

THE OUTER CIRCLE

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

HUMILITY

INSIDE:

- EGO TO ESSENCE
- GOODBYE TO MY ADDICTION
- RESULTS OF RECOVERY





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 p. 30. To have an article considered for publication, see our Submission Guidelines on p. 31.

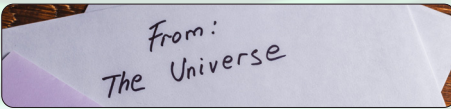
To ensure that future issues can be offered without cost, please consider making a tax-deductible donation now to support publication of the newsletter.

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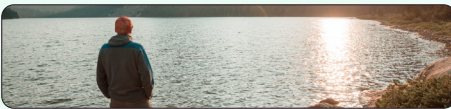
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Share *The Outer Circle* with your recovery friends in SAA and encourage them to submit their experience, strength, and hope (see p. 31).

FROM THE EDITOR

Seeking True Humility

BY ALEX B.

**THE OUTER CIRCLE
EDITOR**

This issue of *The Outer Circle* opens the door on one of the most squirrely topics I've faced in my recovery journey—how to live in humility in my program.

I was one of those who tended to put himself second, or so I thought. I would let others move in front of me in line at the buffet. I would stay up late to finish work around the house so my partner could get some sleep. I would keep quiet about my needs, because I believed this was my way of practicing the virtue of humility, placing myself in service of others.

As I worked the Steps and examined more of my history, cataloguing my character defects, another picture emerged. While I was soothing my soul with my attestations of humility, the undercurrents of this apparent selflessness were based on something substantially different. While I would put myself second, I would also carefully observe those to whom I would defer, hoping for their approval and recognition.

“Oh, what a courteous young man!”

“I'm so glad I get to catch up on rest, honey.”

“You let me have first dibs last time—now it's your turn.”

When these positive words would inevitably fail to come, I would use that seeming rejection as an excuse to build a resentment. I nurtured a budding anger that no one else was as selfless as I was. Taken to the extreme, my practice of this false humility was my excuse to make myself larger and more generous than anyone else.

Through the work of the Twelve Steps of SAA, I have been able to hold up this core character defect, turning it in the light to examine it in more detail. I have a standing belief that our society relies on altruism and selfless giving, but of course we all fail to live up to that ideal. Today, I am able to hold that value while also living in reality, gradually releasing my need to control the behavior of everyone in the entire world.

I am not perfect; no one is. And the imperfections of others are not my responsibility. Instead, I choose to give of my time and comfort when I am truly moved to do so, and in so doing, pursue the true humility of thinking of myself less, being open to others, and having clear self-awareness in the arms of a loving Higher Power.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Growing From the Roots

BY TRACY R.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
ISO OF SAA, INC.



I've been thinking about the 2027 convention theme, "Rooted in 50 Years; Reaching for Another 50," and the 2026 convention theme, "Rooted in Recovery." When I think of roots, I think of intertwined parts of a whole, digging deep into the earth to anchor and nourish the tree. As the tree grows, it bears fruit, provided its roots are strong and it receives the proper nourishment. Without an ongoing supply of these things, the tree will die.

That's the way it is with my recovery. By actively participating in SAA meetings and joining the diverse SAA community, I gain wisdom, knowledge, and experience from others who are recovering. Applying the Twelve Steps and integrating their spiritual principles into my life grows my roots. In time, my recovery begins to bear unexpected fruit. However, to keep bearing fruit, I must keep working the program and remain grounded in the fellowship. Without a firm foundation and steady spiritual food, my program will wither and die.

Paradoxically, one of the main keys to continuing to flourish is to give away the fruits of the program. If I try to hoard my recovery, to keep it all for myself, I will eventually lose it all. I must stay rooted in recovery, reaching down to the foundation for the strength I need, and I must reach out to those who still suffer, sharing the fruits I receive. This is how a healthy tree survives and thrives. A healthy recovery does the same thing.

I arrived in SAA humiliated, helpless, and hopeless. In SAA, I learned that humility means I cannot recover on my own. That is as true today as it was when I first came into SAA. Left to my own devices, I will, in time, return to my addiction. However, I am no longer alone. I am part of the SAA fellowship. Working together, the miracle of recovery keeps happening.

If you are experiencing the fruits of the program and want to learn more about how ISO service helps others find the miracle of recovery, contact info@saa-recovery.org.

DEAR GRACE

Welcoming women into mixed meetings

BY WOMEN'S
OUTREACH
COMMITTEE

*It is vital, if the
meeting is listed as a
mixed meeting, that
everyone there treats
it as such, which
means that women
are welcome. Period.*

*This submission was previously
published in the March/April 2023
issue*

*The Women's Outreach Committee
cannot guarantee that this advice
will be equally applicable to every
woman, although it is our hope that
such will be the case.*

Dear Grace,

I am a man in recovery attending a mixed meeting in my town, but we rarely have women. My wife has told me she does not want me attending meetings if women are present, and several of us in the meeting are in this situation. Recently, a woman showed up to our meeting. We didn't know what to do. One of the other men in the group told her that some of our wives aren't comfortable with women attending our meetings. I don't know if she will come back. I hope she can find something that works for her, but her attending the meeting doesn't work for me. What do I do?

**Signed,
Doesn't Work for Me**

Dear Doesn't Work,

This experience is not unusual; however, our fellowship is a place for all suffering sex addicts. Often, it is human nature to separate ourselves based upon our differences. But when it comes to addiction, the pain we experience is universal. Very few of us have walked into the rooms of SAA without feeling this pain. The newcomer, male or female, holds a special place in our meeting for this reason.

The most important step to take is to welcome the woman newcomer to the mixed meeting, regardless of how uncomfortable you feel. It is vital, if the meeting is listed as a mixed meeting, that everyone there treats it as such, which means that women are welcome. Period.

