

THE OUTER CIRCLE

Free at Last!
Recovery leads to
clarity about sex —
and a new way of life

PLUS

Lessons Learned

The Sixth Step Baton

The Guide of Gentleness

The Newsletter of SAA's International Service Organization





International Service Organization of SAA, Inc.

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The Outer Circle Mission

The mission of *The Outer Circle* is to provide information from the ISO and to share the experience, strength, and hope members have obtained from working the SAA program of recovery. As the first iteration put it in 1998, *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 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.

September - October 2018

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FROM THE EDITOR

Breaking Free from Group Isolation

BY GARY T.

The discussion about area formation has spurred other conversations about how we can work together more in the future.

As I write this column, I'm preparing for the coming SAA delegate conference in Houston — the first that's delegates only. The splitting of the convention and conference is part of the move toward a new governing structure in which yet-to-be-formed areas send an area representative, rather than individual meetings sending delegates.

This move to area delegates has been one of the most difficult transitions the fellowship has gone through — and there's much more to come as the shift happens. I'm sure it will be a hot topic of discussion at this year's conference. And not everyone agrees that this is the best course forward for our fellowship.

But already, I'm starting to see the benefits of the area structure in my home fellowship. As our intergroup has pondered what our area should look like, we've been reaching out to other intergroups in our region. We've come to an agreement to form an area with three other intergroups in Oregon.

This discussion has spurred other conversations about how we can work together more in the future. Already, fellows from the different intergroups are speaking at each others events. There's even talk of doing a regional retreat, rather than each intergroup doing its own retreat as has been the case in the past.

That kind of cooperation is exactly what supporters of the area concept are hoping will happen as areas get formed and groups begin working with each other. What the process has taught us is that just as we can isolate as individuals, so too can our groups. In both cases this unhealthy isolation holds us back from growing. I look forward to seeing how the area formation process brings other groups out of their isolation.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Help Needed Reaching the Professional Community

BY JOE H.

Mental health professionals at a major psychological conference thought the SAA banner was a joke.

As the ISO focuses resources on bringing awareness of sex addiction to the public and professional community, we are faced with limited resources. This newsletter will be sent out around the same time as our annual appeal. Please take time to consider our annual appeal and share the information with others in your SAA meeting.

Our latest outreach effort was having a booth at the American Psychological Association conference. We talked to more than 300 professionals and they gave us their information to follow-up. Around 15,000 mental health professionals attended the conference. But many attendees walked up to our booth, saw our banner, and thought it was a joke. We also had several take selfies in front of our banner. These are professionals in the mental health field, yet they had not heard of us and seemed surprised to know that sex addiction was real. If professionals do not know of our existence or think of us as a joke, what hope does the suffering addict have in finding us?

Our fellowship has work to do. The professionals did not seem surprised by the AA booth. Alcoholism is accepted, but there is still a stigma around sex addiction. The ISO cannot carry our message and inform the general public and professionals by itself. It needs the help of every group and member in carrying our message at the local level. The ISO is able to attend some national and international professional conferences with the assistance of volunteers but we need our groups and members to focus on state/county/city professional conferences. The ISO can provide resources to local groups including funding for a booth, literature and training.

This can be accomplished only with members stepping up to support outreach efforts.

DEAR GRACE

How Women's Intergroup Differs From WOC

BY WOMEN'S
OUTREACH COMMITTEE

WOC is an ISO
Board committee;
Women's
Intergroup is
an autonomous
intergroup.

Dear Grace:

I just heard about a new SAA Women's Intergroup. Does this mean the Women's Outreach Committee (WOC) is going away? I don't understand why we would need both. So I guess the new intergroup will be taking over all the stuff the WOC does now? Will you work for the intergroup? Will you still do this column? What will happen to the Grace list?

Sincerely,

What about the WOC?

Dear What about the WOC,

Thank you for your concern! NO, the WOC is NOT going away. We are and will be continuing our service work in support of the woman sex addict who is still suffering. In fact, your questions are very timely, because it gives us the chance to make a plug for the excellent service work being done by the WOC and an appeal for new members!

This "Dear Grace" column is just one of the many on-going activities of the WOC that will be unaffected by the new intergroup. Here are some others:

- » The Women's Outreach List (sometimes known as "the Grace list")
- » The Women's Outreach room at each ISO convention
- » The women's pages on the ISO website (WOC serves as "content expert")
- » Membership in the General Outreach Committee

Then, in addition to those, the WOC is always looking for ways for the fellowship to hear women's

voices. For the past three years, we've facilitated a women's panel at the ISO convention. One of those panels morphed into a series of teleconferences titled "Women in the Fellowship: What's working; what's not working." All SAA members are invited to join those teleconferences. That effort, to find ways to present women's experience, strength, and hope will also continue to be a priority for the WOC. Please join us if you have ideas about how to do that.

