environment feels off. It took me extra time to formulate an answer to your question because I didn't want to confront that this is still happening in our fellowship. This is not okay and does not reflect our values as a fellowship. I did what I often do when I am stuck and asked my fellow SAA members for their experience, strength, and hope. Some of their comments are quoted below, anonymously. They were all unified in feeling sad and disappointed that you felt unwelcome and judged at these meetings. All hoped you would try many meetings and keep giving recovery a chance. As

one put it: "If you want recovery, **STAND YOUR GROUND!**"

Now, to address your specific questions.

Yes, if you feel you belong, then you belong. Many of the responses I gathered referred to the Third Tradition: "The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop addictive sexual behavior." This response was the most direct: "She absolutely has a seat at the table. Recovery is available to her in SAA, and no one can take that away from her."

Safety for all members is a core value of our fellowship. Your concern about possibly being followed home needs to be addressed immediately. Please request from the group's trusted servant that someone who has strong recovery

either watch you get in your car (or walk you to your car) and let you drive away before anyone else leaves — until you feel certain that no one from the meeting is following you to your car or home.

Who can you trust? How to know? As a starting point, anyone who tries to say that you are triggering them is a good person to avoid. We hope that one or two members offered you a newcomer's meeting. If not, please request one from the trusted servant. You can then start by observing them to see if they earn your trust.

What happened in this meeting is not okay and does not reflect our values as a fellowship.

The way you dress is not the reason for anyone else's behavior. Their behavior is on them, not you. If someone seems to be judging you or others or offering feedback that relapses are caused by an addict's partner, they absolutely do not speak for the fellowship as a whole. We have a saying about feedback: "Take what you need and leave the rest." As one response expressed it: "We are all humans and recovering addicts, some further along than others in our journey."

Many responses included an encouragement to try other meetings, including other mixed meetings. For example, this comment: "Not every meeting has the same level of sobriety, experience, and diversity. We encourage you to visit other groups and chose the one that gives the most comfort and support."

We are so glad to hear that you are already plugged into the women's fellowship! Please start or continue to attend women-only meetings (virtual if necessary; with the camera off, if helpful). If you haven't done so, please join the Grace list to build your network of supportive sisters.

We encourage you to keep coming back. Recovery is possible, and you are worth it!

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



Sponsorship: The Way to Peace

BY ANDREW

Like many of my fellow sex addicts, I had used sex to short circuit, shortcut, or avoid things in life I didn't like. This had the unintended effect of never allowing me to grow. I was immature, not facing up to the unpleasant things in life. I did believe that without change I wouldn't get sober and would be much less happy. But it was a slow and painful process to get to where I could actually answer the call to change that I heard from old timers. As a sex addict, I know I would prefer a trouble-free, perfectly easy relationship, but such a relationship never exists.

My relationship with my sponsor is different—heavy on the stuff I tried to escape or avoid. It's closer to real love, and it includes difficulty and pain. The relationship is low on drama, which might also reduce its appeal. Before asking for a sponsor, I had to ask myself if I was ready for a radically different relationship, one I might not understand. Newer members asking for a sponsor don't always know what they are asking.

My program can be summed up as “When I'm doing what my sponsor tells me, I'm happily sober; when I'm not, I'm neither happy nor sober.” There are about as many different kinds of sponsorship as there are sponsor/sponsee pairs in our fellowship, but there are common patterns.

Some sponsors communicate clearly, others don't communicate at all. Some sponsors like to get into their sponsees' issues, and some sponsors are very hands-off. Some are more like drill sergeants. None of these is necessarily good or bad. I've learned it's important to examine how and why a sponsor chooses a particular approach and whether it is making the sponsee's life better. A sober, experienced, and objective sponsor is more likely to be able to answer that question than the sponsee.

I've been a sponsor many times. Sponsoring helps me stay happily sober, even when it makes me lose sleep, worry, or feel an urge to rescue. Having sponsees is a lot like having kids — I've seen myself reflected in all of them, and they've taught me a lot. It works the other way too: when I can't see myself, my sponsor can see me. Codependence and other defects still come up in my life a lot more than I'd like, but a lot less than they used to.

It's not an exaggeration to say that without strong sponsorship I'd be dead, dying, or in an institution. But much more importantly, I would rarely be happy—and never at peace. ©



Unlocking the program through sponsorship

BY JEFF W.

Sponsorship is an integral part of the sobriety process of SAA.” I read this as part of our script at many meetings. The meaning is much deeper than just words.

After coming into the SAA fellowship, I looked around for a sponsor. Members suggested that I attend a few meetings, connect, and ask questions in meetings. I remember being very scared and timid. I did not want to draw attention to myself, a newly recovering addict who barely understood the Steps.

My Saturday morning group – a telemeeting which has transformed during the pandemic – really stands out in my weekly routine. There is prominent recovery present in this group. Many members have lasting sobriety (which I desired) and many are happy and enjoying life. I remember thinking, “Wow, this is what I want!”