To honor the traditions of Sex Addicts Anonymous, we simply cannot turn away from our primary purpose: to carry our message to the still-suffering

sex addict. We cannot tell a woman she is not welcome when our meeting has declared itself to be mixed. If she has a desire to stop addictive sexual behavior, we should welcome her.

We are each responsible for our own recovery. Some may be so uncomfortable that they choose to leave the meeting for that session. If there are some in the group who are not able or willing to welcome women, perhaps they could start a separate meeting for men only. Please, make sure it is registered properly with the ISO as a “men-only” meeting.

In line with Tradition One, we have found that our recovery is enhanced and our groups and fellowship grow stronger when we recover together— men and women. Quite often, we or our spouses may fear contact with the opposite gender. This is natural because this was often the object of our acting out. However, experience has shown that, when we come together and really hear each other’s stories, we find we are, in fact, the same, sharing the same disease and the same solution.

SAA provides resources addressing how to welcome women to meetings, such as “A Special Welcome to the Woman Newcomer” and “Safe and Sexually Sober Meetings— Helping Women Feel Welcome in Your Meeting” pamphlets. The Group Guide also gives guidelines for a group conscience and taking a group inventory. In addition, there are also audio recordings addressing the subject on the SAA website.

Thank you for writing.

**In service,
Grace .**



Get in touch with Grace at grace@saa-women.org if you have a question you’d like answered.

THE PATH OF HUMILITY:

A Journey from Ego to Essence

BY WAYNE K.

In a world that celebrates self-promotion and personal achievement, humility remains one of the most misunderstood and undervalued virtues. To develop humility as addicts, it's helpful to explore what humility truly means, why it matters more than ever, and how ancient wisdom—from St. Benedict's monastic ladder to SAA's principles of service—offers a practical path toward genuine self-awareness and spiritual growth.

Humility is frequently confused with timidity, low self-esteem, or the habit of putting oneself down. But this is a fundamental misunderstanding. True humility is not about *thinking less of yourself*, it is about *thinking of yourself less*. It is an accurate, honest self-perception that allows you to see both your strengths and your limitations without distortion.

Where St. Benedict's "Ladder of Humility" ascends toward love and truth, the 12th-century Cistercian monk St. Bernard of Clairvaux created what he called a "mirror of pride"—twelve steps of descent toward isolation and self-destruction. This is an example of how essential it is to recognize and understand within ourselves the nature of the spiraling descent in our addiction.

This descent ends in full self-exaltation—the complete identification of the self with its own importance. At this point, the person is no longer capable of seeing reality clearly, much like being in the bubble of sex addiction! For the self-absorbed sex addict, every criticism becomes an attack and every success becomes proof of superiority. Those who ascend Benedict's ladder get closer to God, while those who go into Bernard's mirror of pride find themselves further and further away from their Higher Power.

The most dangerous thing about pride is that it blinds us to itself. We can diagnose pride in others with crystal clarity while remaining completely unaware of it in ourselves. This is why Bernard's mirror is so valuable—it gives us specific, observable markers of where we stand on the ladder.

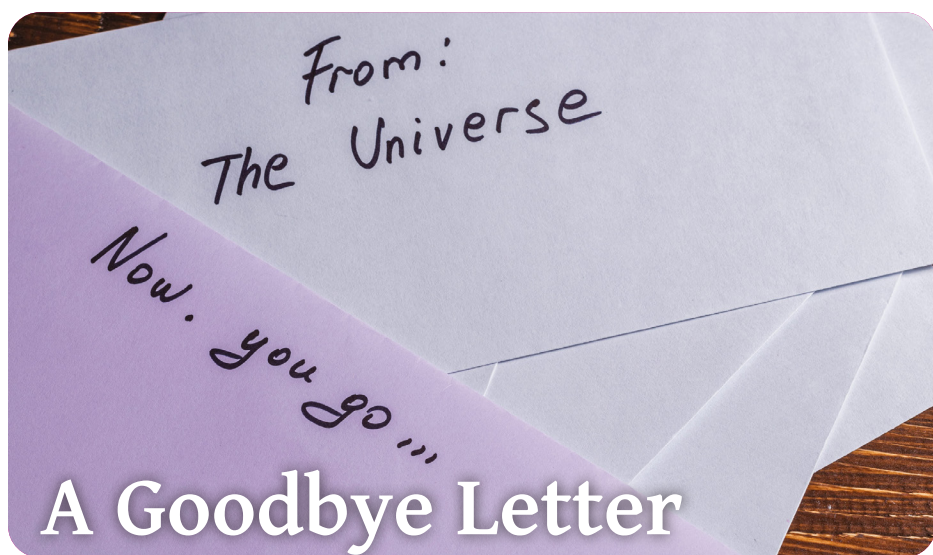


Humility is not a stage play. When we *perform* humility for others to admire, we have already lost it. This is the great paradox: the moment humility becomes a reputation to cultivate; it ceases to be humility at all.

This shows that humility is not a personality trait you are born with—it is a discipline you practice. Like any virtue, it is built through small, consistent choices made in ordinary moments. Having a higher power is a key component to cultivate humility in daily life.

How can we cultivate humility? We can seek out service opportunities to help others where no one will applaud. Anonymous service is among most powerful humility building practices available to a sex addict.

Humility is not the end of the journey—it is the beginning. It is the ground from which love, wisdom, and genuine connection can grow. ☺



A Goodbye Letter to my Addiction

BY A GRATEFULLY RECOVERING SEX ADDICT

It's about time.

Even so, I still feel a faint urge within me that resists saying goodbye. Maybe it's the dying gasp of my addiction.