The WOC will also continue to be involved in literature. We have the WOC to thank for the pamphlets "Welcome to the Woman Newcomer" and "Safe and Sober Meetings." They drafted these pamphlets and worked with the Literature Committee to have them approved and available for sale. We know there are more topics that could be covered in new literature, and need new members who have the energy and commitment to make that happen.

Of course, the WOC also sponsored five women-only retreats in the years 2011 – 2017. In fact, this is the only function that the WOC has recently transferred to the new women's intergroup. The reason why is the answer to your question about why the fellowship would need both the WOC and the new women's intergroup.

The essential difference between them

is that the WOC is an ISO Board committee, formed by the ISO Board of Trustees, and is supported by ISO resources. It is also part of the ISO of SAA corporation, and it is bound by the financial and tax implications of that. In contrast, the Women's Intergroup is an autonomous intergroup. Being autonomous, it can engage in fundraising, and can hold and distribute those funds in accordance with its own group conscience. It can be more flexible and immediate in its response.

In other words, both of these service bodies have plenty of work to do! Both need members to make it happen. You can join at any time, but October will be an especially good time, since the ISO service year begins then. You can find out more by emailing the WOC at www.genoutreach.WOC.chair@iso-saa.org, or by calling the ISO office.

Hope to hear on those calls soon,

Grace

*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.*

LIVING IN SOBRIETY

Using Gentleness as a Guide

BY GARY D.

**Shame always
wants to punish
me. Higher Power
always wants to
pardon me.**

In July, I celebrated a major milestone — ten continuous years of sobriety — and I'm amazed at how my ideas about how recovery have changed.

When I first came to the program I was racked with shame, guilt, fear — and denial. I had been acting out with anonymous sexual partners and telling myself an addict's favorite lie: that I was doing it to protect my husband. My rationalization was that since he couldn't meet my needs sexually, I needed to take care of myself.

Even in the midst of my addiction, that lie was unsustainable. Unlike many I meet in recovery, I didn't start recovery because I was caught. I got there on my own in a moment of grace when I realized the utter insanity of putting my life — and my husband's — at risk for a fleeting high.

But even then, I wasn't ready for SAA. Instead, I went to a therapist, convinced that I could handle this problem on my own. Several months into therapy, I continued acting out between sessions, even as my counselor kept urging me to attend SAA meetings. I refused. Then God did for me what I couldn't do for myself. A severe injury left me so humiliated/humbled that I finally threw up my hands and attended my first meeting.

What a relief! Instead of the sketchy, scary, surly underbelly of society I expected to find, I discovered a group of people who understood, loved and held me. From that first day, meetings have been a central part of my recovery, and I still attend up to four meetings a week, though my reasons for doing so have changed.

I'm so grateful that I clearly heard the message of recovery in that first meeting — that abstinence

from addictive sexual behavior is possible through working the Twelve Steps — and that there were people modeling that same behavior.

One of them was my first sponsor, who I still think of as some kind of Jedi Master. He gave me the key to sobriety in four simple words that left me dumbfounded. “Be gentle with yourself.”

At first I didn’t understand what he meant, thought maybe he wasn’t the right sponsor for me after all. Gentleness, I told myself, was the last thing someone as shameful, horrible and monstrous as me needed. I required punishment, or at the very least, discipline.

Thankfully, I had enough willingness to keep coming back to him and to recovery. As I worked my first three steps, convinced that I was failing, he gently reminded me of the progress I was making. Whenever I complained about what a disaster I was, he smiled and pointed out where I wasn’t. The time he showed me that I was beating myself up for not being gentle with myself still makes me laugh.

Very slowly, I began to understand, to feel the power of gentleness. As I continued working the rest of the steps, and took my daily actions — reading, prayer, meditation, exercise and daily outreach calls, still my recovery staples — gentleness became the voice of my

Higher Power. And that gentle voice keeps urging me to be more gentle with each passing day.

Today, as I sponsor others and attempt to be of service, gentleness is my guiding light. Over the years in recovery and working the steps both formally and daily, I’ve become convinced that what I’m really addicted to is shame. Shame always wants to punish me. Higher Power always wants to pardon me.