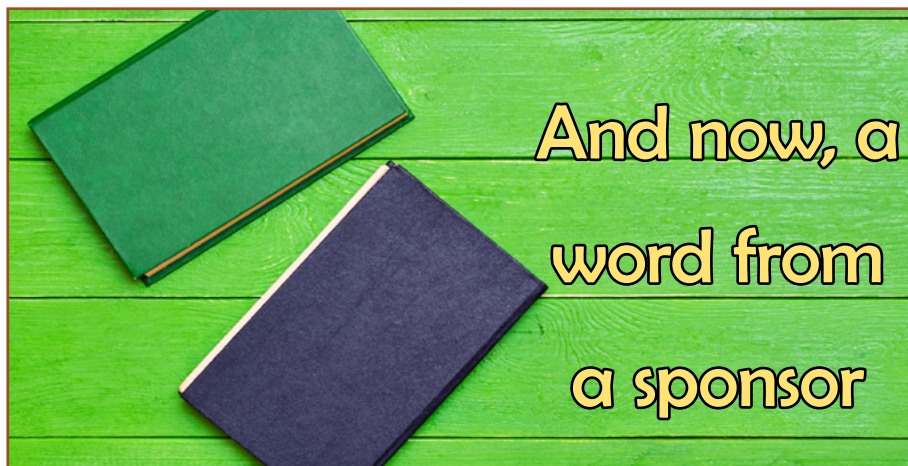
After attending this group for a few weeks, I gathered up the courage to ask one of the old-timers to sponsor me. He said that we should talk about sponsorship and quickly set up a time to talk further. He said that he would be glad to sponsor me “temporarily or longer.” He told me that the sponsor/sponsee relationship runs in both directions, and we must be willing to be honest and work the Steps. I liked this approach because at any time either one of us could say it was not working and pause or discontinue our relationship. There were also some guidelines which he outlined for me: Being on time, continuing to make progress, and working my program. I appreciated his giving of his free time. I also thought that he had the temperament and tone in his voice to be a good teacher for me.

The past 20 months have proven to be a blessing. I have spent many hours on the phone with my sponsor working the Steps of this program. I am always so overwhelmed by the depth of knowledge which is being shared with me. I now have a higher power, which I did not have when coming into this program. Every day in recovery keeps getting better when I continue to focus on the program.

During my journey in SAA I have had the opportunity to sponsor my own fellows. Giving back focuses me on what I have received and keeps me humble. In this program of attraction and suggestions, some sponsees work the program while others are what I consider “tourists.” They stay for a while and then move on; sometimes they leave and I wonder what has become of them. I pray that their journey is guided by their higher power, and the door and phonenumber is always open. I am currently working with two sponsees, and they enrich my recovery. We are all in this together, one fellow helping another. The relationships forged through this program are building blocks to a healthy life.

I am truly blessed to have my sponsor. He came into my life when I needed him and had the knowledge and experience I was seeking. I now have peace and serenity! My sponsor is evidence that my higher power knew exactly what was needed and provided it at exactly the right moment.

Every day is a new day, and we must be able to share this program of recovery. It was given to us freely and we must pass it along. I hope this approach will strengthen our fellowship for years to come. ☺



BY ANONYMOUS

The foundational literature for our Twelve Step recovery program – the Green Book of SAA and the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous – are silent on the “correct” way to sponsor. This absence of definitive instructions in our literature indicates that any instructions surrounding sponsorship are opinions. This article is not different: The ideas expressed here are my opinions of sponsoring – based on my understanding of our literature and my own experience as both a sponsee and a sponsor.

Perhaps it may be helpful for me to briefly share my own story, for context. As of this writing, it has been almost ten years since I started working the SAA program with a sponsor, and also almost ten years since I last acted out. It has probably been about six years since I last had the desire to act out.

I am in a committed, monogamous, thirty-three-year relationship. My partner and I have not had a sexual relationship in probably about nine years. Therefore, my abstinence from inner circle behaviors is not aided by “acceptable” sex. Rather, my abstinence is due to an act of grace from a power greater than me.

I’ve been sponsoring for about nine-and-a-half years. Some of my sponsees have done well, some have not. My approach to sponsoring has changed over the years, as I have matured in this program and in my own recovery.

In my time, I have encountered a number of questions and answers about sponsorship:

Who needs a sponsor?

Only people who want to recover from sex addiction. For anyone who does not want to recover, getting a sponsor is optional.

What is the “job” of a sponsor?

A sponsor has only one job: To help the sponsee in taking the twelve steps of the SAA program. Period. The sponsor’s job is not to get the sponsee sober: That’s God’s job. And the sponsor is not God.

As a sponsor helps another addict, it is possible that the sponsor may discover other ways that she can help her sponsee. But it is important for a sponsor to remember that her primary qualification is that she is a recovered or recovering sex addict. If she is not trained in therapy or counselling – true for most SAA members – then it may be better not to counsel a sponsee in matters that are more related to therapy. It is important for a sponsor to adhere fairly closely to this limitation of “only one job.”