My sponsor reminds me not to ignore these urges. I may be powerless over them, he says, but I'm never helpless. If I seek to truly understand my addiction and am willing to think through each of my urges to act out whenever they arise, I can use the knowledge I gain to make healthy choices to protect myself.

So, what are these urges, exactly?

Memories, mostly of internet pornography, sometimes inspire an urge to act out. I like to think of them as lingering traces of compulsivity that SAA recovery is slowly draining away. Whenever I work a Fourth Step spot-check inventory to understand my addiction, I remember how excited I used to feel whenever I decided to act out. I'd plan my day with care and exploit every opportunity to control my environment. It was a big part of the addictive thrill for me, perhaps

the biggest. And when the stars aligned and everything went according to plan, the pleasure I contrived for myself was hard to beat.

When I was young, I enjoyed acting out. It felt great to be in control, to make my own rules, to not be beholden to anyone. I liked getting what I wanted when I wanted. If I ever felt sad or lonely, acting out diverted my attention. If I was hungry, or tired, or bored, or angry, acting out helped me drift through the discomfort. Even when I was happy and genuinely content, acting out intensified the experience. No matter what, I was always ready.

I was careful to hide my activity. The cloak-and-dagger secrecy heightened my excitement, and I felt an intoxicating exhilaration. Whenever I acted out, I let everything in life go and forfeited all personal responsibility. I felt soothed, in control, and I told myself I wasn't hurting anyone.

As I grew older, however, and began to confront the challenges of my maturity, my acting out behavior took me to many dark and lonely places.

I began to feel desperation rather than relief. Revulsion replaced youthful comfort, and I often experienced an overwhelming, stupefying boredom. I didn't stop, of course. My synaptic architecture was grooved from years of acting out, and my compulsivity had become patterned, automatic, deeply ingrained. Escalation into new, exotic behaviors was the only way to keep things interesting, and I began exploring increasingly deviant sexual activities. It got weird.

The clarity of hindsight, one of recovery's many gifts, has helped me realize I feared intimacy. Being vulnerable was uncomfortable and scary, and my emotional longings were bewildering. Physical and emotional withdrawal from others was the safest choice, and I kept my partner, my family, and my dwindling friendships at a distance. Over time, low-level anxiety became my constant state of being, and I acted out to numb myself.

Hindsight also enabled me to see how deeply I'd hurt those closest to me—especially my partner. I perpetrated sexual abuse upon her and victimized her repeatedly. It's been hard to accept the truth, but working the Twelve Steps has helped. As my sponsor says, "You can't skip the hard stuff."

Regarding my partner, here are some truths that hindsight has helped me accept:

- My partner didn't want to be lied to, betrayed, or heartbroken.
- My partner deserves to know that she's not to blame for what happened to her.
- My partner deserves to know that I accept her need to set boundaries and to create healthy distance from me while she heals.

- My partner deserves to know that I'll accept any decisions she makes to ensure her continued safety and health.
- My partner deserves to see evidence that I understand how I've hurt her, that I accept responsibility for my behavior, and that I honor her process of healing according to her timetable—not mine.

For me, this is one of the core actions of making amends to my partner: I strive to empathize with *her* experience, not merely apologize for *mine*. With this fresh orientation, I work to fundamentally *change my behavior* so I never harm her or endanger anyone else that way ever again. For me, my resolve to change is the foundation of honorable amends-making.

So, it's time to say goodbye to my addiction.

Here are things I won't miss:

- I won't miss the lies I told to cover other lies that kept my acting out hidden.
- I won't miss the ways I ignored my personal hygiene, household and employment responsibilities, and healthy contact with family and friends.
- I won't miss my chronic state of fatigue, pervasive anxiety, fuzzy thinking, and inability to focus.
- I won't miss the panic I felt whenever I knew my behavior was about to be discovered.
- I won't miss my preoccupation with fantasy which impaired my ability to relate to reality and to feel and express my true emotions.
- I won't miss the hours I spent alone on the computer in dark rooms, objectifying strangers, and planning new activities.

There are good things, too:

- Without my work to recover from sex addiction, I wouldn't have developed a unique and special closeness with each of my children and their families.
- Without my work to recover from sex addiction, I'd never have learned to approach each new human interaction as a test of my ability and willingness to stay focused, to be present, and to be authentic.
- Without my work to recover from sex addiction, I wouldn't begin each day with a desire to meditate, to read program literature, or to attend a recovery meeting.
- Without my work to recover from sex addiction, I wouldn't end my day by reviewing events, remembering if I'd been resentful or dishonest, or whether I failed to promptly admit when I was wrong, or if I thought about people to

whom I owed an apology, or if I ever reacted in fear, or if I withheld anything that I ought to have shared immediately.

- Without my work to recover from sex addiction, I wouldn't have learned how to support my friends, or to consider whether I'm kind and loving to others, or if I'm able to express myself honestly, sincerely, and consistently.
- Without my work to recover from sex addiction, I wouldn't constantly look for opportunities to express vulnerability and to courageously face my fear of intimacy.

Living with my addiction has been a mixed blessing, for sure. I've hurt myself and others, but my addiction has also led me to the healing fellowship of SAA, and that's made all the difference.

Thanks to SAA, I'm more present, more real, and I strive to be genuinely authentic. I'm better able to identify and express my feelings, appreciate and tolerate the experiences of others, and honor my personal and professional commitments. I don't lie—*ever*—and I can be trusted. I set healthy boundaries, and I honor the boundaries set by others. I'm glad to accept, with humility, who I am: a simple, well-meaning man working diligently to heal from sex addiction.

My lifelong challenge—and responsibility—is to accept my addiction, continue to refine my behavior, and help others do the same. This is how I define the spiritual awakening I've experienced by working the Steps. It's a hard-won privilege for which I'll always be grateful.

So, goodbye to my addiction.