But I’m not always willing to accept that grace. Sometimes, I still want to use my sex addiction as a way to beat myself up. If I go into middle circle, act on a character defect or even feel a sexual urge, I can tell myself it’s because I’m a bad recoverer, a miserable sex addict.

But with the gift of sobriety and the gentle grace of my Higher Power, I now more quickly remember that all of those “failings” are often just human. I don’t work a perfect program. I never will. And that’s okay. That understanding gives me a new and different kind of freedom than I ever expected — the gentle freedom to be human. Nothing more. Nothing less.

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



A longtime member shares the wisdom gained from service and step work

BY JIM L.

M

any life lessons have been learned from working the SAA program of recovery and from studying the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and Twelve Concept for World Service. I would like to share five of them with you, as testimony to what this program offers, and what it has done for me.

These lessons have been instrumental in my own recovery and in the recovery of those I've had the privilege of sponsoring. Time does not permit in-depth discussion of each lesson, but I share them with you as food-for-thought.

Lesson 1

The Twelve Step program is methodology, not theology. While our program of recovery undoubtedly helped clarify my need for a Higher Power and helped me develop a genuine connection/relationship with the God of my understanding, it primarily gave me the step-by-step method of coming to grips with my addic-

tion and working through the issues (resentments, fears, and character defects) that held me captive to the addiction. If we recognize this distinction, then neither muddies the other.

Lesson Two

There are four ingredients that serve as the essential foundation of the Twelve-Step program of recovery—honesty, willingness, commitment, and action. Success in recovery depends on how well you build this foundation! I have found it useful to discuss these points when meeting with a new sponsee, and I have also found them useful when encouraging a member of the fellowship, who is struggling and not getting sober.

Lesson Three

Learning how to process emotions with respect to reality is an important lesson for any addict. I believe that most, if not all, addictive behavior is driven by feelings being processed in unhealthy ways — not rational thinking. That’s the insanity we experience.

Feelings (emotions) are real, but they do not necessarily reflect the truth. As an addict, my thoughts and actions were driven by feelings, and very often those emotions grew out of my misinterpretation of reality. Likewise, they were often out of sync with my own moral code. The

Twelve-Step program has taught me how to recognize my feelings but to pause, reflect on what is true, and, very importantly, to seek God’s guidance. The power of the pause cannot be under estimated.

The AA Big Book states it most succinctly on page 87: “When agitated or doubtful, we pause and ask for the next right thought or action.” The asking is typically and appropriately considered to be prayer, but it can also be calling my sponsor or another member of the fellowship. The point is that I take the time to check the validity of my feelings against reality—against what is true. This pause allows me the opportunity to make better, more thoughtful decisions.

As I have learned to process my feelings in a healthier way, I have also realized the power of gratitude. I cannot be angry or resentful and grateful at the same time. I cannot be fearful or anxious and grateful at the same time. I am convinced that gratitude is the universal antidote for negative, addiction-driving feelings.

Lesson Four

Our program of recovery is a daily program. Throughout the AA Big Book and the SAA Green Book, it is clear that the Twelve-Step program is a life-time prescription. While the core of our recovery program is contained in Steps One through Nine, it is equally clear that Steps Ten, Eleven,

and Twelve do not have an endpoint. They establish a daily program that will keep me sober and will reap many more benefits, not the least of which is emotional sobriety—the basis of a content, serene, and joyful life.

Lesson Five

Spinning out of Step Twelve, service has been and is today a crucial part of my recovery program. Service pulls me out of self-centeredness, which we all recognize to be the root of our troubles. It helps me focus on the needs of others rather than my own wants and self-serving desires.

Significant and beneficial service can occur at any level within the SAA fellowship. At the local and intergroup level, seemingly unimportant tasks like making coffee, arranging chairs, putting out literature, talking to newcomers, or cleaning up after a meeting are service opportunities of significance. For example, I like to arrive at least fifteen minutes before a meeting to make sure that the chairs are a few inches apart! I like a little elbow room, and I believe it enhances sharing.

Service opportunities also abound at the ISO level. A good starting point is writing to prisoners, those addicts who typically do not have access to meetings or to a sponsor. Other opportunities include working on local, intergroup, or ISO committees. There is much work to be done in support of the fellowship and in reaching out to

the addict who still suffers. Most of it must be done by volunteers. We might even use our personal training, skills, and experience to serve in leadership positions within the ISO. But serve, we must!