What are the qualifications or requirements for becoming a sponsor?

To answer this question, a prospective sponsor should be careful about recommendations some people may offer. The Green Book states, “SAA has no formal requirements,” but also, “Ideally, a sponsor is abstinent from addictive sexual behavior, has worked the steps, and can teach us what he or she has learned

from working the program...Once we have worked the SAA program ourselves, gained abstinence from the sexual behaviors that were addictive for us, and experienced some degree of spiritual growth, we are ready to consider sponsoring other members who ask us to do so” (Sex Addicts Anonymous, pg. 13-14). As the Big Book of AA says, “you cannot transmit something you haven’t got” (Alcoholics Anonymous, pg. 164). Perhaps the most important question for anyone considering becoming a sponsor is this: Does your sponsor think you are ready to sponsor?

One important principle is this: The best way to keep from acting out sexually is to help another sex addict. That principle is found throughout the Green Book – even when not stated specifically. Thus, there is a level of risk if someone is prevented from being a sponsor due to requirements that are external to the relationship of the potential sponsor and their current sponsor.

Is it possible to become a sponsor too early? Certainly. Is it possible to become a sponsor too late? Certainly. Which is worse—trying to help other addicts too early or not helping other addicts long after I’m ready to do so? In my opinion, the latter scenario is worse. But I recommend asking your sponsor.

How does a sponsor motivate sponsees?

This is a tough question. I have had sponsees tell me that they were having extreme difficulty staying motivated to continue taking the twelve steps. When they ask me for suggestions on how to get motivated, I tell them that my answer may not be satisfactory; maybe they need to act out some more. I know that sounds harsh, but here's the truth behind that statement: Our motivation for continuing in the SAA recovery program likely comes from the consequences of our behavior.

The more time that has passed since the event that propelled me into SAA, the more likely I am to minimize those consequences. For me, the possibility of losing my partner helped me to get a sponsor and get to work. But if I'm having trouble maintaining that commitment, it may be that the only motivator that can push me back into the program is to experience more consequences.

I cannot be an adequate motivator for anyone I sponsor. That's a statement of fact, not an abdication of responsibility. Instead, a sponsor should help her sponsees to take these steps quickly – as was the practice in early twelve-step recovery – so that the consequences are still fresh, and the motivation is still strong.

A sponsor has only one job: To help the sponsee in taking the twelve steps of the SAA program. Period. The sponsor's job is not to get the sponsee sober: That's God's job. And the sponsor is not God.

One practical suggestion is an idea I got from a speaker recording. Whenever someone asks me to sponsor her, I give her a sheet of paper that describes how I sponsor. That paper is not a contract, but it is for her to use as she considers whether or not my approach fits with her expectations.

That sheet of paper has been a huge help to me, because one of the items on that sheet states that by asking me to sponsor you, you are asking me to tell you things that you don't want to hear. Then, down the road, if there is something that I need to say to her that could be difficult to hear, I can say, "This is one of those things-you-may-not-want-to-hear that I described in that sheet I gave you." That sheet has helped enable me to have the courage to say things that I needed to say but were tough for me to say and for the sponsee to hear.

In closing, I'd like to share a statement that was developed by one of the SAA intergroups as a way to encourage addicts to seek a sponsor and to encourage addicts to sponsor when they are ready. That statement is read at each local meeting. May this statement be helpful to you.

"Sponsorship is invaluable in our program. Guidance from a sponsor promotes success in working the twelve steps. We encourage those without a sponsor to look for members with the recovery they want and to ask for sponsorship. Sponsoring others helps us stay sober. Carrying the message is our Twelfth Step. We ask those who can, to be willing to sponsor others and we encourage our own sponsees to be willing to sponsor when they are ready." ©



*Whether it's being
a sponsor or getting
a sponsor, make
sponsorship your
resolution in 2024!*

Finding a sponsor can be as simple as putting your name on a list. Most often, however, you'll need to ask someone personally. Ask someone whose story speaks to you. If they say no, ask someone else! For more information, go to <https://www.saa-recovery.org/literature> to read the pamphlet "Getting a Sponsor."

If you are unsuccessful at finding a sponsor, or if you want to sponsor long-distance, we have resources for you. If you identify as a man or male, please email men4saa@saa-recovery.org for the "Men's Support List." If you identify as a woman or female, you may email the Grace List at grace@saa-women.org. If you do not identify as either or are not comfortable emailing either list, you can reach out to the LGBT Outreach Committee at lgbt@saa-recovery.org.



Growing Through Sponsorship

BY TIM

I distinctly remember the feeling when my sponsor first popped the question one day: “So, how do you feel about sponsoring?” Nervous and unprepared would have both been honest answers that day! Regardless, he thought I was ready and by the end of the conversation I was as ready as I ever would be to start sponsoring.