Hello to the rest of my life in recovery. ☺

ISO Wants to Hear from YOU!

We need your stories! The ISO Literature Committee is reviewing submissions for the personal stories of recovery in the Green Book. Whatever the nature of your sex addiction, wherever you are in your recovery journey, your story could help inspire the sex addict who still suffers.

Help your fellowship! Visit <https://saa-recovery.org/news/new-green-book-stories-wanted/> for submission instructions.





From 'DIY' to 'Let Go & Let God'

BY BETHANY B.

What does it mean to be humble?

I have struggled with this question for years because what I learned growing up was a form of humiliation. I learned I was worthless as a woman in a patriarchal society except for my virginity, that love is conditional, that I had to work to earn grace and acceptance, and that no matter what I did, it would always be simultaneously too much and not enough.

Humility, as I've learned in recovery, is knowing *I cannot do this on my own*. The fellowship of SAA is here to support me every step of the way, even in my lowest moments when I've slipped back to my inner circle behaviors.

For thirty years, I believed that I was on my own. I thought if I wanted something I had to do it myself. I was so self-reliant that I believed that things like faith or humility were forms of brainwashing. When I entered these rooms, I chafed hard against the idea of powerlessness. I thought, "If I'm powerless, I'm screwed, because I'm the only one who can do anything about my situation."

My hardest part, after identifying my Higher Power, was allowing that Power access to all areas of my life: my relationships, my heart, my thoughts, my actions, my choices, my pain, and my joys. But my recovery comes from granting access to a loving, accepting power that's greater than me and who knows what's best for me. This has required a very high level of trust; I have found that difficult to practice, because it is definitely a practice and a process.

I'm so accustomed to self-sufficiency that I forget that a phone call or a text to a fellow has the power to soothe me. I forget that a meeting holds the key to sobriety for one more day. I forget that a moment of connection with my Higher Power means healing. When I remember, I am humbled.

The dictionary defines *humility* as "freedom from pride or arrogance," and the word comes from a Latin word meaning low. What's interesting to me is that "low" is how I felt in my addiction. In recovery I feel freedom; elevated to a place of safety, security and peace. The humility I feel in recovery isn't low at all.

Recovery is still the hardest thing I have to do every day. It requires more trust and acceptance and work than I thought I was capable of. In choosing the path of recovery, though, I have gone from "DIY" to "Let Go and Let God," and that attitude is changing my life.

I have a greater capacity for real life—one that's not focused on me or on acting out. I am learning about healthy sexuality. I am practicing how to live life on life's terms, not some fantasy of what life "should" be. I am learning how to stop trying to run the show. This is a lifelong endeavor; I believe I will be done when I'm dead. In the meantime, I keep allowing my Higher Power access to me to bring me humility and lower the arrogance that tells me I can do this on my own. ☺

This is YOUR ISO, and the
Board of Trustees is here to serve YOU!

Have a thought? Make your voice heard
by emailing: board@saa-recovery.org



Humility

BY DAVID IN NORTH CAROLINA

I was standing by a lake, completely numb. I was out of ideas. I had just acted out in a way that was further than I thought I would ever go, and I didn't know what to do. I had read books, tried every technique I could get my hands on, prayed, repented, yet here I was again.

This was my bottom. My realization that no matter what I tried, no matter what barrier I put up, I found myself back acting out as if I had never left. Should I just accept that acting out is inevitable and budget more money for business trips?

In the early days of Alcoholics Anonymous, members would talk to alcoholics in hospitals and try to engender a sense of despair, to get them to realize that nothing they could do could help them lick this disease. I was there. This was my entrance to Step One.

Through circumstances that I won't detail here, hope was spoken to me. I started to wonder if I couldn't break my acting-out habit on my own, there was something beyond me—something “out there”—that was able to help me. Something that could do for me what I could not do for myself.

I think Step Two is more than a spiritual awakening, and I say that as someone who is an advocate of those who take their religious beliefs seriously. I once went to a meeting where some in the group were subtly antagonistic to my form of religious belief. Yet I saw that it was not so much about getting my theology right (although I ultimately grew in that area as well), but more about recognizing that there were people who had been just as down as I was, and they had years of sobriety. I listened to what they had to say, and I started to see a power greater than myself that could help me become sane. Step Two was showing itself to me.

In Step Three, I committed to do what they suggested. I was told to take the telephone book out of my hotel room and give it to the front desk—which, at the time, meant removing a directory of acting-out information from my environment. I did this, and no one thought ill of me. There were other things, like writing about the steps, calling my sponsor each day, and writing an inventory whenever I slipped that seemed intimidating, but I followed through and did them.

It took a while, and I tried my best to find ways to act out without acting out, but finally the obsession diminished. Soon I learned to say “No” to fantasy of any kind—sexual, resentment, despair, fear—before it grabbed me too fiercely and took me down the acting-out path.

The first three steps really are where our program starts, and with good reason: Without the humility gained in Steps One through Three, I wasn’t ready to do the inventory and life rearrangement that takes place in recovery. Humility came from a visceral realization that I was hopelessly lost in my sex addiction and all my efforts had failed, and started to find my willingness to see a solution in people who had actual sobriety and to do what they told me to do. ©

Humbled by his first Outer Circle publication (“Fantasy” in the July/August 2026 issue), Andy N was inspired to write his second poem on the importance of making program calls every day.

Telephone

by Andy N.

The iPhone has destroyed the telephone
From a device of connection
To a device of numbing isolation
Joining the program changes that
It becomes a life-saving device
To get us out of our vice
They say, “Lift that 500-pound phone.”
We don’t lift a heavy phone
We pause, breathe and let go

We shed 500 pounds of bottled up emotions
By a simple click
A mix of honesty & vulnerability
leading to quick rejuvenation
A telephone call is a 2-way line but
a program call is a 3-way conference
with
Your HP as the operator and
Your program as the navigator

DEAR WILL

Resting on my laurels?