It wasn't too long afterwards that someone asked me to sponsor them for the first time. Being a true addict, I wondered what it was this person saw in me that they actually wanted for themselves. But nevertheless, I resolved to be open to the experience and took the plunge. Fast-forward one year and I can completely agree with the saying, “In order to keep our sobriety, we have to give it away.” In this year, I've learned a lot about myself and my program from sponsorship and I now see it as an essential part of my personal recovery.

First and foremost, serving as a sponsor has helped me immensely when it comes to setting and understanding boundaries. Surprisingly enough, it turns out that I am just as powerless over the addictions of my sponsees as I am over my own. The first time one of my sponsees relapsed, I worried that I

might have made a mistake or otherwise not given my sponsee the direction and support that he needed to stay sober. That experience, along with quite a few subsequent relapses by several sponsees and even one cutting off contact entirely, have all made my powerlessness crystal clear to me. I cannot work the program for my sponsees, nor can I pick up the phone for them and call when they are struggling. I can only hope that they are able to take these actions for themselves.

What I can do as a sponsor is to share my experience, strength, and hope with my sponsees. I can listen without judgment when they share the pain and insanity of their addiction and commiserate with them. I can share the things that have helped me in recovery and the ideas and sayings that I've picked up along the way. I can share my observations of their behaviors and work with them to identify feelings, triggers, and patterns that may be obstructing their efforts. I can take them through the Twelve Steps just as my sponsor did for me, while celebrating their victories and encouraging them when they are down. Most importantly, I can show my sponsees that they are as worthy of love and compassion as anyone else on this Earth.

Sponsorship has also proven to be an effective antidote to my own feelings of terminal uniqueness. It regularly reinforces how much I have in common with my sponsees, with my fellows in the program, and with people in general. When listening to my sponsees share their own struggles and personal inventories, I've found that I've felt compassion, understanding, and an abundance of identification and connection with my sponsees. This contrasts sharply with my view of myself, in which I still struggle mightily with the character defects of self-criticism and perfectionism. My sponsees' struggles are potent reminders that my own emotions and overly harsh judgment are persistent traits of my addiction. The truth is that I am simply messy, imperfect, and—above all—wounded. In other words, I am human.

I would not be where I am in my recovery today without the gift of the sponsees with which I have been blessed along the way. They have taught me about both the places where I can help as a sponsor and also about myself. They have taught me to be gentle, kind, considerate, and especially patient with others, as well as with my own struggles and flawed thinking. Most of all, they have shown me beyond a shadow of a doubt that my higher power is alive and present, working in the rooms, in my life, and in the entire world.©

DEAR WILL

When is the right time to get a sponsor?

BY WILL

*By putting off
sponsorship you
are putting off
the freedom
that comes from
working the
Twelve Steps.*

Dear Will,

I have been getting some “peer pressure” from people at a meeting to get a sponsor. I am not sure I am ready to work the steps yet. I would like to get a little more comfortable in the meetings and meet more people before taking that next step, so to speak. I already attend a meeting regularly, work the program, and have put together some sober time, except for some minor “slips” into my inner circle. When should I get a sponsor?

Sincerely,

Sponsor Less

Dear Sponsor Less-

To answer your question in short, NOW! Thanks for writing.

...Ok, so maybe I should explain that answer, some.

Sex Addicts Anonymous is a Twelve Step program, not a self-help program, and there is a difference. The Twelve Steps were founded on the principle of one addict helping another, sharing their experience strength, and hope, and guiding them through the Twelve Steps. I have seen many people attend meetings, even make phone calls, and not get a sponsor. This is called “attending SAA,” not “working the program.”

Like our book says, “We have to work the steps to experience the fruits of working the steps,” (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, pg. 99) and

this requires the help of another member of the SAA fellowship. Many of us have tried to work the steps on our own, and it does not work. In our basic text, *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, the book starts out with “Our Addiction,” then goes into “Meetings” and “Sponsorship,” before going into “Defining Sobriety” and the “Twelve Steps.” I was told to read and follow the book in that order, and informed that I was in no condition to change the order of the book as it represents the wisdom of the fellowship. What has worked for countless others could work for me. I have found it helpful, if not necessary, to follow that example.

I reviewed our literature and have not found a “readiness checklist” for getting a sponsor, because there isn’t one. After all, why delay the

help we so desperately need? In talking to others in recovery, I have heard people say they wish they would have come to meetings sooner, gotten a sponsor earlier, began working the steps, made more phone calls, looked for ways to be of service—but what I haven’t heard is people saying they wish they would have waited a little bit longer, waited until they were “ready.”

By putting off sponsorship you are putting off the freedom that comes from working the Twelve Steps. So, my fellow, I ask: What are you waiting for?

Will

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



STORIES OF SERVICE

Service keeps me sober

BY TOM B

*The main thing I
do as a sponsor
is share my
experience of how
the program works
for me.*

When nothing else will keep this addict sober one more day, trying to help another addict always works. That is the main reason I sponsor other members. As I understand this program, I don't get to stay sober unless I try to help others. And, strangely enough, it doesn't seem to matter if they get sober or not — I can stay sober if I at least try to carry the message to others. Sponsoring members is not the only way to carry the message, but it is perhaps the single most powerful way for me.

Sponsorship is about helping another member take the Twelve Steps. I consider my sponsor a friend, and we connect in many other ways, but what makes it sponsorship is working through the Twelve Steps together.

The main thing I do as a sponsor is share my experience of how the program works for me. I don't give orders or assignments, and I try like hell not to give advice. Instead, I just share my experience. I think some people want a drill sergeant for a sponsor, but that's not going to be me.

When someone asks me about sponsoring him, I am always grateful for the opportunity, because he's going to help me stay sober. I never say "Yes" or "No" right away. I like to find a time when we can sit down and talk about what sponsorship looks like for me, so I can see if this aligns with what the other member has in mind. I give him my number and ask him to call me later, when I'm at home and can look at my calendar. This way, I find out if he is willing to make a phone call, and if he can keep an appointment. I don't want to sound cold, but for every ten people that ask about sponsorship,

only one or two will follow through. I don't judge folks at all for this, since it took me a long time before I was ready to get serious about working this program. When they are ready, I will be available, and they have my number. When we meet for the first time, I share how I've gone about sponsoring and some vital aspects of how I work my program. I don't ever say "You have to do _____, or I won't sponsor you." Instead, I say there are some aspects of my program that are so important that I don't know if the rest of the program would work without them. If he isn't able or willing to do one of them, I tell him there might be a better sponsor for him, one that knows how to work this program without that piece.

I sponsor people through my home group. Being part of a group has been crucial to my sobriety, and it's very helpful to have the shared experience of group meetings together, to have that connection and familiarity, as opposed to only seeing someone when we meet one-on-one. This also puts a practical limit on how many people I end up sponsoring. But more importantly, I want to be able to model what it looks like to be part of a group. I do service in my Home Group, and I want anyone I sponsor to have that example to follow. I got into service in my first thirty days of sobriety, and I think I can safely say I've never been without a service position since then — it is that important to my sobriety and my sanity.

I find it works best when we meet one-on-one on a regular basis (usually weekly) outside of the regular group meetings. This helps us maintain steady progress on the Steps. It's also more practical to have a regular schedule than to be constantly arranging meetings at different times. The sponsorship routine needs to be sustainable for both of us.



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

I want to end by saying: "Service keeps me sober." I'm not sure exactly why that is, but I have a few ideas. When I'm trying to help someone else, it gets me out of myself. It also gets me into the program, because I have to share about the program in order to help them. Most importantly, when I am trying to help someone else, I believe there is a power greater than myself working through me, and when that power is moving through me, my addiction has no power.

FROM THE BOARD

Sponsorship is service in action

**BY TIM A
MEMBER OF THE BOARD**

*We value your
input. Email the
board at*

board@saa-recovery.org

In working the Twelve Steps of SAA with a sponsor, the opportunity to become a sponsor ourselves will eventually come our way. Step Twelve reads: “Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other sex addicts and to practice these principles in our lives.” Glimpses of that spiritual awakening and of the promises coming true often become evident long before we fully appreciate Step Twelve.

The earlier steps are a proving ground for not only our willingness to follow these principles of the program, but a chance for us to explore and the ways we can be called to service.

My understanding that being of service is an essential element of my sobriety came over time. My first sponsor emphasized this message and encouraged early service even before I had completed my First Step.

It was setting up chairs in my home meeting and becoming a representative to our local Intergroup. Then involvement in the Northeast Region began to give me a flavor of service beyond my local meetings. In the fellowship of SAA I found folks who encouraged my recovery journey and invited me to get involved in ways that proved significant in shaping my recovery, leading to serving as chair of a convention planning committee and being elected to the ISO’s Board of Trustees.

Sponsorship is challenging. I have often felt inadequate to the task. What wisdom do I have to offer those sharing their recovery journey with me through working the Twelve Steps together? Those that sponsored me and others who were successful in recovery became mentors for me, leading me to be able to actually do this—to sponsor others and share my own experience, strength, and hope.

Whatever our early forays into service might be, it is essential that we understand that each of us has something to offer other suffering sex addicts. It might be welcoming them to meetings as a greeter, sharing in meetings, making phone calls, and, when we're ready, sponsoring others. In doing so, my attitudes about what is essential to recovery continue to be shaped, deepening my understanding that service on any level is integral to my becoming and remaining sober. It helps secure not only my own sobriety, but that of others as we depend on our Higher Power.