BY WILL

I encourage you to check in with people in your recovery groups: those who have maintained longterm sobriety and those who have suffered a relapse.

Do you have a question for Will?
Please email info@saa-recovery.org.

Dear Will,

I need some help with something, as I am building a bit of a resentment toward my sponsor. I have been working with him for over a year now. I am sober, have been working the steps, completed my Fourth Step, and my life and relationship seem to be back on track. As a result, I have been busier with life and not able to make as many SAA meetings and have had to put off meeting with my sponsor as often as we used to. Recently my sponsor cautioned me to “not get too cocky, as it looked like I was beginning to rest on my laurels.” What do you think of this statement? I thought the whole point of recovery was to get sober so I could get back to living my best life.

**Signed,
Best Life**

Dear BL:

Congratulations on your sobriety, step work, and recovery. It's always good to hear about another brother in recovery who is seeing the fruits of working the steps.

Anytime I hear about a concern regarding a relationship, especially with one's sponsor, I usually think the best action is to lean into the relationship and communicate, ask questions, and seek first to understand before being understood. I would like to speak to the concept of resting on our laurels and hope this helps you as you consider your situation.

When I am thinking of resting on our laurels I think of taking our foot off the recovery gas or dialing back our program of recovery. When I was new in recovery, I was sick: spiritually, emotionally, physically, and sexually. Most areas of my life were affected by my addictive sexual behavior, in addition to how my addiction manifested in non-sexual terms.

SAA offered me a program of recovery, a medication, if you will, that helped me become healthy, as it seems it has for you. By working a daily program that included meetings, step work, phone calls, prayer and meditation, and service to others in recovery and beyond, I was able to regain my health. Today I view those recovery behaviors, or medications, that served to get me healthy as the same actions that will keep me healthy. Instead of viewing them as medications, those actions are now my vitamins that keep me healthy and allow me to continue growing. Getting healthy is one aspect of recovery, remaining healthy is another yet it takes similar action for me.

Please consider someone who has decided to work out or even become a body builder. They focus on exercise and nutrition to transform their bodies. Once they achieve their desired physical fitness they must maintain it for, if they rest on their laurels, they will dial down their program, cease to maintain their gains. and will, in fact, return to their prior state.

I am wondering if your sponsor is seeing your situation in the same light. Could your sponsor be concerned that after you have worked so hard to work the steps, gain your sobriety, and improve your relationships, you might now be showing signs of resting on your laurels by doing less of what got you to this point?

I encourage you to check in with some of the people in your recovery groups: those who have maintained long-term sobriety and those who have suffered a relapse. It might be helpful to learn from them what role maintaining their recovery action or dialing it back (resting on their laurels) played in their sobriety and recovery. Resting on our laurels can be a real threat in recovery. Please do not it threaten yours.

**In Service,
Will**

LIVING IN SOBRIETY

What Did You Expect? Results of SAA Recovery

BY KEITH G.

The SAA program's claim—that freedom from addictive sexual behaviors is possible—can initially seem pretty outlandish. But what if that claim is actually true? What if SAA really can do all we hoped it would do?

The problem is that we have certain sexual behaviors that we cannot stop—no matter what we try; no matter what the consequences are.

Quoting from the SAA Green Book (page 9):

“Sex addiction is not just a bad habit. Nor is it the result of poor self-control, a lack of morals, or a series of mistakes. If it were something we could stop on our own, the negative consequences would be enough to make us stop. ... Despite our sincerity and our best efforts, we continued to act out. ... For all of us now in recovery, there came a time when we realized that we simply could not keep on living as before. ... To continue to act out seemed impossible, and yet not to act out seemed equally impossible. We knew we had to change, even if we didn't know how. Out of this despair, we came to Sex Addicts Anonymous.”

That is my problem. If you're an addict like me, that is our problem.

So... what results do we expect from SAA? We all typically come to SAA, looking for the same result: to stop acting out. I know I didn't come to SAA to be a different person. I wasn't looking for a life change or anything else. I was just looking to stop that one little set of behaviors that was on the verge of destroying my life.

But who determines results? Twelve-Step recovery is an approach to enable a power greater than me to change me. So, in one sense, God determines the results in me. But also, the SAA program, as in all Twelve-Step recovery programs, states the result in Step Twelve: “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.”

Why must a sex addict like me have a spiritual awakening—a spiritual transformation? The only way for me to keep from acting out is for me to no longer have the desire to act out. If I still want to act out, I'll find a way.

Here are some Green Book passages regarding results or the spiritual change:

“In the Second Step, we are presented with the possibility that this Power can restore us to a basic sanity and well-being.” (page 25)

“Working this program leads to a spiritual awakening.” (page 58)

“...every step of the program contributes to a fundamental change in our outlook...” (page 59)

“For some of us, this awakening may be a sudden and dramatic gain in awareness. For others, it may be slow and gradual, and we may not even realize we’ve had one until we reflect upon the changes that have occurred.” (page 59)

“Our message is simple and profound: that recovery from sex addiction is possible through working the Twelve Steps of SAA, and that following this program results in a spiritual awakening.” (page 59)

“The Twelve Steps of SAA lead to a spiritual awakening.” (page 71)

“The steps are the spiritual solution to our addiction—leading not only to a life of abstinence from our addictive sexual behaviors, but to a fulfilling life of service to our brothers and sisters in recovery and beyond. The spiritual awakening described in Step Twelve puts us on the path of service and connects us with our Higher Power, our fellow addicts, and our world in ways we had never dreamed possible. This awakening is the foundation of a responsible and joyful existence as we seek and find our Higher Power’s will for us—both in our individual lives and in the life of our fellowship.” (page 99)

So, it is clear. The Twelve Steps of SAA, if practiced diligently, honestly, and thoroughly, will lead to a spiritual awakening. But how do I know when I’ve had one?