ISO NEWS

Literature Committee requests feedback

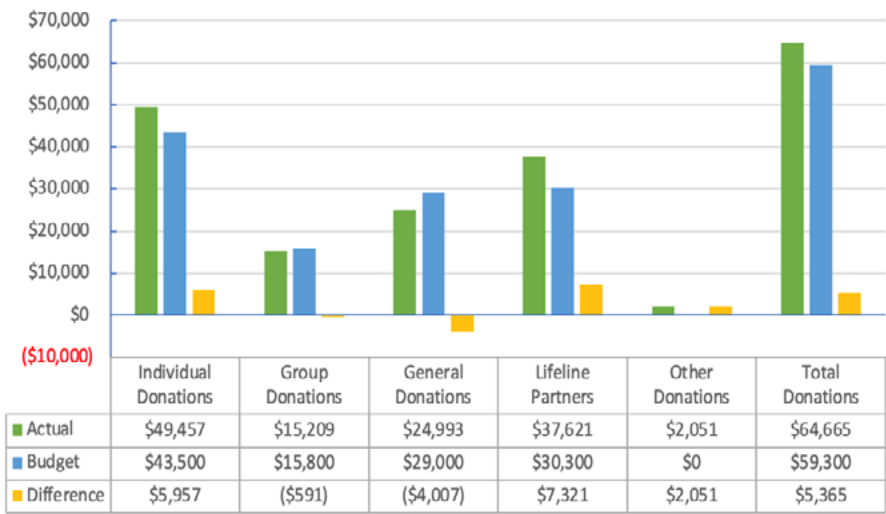
A new pamphlet, “Compassionate Communication with Our Partners” (<https://saa-recovery.org/literature/compassionate-communication-partners/>) has been approved by the Literature Committee.

Please check it (and all our literature) out and use the short feedback form (<https://saa-recovery.org/literature-committee-feedback-form/>) to tell us if you found it useful for recovery and if it could be improved.

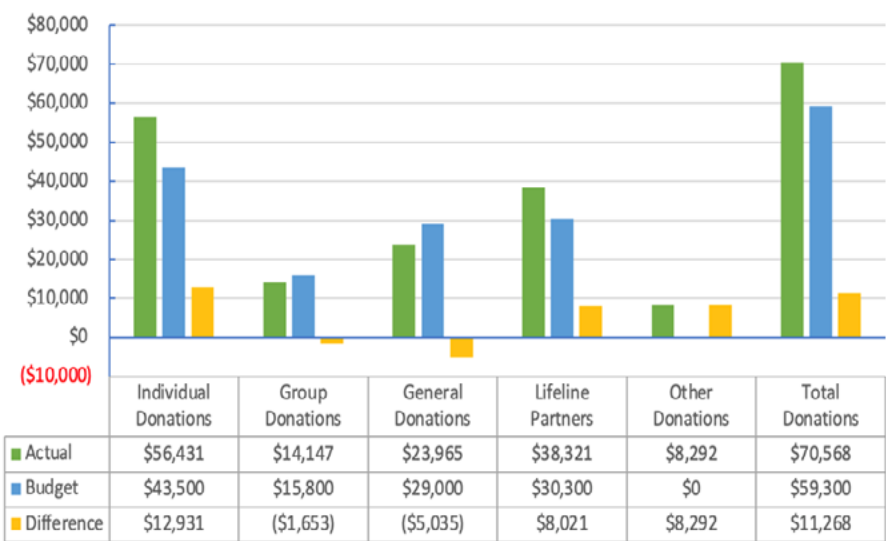
Thanks to all who work to produce literature to support recovery.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