More from the Green Book: “Sex Addicts Anonymous offers a spiritual solution to the disease of sexual addiction. Every aspect of our program is founded on the experience of a Power greater than ourselves helping us live healthy and productive lives, free of addictive sexual behavior. With time, and continued abstinence from our inner-circle behaviors, we have found that the desire to act out becomes less intense and less frequent. The sense of compulsion is lifted from us—we now have a choice. We also experience relief from the obsession with sex, and we are grateful to be free of a craving that we thought would never leave us.” (page 69)

LIVING IN SOBRIETY

This passage seems to indicate that the way I can know if I've had a spiritual awakening is if I no longer have the desire to act out.

Why is it important for me to know if I've had the spiritual awakening? If I haven't had one yet, I should probably take appropriate actions. Maybe I need to put some speed bumps (or, as we call them, tools) in place to make it more difficult to act out.

On the other hand, if I've had a spiritual transformation—if I no longer have the desire to act out—then I can depend on that transformation. I do not have to live my life waiting for the sky to fall—waiting for an inevitable collapse and for me to resume my addictive behaviors.

Let's take a brief tangent: The idea that we could at some point no longer have the desire to act out may scare some people. Some of us might be afraid that we would stop working this program if we felt normal and sane, as if the problem had been removed.

As I see it, if I realize that I no longer have the desire to act out, I think there are basically two directions I can go with that realization: The first might be this: "I'm cured! Now that I'm changed, I can stop attending all those meetings and taking these steps and doing service and helping other addicts." The other option might be this: "I'm grateful. Now that I'm changed, I'll continue with meetings and steps and service and sponsees because that's what helped me get here—what enabled God to change me—and what keeps me sober."

I believe that is what Twelve-Step recovery is all about: the desire being removed, our being confident in the condition of sanity, and our continuing to work it—one day at a time.

How to get sane? Taking the Twelve Steps places me in a condition in which a power greater than I can change me. The steps are my responsibility; the transformation is God's responsibility.

What should I do if I haven't had the spiritual transformation?

The Green Book helps again: "Attending SAA meetings starts us on a new way of life. But while the SAA fellowship supports our recovery, the actual work of recovery is described in the Twelve Steps. Meetings are forums for learning how to integrate the steps into our lives. Working the Twelve Steps leads to a spiritual transformation that results in sustainable relief from our addiction. ...

Taking these steps allows fundamental change to occur in our lives. They are the foundation of our recovery.” (page 20)

The prior quote has interesting subdivisions: (1) attending meetings, (2) the SAA fellowship, and (3) working the Twelve Steps. According to the quote, attending meetings is good; the SAA fellowship is good; but neither of these two items is what leads to sustainable relief from sex addiction. That relief comes from working the Twelve Steps.

So, if I haven’t had a spiritual transformation, what step am I on?

Do I need to get back to regular work with my sponsor to help me take these steps? Am I stuck on a particular step?

These steps are our program. The SAA program has no other suggestion—or message—that can lead to sustainable relief from sex addiction.

The counter is also true, as the only guaranteed way for this program *not* to work is if I do not work it. Maybe I start working the program, but then I stop. Or maybe I never get a sponsor. Or maybe I choose to work some of the program, but not all of it.

According to the Green Book, here are some results of the SAA program: freedom, relief, long-term abstinence (over months, years, and decades), sanity, recovery, a lifting of the compulsion and obsession—all from the spiritual transformation brought about by taking the Twelve Steps.

May we all draw strength and encouragement wherever we are in this Twelve-Step recovery process. May that renewed strength help us to take these steps and keep our recovery moving forward. And may we all keep moving forward even after—especially after—experiencing the results that this program can bring.

Don’t miss a meeting!

Try the all-new “Find a Meeting” page on the SAA website:

<https://meetings.saa-recovery.org>

Search by location, day, time, and mode. We’ll see you in the rooms!

STORIES OF SERVICE

Service: From Avoidance to What's It Like Now

BY FRANK T.

There were so many reasons I put myself first and avoided carrying the message of the Twelfth Step. Service was inconvenient, uncertain, and far too exposed. I was unlikely to get it right, and the last thing I wanted was unwanted attention.

And then there was the bigger picture of service, which was enough to send me running. Working alongside professionals who

encounter sex addicts. Carrying information to the general public. Starting a new meeting. Maintaining a website. Running a Zoom meeting. Serving as treasurer. Writing to incarcerated people around the country. Managing emails and phone inquiries. Supporting retreats. Connecting with other intergroups. Serving as an Intergroup Representative meant attending a 90-minute monthly meeting to bring my group's voice to the Bay Area. Or joining a quarterly meeting as a Group Service Representative.

All that work? Unthinkable. That was genuinely how I felt. But What did service in SAA actually look like? At its simplest, it meant helping my group. Setting up the meeting room, acting as secretary, greeting newcomers, showing up to a business meeting and offering my perspective.

I held my objection for a long time. And then, slowly, something shifted.

Over a few years, starting with small efforts, I begin to show up in the service realm. I became secretary for a meeting, just following a script. I ordered literature and took on the treasurer role. My sponsor had us create an Outer Circle script for our fourth Wednesday monthly meeting. A sponsee talked me into sitting in on and then joining Intergroup as a representative for my group. (I might never have joined on my own.) At my last regional retreat, I carried the microphone to members after a speaker share. A small thing, sure, but service puts me in conversation with more people, and each exchange opens something inside of me—ideas, connection, fellowship I hadn't known I needed.

It has taken time. But today, service for me is one of the most vital parts of staying engaged—with my program, with my fellow members, with my Higher Power, and with myself. I can no longer imagine being someone who runs from it. That's what it's like now.