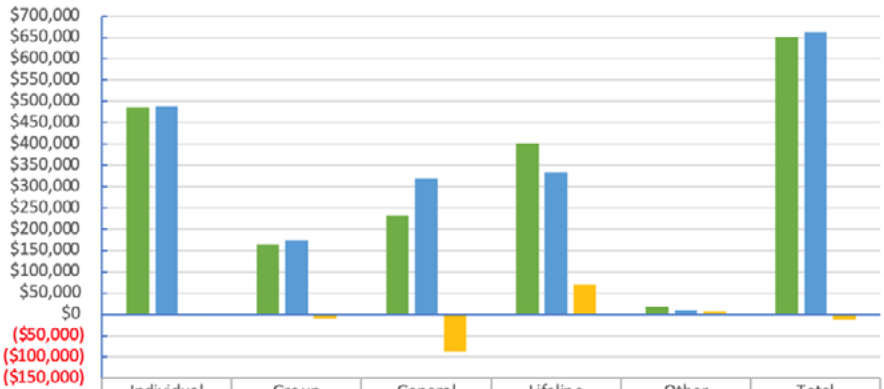
October 2023 Donations



November 2023 Donations

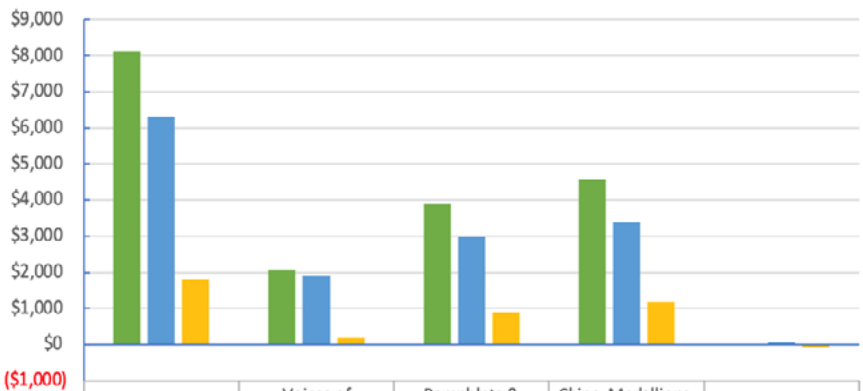


2023 YTD Donations (to November)



	Individual Donations	Group Donations	General Donations	Lifeline Partners	Other Donations	Total Donations
Actual	\$486,614	\$163,879	\$231,136	\$402,361	\$16,996	\$650,493
Budget	\$488,500	\$173,800	\$319,000	\$333,300	\$10,000	\$662,300
Difference	(\$1,886)	(\$9,921)	(\$87,864)	\$69,061	\$6,996	(\$11,807)

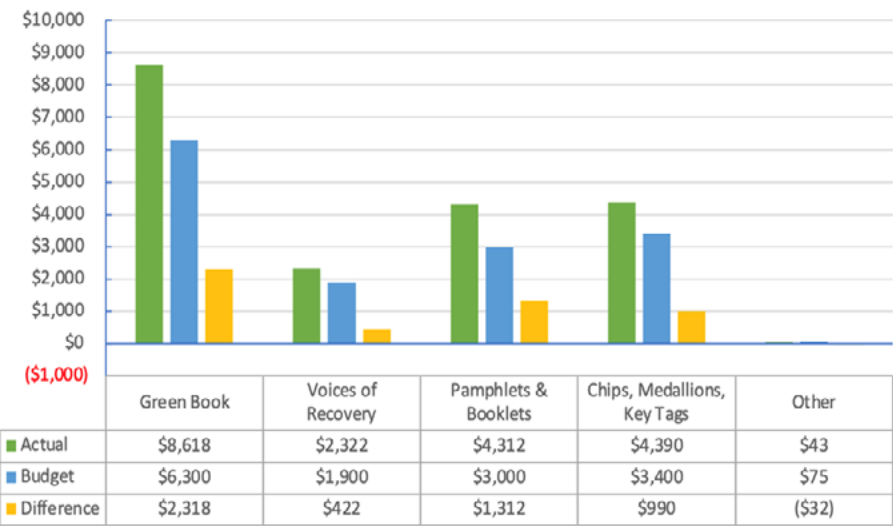
October 2023 Sales



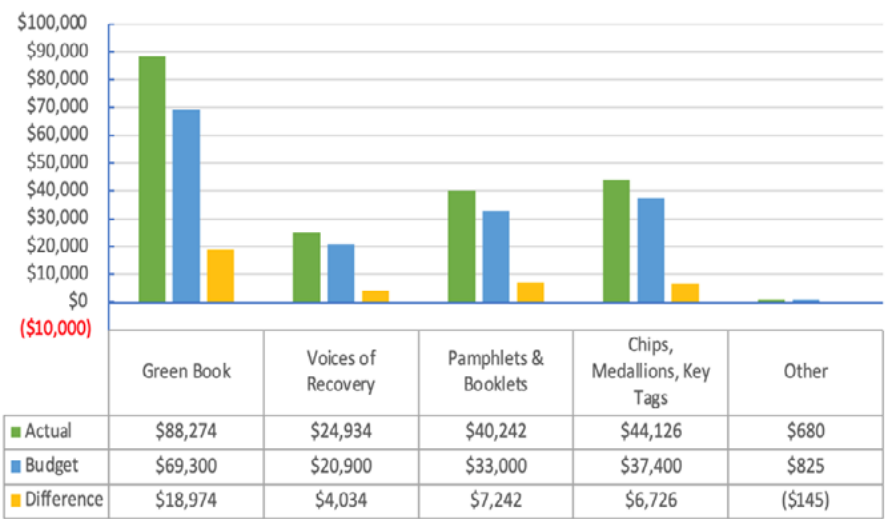
	Green Book	Voices of Recovery	Pamphlets & Booklets	Chips, Medallions, Key Tags	Other
Actual	\$8,113	\$2,083	\$3,899	\$4,588	\$10
Budget	\$6,300	\$1,900	\$3,000	\$3,400	\$75
Difference	\$1,813	\$183	\$899	\$1,188	(\$65)

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

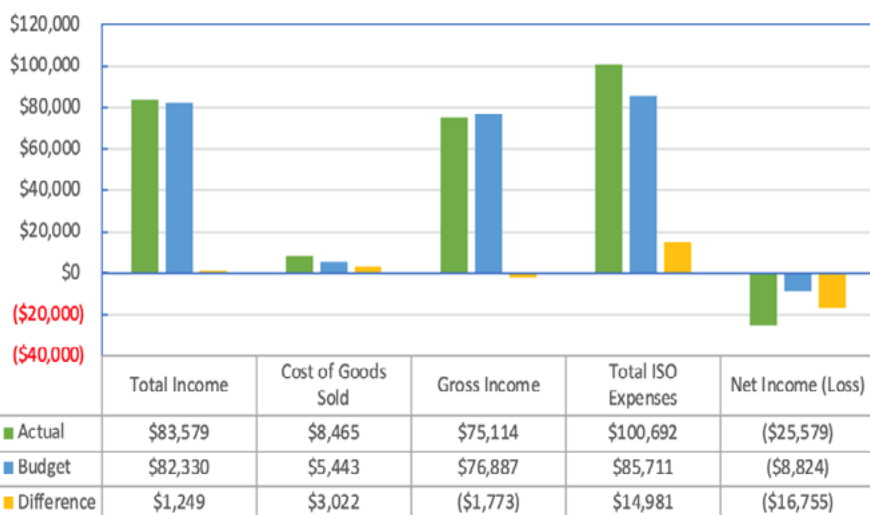
November 2023 Sales



2023 YTD Sales (to November)



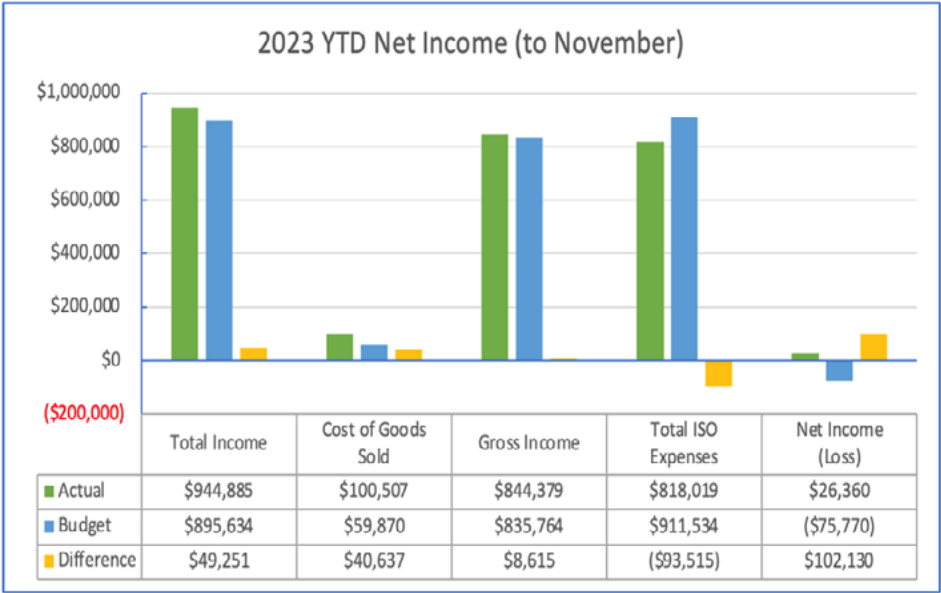
October 2023 Net Income



November 2023 Net Income



FINANCIAL SUMMARY



Annual Appeal Update

Thank you to all who have donated! Because of your generous support, we have reached \$15,261 as of December 31! Please consult your Higher Power and consider making a donation. To donate, go to <https://www.saa-recovery.org/annual-appeal>.

Donations have increased. However, all categories of donations, except Life-Line Partners and Other donations, are below budget for the year-to-date, as are total contributions. Other donations include the Annual Appeal and local Giving Thanks events.

Sales remain steady and are above budget for the year.

YTD wages and benefits continue to remain below budget due to the resignation of two staff members, effective December 31, 2022. We have now hired a contract accountant, who started in September, so monthly wages and benefits are now more in alignment with the budget.

There is a substantial gap between actual and budgeted expenses for October because a partial payment on the 2022 audit, which was budgeted for August, was made in October.

Because of these and other lesser items, our net income remains above budget, but this will begin to change with the addition of the accountant, the upcoming final audit payment, and other items.

Tracy R.

Executive Director

CONTACT THE ISO

Office

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

Phone: 713-869-4902
Fax: 713-692-0105

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

The Outer Circle

Editor: Alex B.

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 (Chair); BJ M; Bob H; Brian S (Treasurer);
Carl D; Carol Ann M; Eddie N; Jim L (Secretary);
Karen S (Vice-chair); Michelle W;
Tim A (Vice-secretary); Wayne K

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

Office Staff

Executive Director: Tracy R: 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

LitCom: litcom@saa-recovery.org

Literature Committee

Alex B (TOC Editor); Chris D; Darren S; David
C; Deb W; Jim P; Juan K; Mike K; Peter L; Ruth
(Chair); Sergio; 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.”

Cover image © luzazure, 123RF Free Images.

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.

Issue	Deadline	Topic
» January/February	» December 1	» Sponsorship
» March/April	» February 1	» Outer circle
» May/June	» April 1	» "From Shame to Grace"
» July/August	» June 1	» Higher Power
» September/October	» August 1	» Pathway to recovery
» November/December	» October 1	» Amends

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.