FROM THE BOARD

Board at Work

BY JIM L.

SECRETARY, ISO BOARD
OF TRUSTEES

For the 2026-27 service year, the chair of the Board has developed a work plan for the year. The plan defines a timeline with specific items for the Board to consider each month. It is also designed to be consistent with the Board's strategic goals and the ISO Business Plan, both of which are being updated this year.

Of particular note is a new Social Media Policy, which the Board approved at the August meeting. The policy clearly delineates the difference between the need for personal anonymity, as articulated in Tradition Eleven, and the fact that the ISO, as an organization, is not bound to remain anonymous.

In fact, it is important for the ISO to make SAA known by all available means as a resource for sex addicts seeking help or others searching for information. The policy provides specific controls and monitoring procedures for any social media engagement to protect the personal anonymity of SAA members while giving SAA a readily accessible presence on the selected platforms.

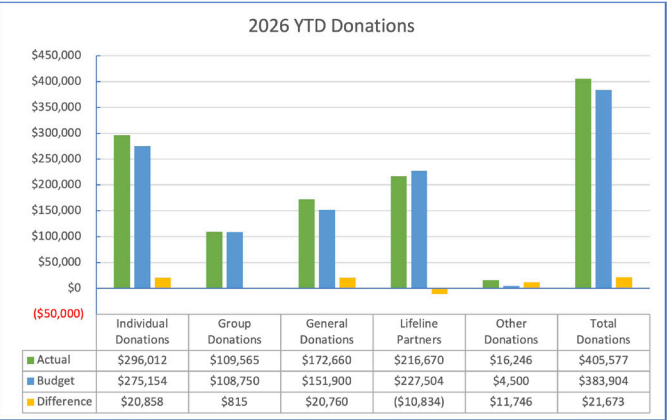
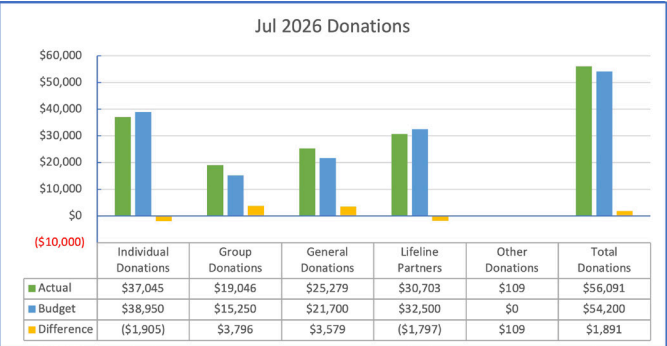
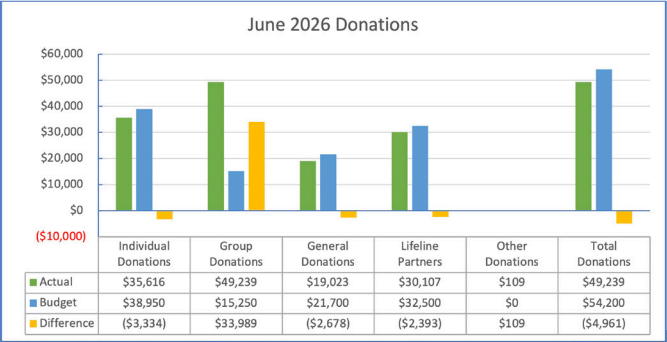
On the committee front, the Fellowship Internal Standing Committee (ISC) includes representatives from the Board and the other ISO committees. A primary goal of the committee is to reduce the *silo effect* that can easily occur when committees focus primarily on their own activities. The Fellowship ISC provides the one place within the ISO where committees can get a clear view of what the ISO is doing on multiple fronts and share best practices. This year, each committee will be presenting a deep dive into its purpose and current activities.

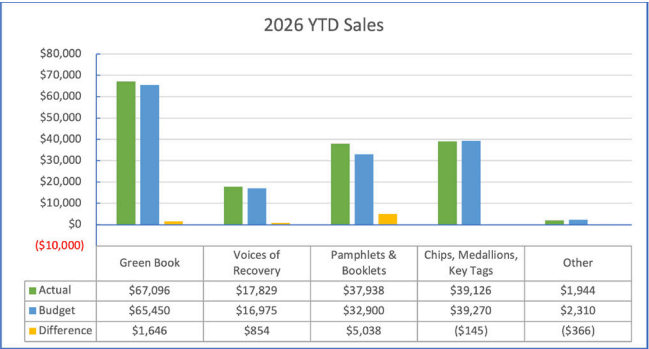
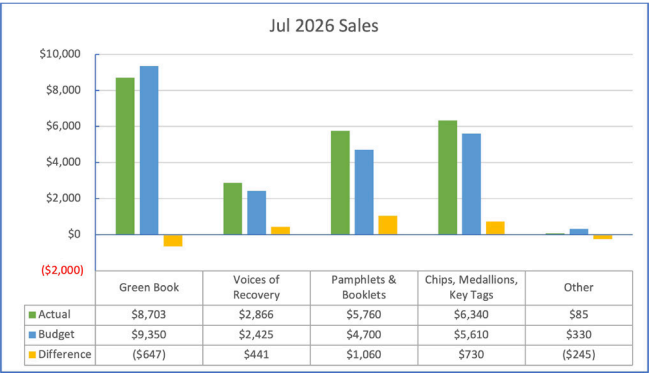
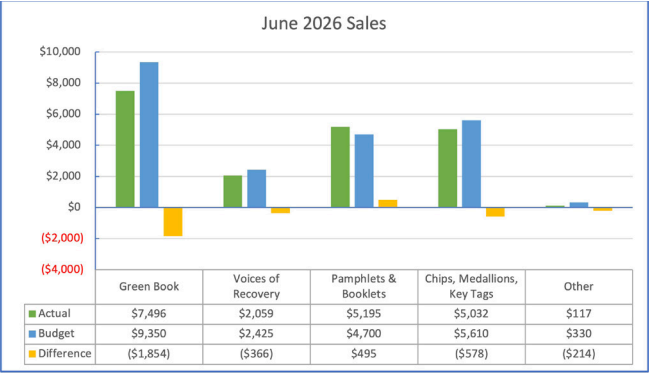
On the technology front, a new store is being built for the SAA website to improve the shopping experience of members when purchasing books, booklets, pamphlets, or supplies. The new store is expected to be fully operational within the next month. Other IT projects include fine-tuning of the meeting search function on the SAA website and plans for a major overhaul of the ISO service website.

The Board of Trustees takes its responsibilities very seriously. One important goal is to ensure that the ISO continues to be financially stable and has the funds needed to support SAA groups and members throughout the world. In addition, the Board is responsible for making sure that the ISO office has the resources to operate as efficiently as possible, so that the services provided to the fellowship are readily available.

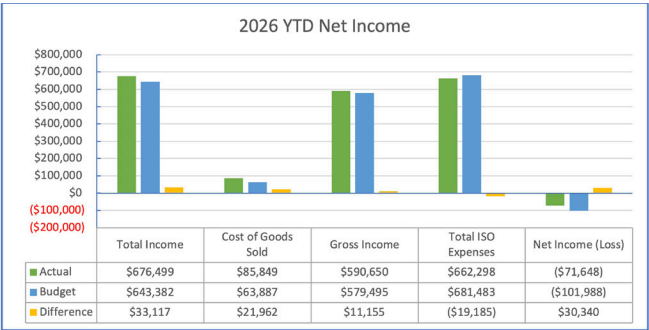
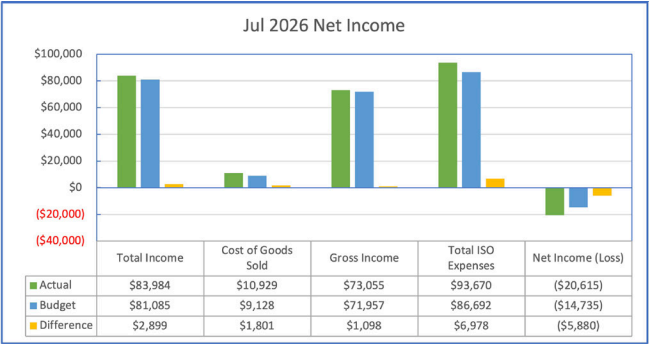
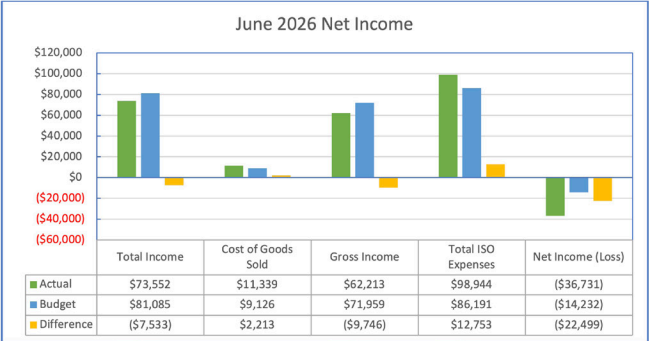
If you have questions or comments for the Board, you may email the Board at board@saa-recovery.org.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY





FINANCIAL SUMMARY



While year-to-date donations are over budget, LifeLine Partner donations have declined significantly. LifeLine Partners provide the steady, predictable income that sustains our services and allows us to plan complex, long-term projects, such as updating and improving our websites to help members and newcomers find what they need when they need it.

While our net income remains above budget, as the new store build continues, actuals and budget become more aligned.

The annual appeal is underway. Your donations will help us build updated websites for service and outreach.

Thank you all for your generous support!

Tracy R.,
Executive Director

Become a Lifeline Partner!

Lifeline Partners pledge a fixed monthly donation that is pooled with those of many other members from around the SAA fellowship.

Become a LifeLine partner today by calling 713-869-4902 or by going to saa-recovery.org and clicking “Contribute.”

CONTACT THE ISO

Office

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

Phone/WhatsApp: +1 713-869-4902
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.

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
Prisoner Outreach Program Manager and
Administrative Assistant: Jonathan C
Office Administrator: Robert C
Administrative Assistant: M'Lisa M
Administrative Assistant: Jerry 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 (Vice Chair); BJ M; Brian S (Treasurer); Enan S; Jim L (Secretary); Juan V; Lizz O (Chair); Mark R (Vice-Secretary) Michelle P; Mike K; Tom B

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

Literature Committee

Alex B (TOC editor); Bernie B; Brett S; Briana H; David C; Don C; Himanshu B; Jason R; Jenny M (Secretary); Keith G; Ron R (Vice-Chair); Ruth; Zach R (Chair)

LitCom: litcom@saa-recovery.org

Calendar

The most up-to-date 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. In the last few years, a new possibility has emerged — namely, meeting by videoconference.

While face-to-face remains the preferred meeting modality in most situations, recent experience in Arizona suggests that meeting by videoconference 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.

Issue	Deadline	Topic
» November/December	» October 1	» The Power of Amends

Here are some general writing guidelines:

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

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

Feature articles: 650-1,200 words on any of the topics listed above. It may be helpful to think of your submission as a written form of a share you'd give in a meeting — something that's working for you or that you're struggling with in recovery as it relates to the steps or traditions.

All submissions must complete a formal release granting usage rights to the ISO of SAA, Inc. Visit saa-recovery.org/toc for more information and a standard form.

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.