In closing, note that the Green Book summarizes the benefits of our program in a very insightful and profound way: “What we gain in this program is a blueprint for full and successful living, whatever may come.” (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, p. 61) Missing from that statement is any reference to our addiction. The program offers so much more than control of addictive behavior! It gives me life after addiction.

I do not always get what I want, but if I surrender to a loving Higher Power—like I decided to do in Step Three—and, if I work this program of recovery, I will get what I need. I will receive, as a gift, the opportunity for full and successful living, whatever may come.

Incidentally, if I am still fighting, I have not surrendered! But if I actively seek God’s will, as prescribed in this program, if I am actively grateful, if I work the steps, surrendering daily, I am confident that I will, indeed, get what I need. As a result, I do know sobriety and serenity. I can live life daily on life’s terms and be supremely content, while serving my fellow travelers.

My prayer is that each of you will seize the opportunity before you and experience the many blessings of this program that I have experienced. ●

Closing Doors



Do single-gender meetings hurt the fellowship — and violate traditions?

Editor's note: The following article raises some important, but difficult questions for the fellowship around how to best handle our mixed-gender fellowship within the context of meetings. It is hoped that this opinion article will encourage healthy discussion within the fellowship on how to address the issues of single-gender meetings. You are encouraged to send feedback to toc-recovery@saa.org. Letters to the editor will be published in upcoming issues of The Outer Circle.

BY ROBBIE H.

I am a member of Sex Addicts Anonymous. I have a service commitment to my local home group, intergroup, and at the ISO level. I have been continuously sober from my inner circle behaviors for the past nine years. But sadly, I am not permitted to attend 20 percent of SAA meetings around the world...simply because of my gender.

How can a fellowship, with the only requirement for membership being a desire to stop addictive sexual behavior, permit, accept, and tolerate gender-based discrimination? How can we accept this selfish act of segregation when it clearly conflicts with so many of our traditions and spiritual principles? If the only requirement for SAA membership is a desire to stop addictive sexual behavior, what does that membership grant?

Our literature tells us that meetings are the heart of the fellowship and yet our

groups tell many that they cannot be “part of the heart” because of their gender. If meeting together regularly to share our experience, strength and hope gives us a choice to live a new life, who are we to deny someone that same opportunity? *Sex Addicts Anonymous* (The Green Book) states, “At meetings we meet as equals: sex addicts helping one another to achieve sexual sobriety and to practice a new way of life. We all contribute to making our meetings places that foster our recovery and carry the SAA message to the sex addict who still suffers.” Unless, of course, if the sex addict who still suffers is the wrong gender...then it is someone else’s job to carry the message, at some other meeting. Our traditions of openness and inclusion, rather than exclusion are based on trust rather than fear. Isolating meetings by gender, even if it is done to protect some from feelings related to trauma, triggers, or other issues, is based in fear rather than faith.

Some groups have identified “group autonomy” as a defense for their behavior. Tradition three states, “As a fellowship, Sex Addicts Anonymous is open to anyone with the desire to stop addictive sexual behavior. Some groups, however, have made the autonomous decision to gear their meetings toward a specific group within the fellowship...Such meetings are meant to allow those of us who attend them to speak more freely, to

give us the opportunity to meet with others who may understand us better, or to better protect or anonymity....”

Autonomy does not, however, enable a group to ignore the steps, traditions, and principles for a self-serving, fear based ideology. The text of the Green Book goes on to suggest that when we have meetings, like those that are single gender, it allows those who attend to speak more freely. Freely about what? The steps? The traditions? The solution? What can be shared at a women’s only meeting that cannot be shared in front of men, and vice versa?

Our individual biological make-up does not dictate how we behave at our meetings, the content of our shares, or our ability to honor group boundaries. To assume that I can or cannot be safe and supportive of someone of my gender or another gender based solely on my gender is short sighted, ill-conceived and dangerous, not only to our individual recovery, but also to the recovery of our fellowship as a whole.

I spoke with members of our fellowship who live in cities where they have single gender SAA meetings. They indicated that the reasons can be varied but they typically come down to preventing people from being in meetings with the opposite gender, which they find triggering, and preventing them from being in a meeting with a member of the opposite gen-

der, which they relate to trauma.

I understand the issues we all face with triggers and past trauma. But it seems the Twelfth Tradition speaks to these matters when it directs us to place “principles before personalities.” When we choose to bar one gender from a meeting because we find them triggering, we have chosen to put our needs above the group’s, above that of other sex addicts. When we choose to bar an entire gender from meetings because some members at the meeting have a trauma history associated with that gender, we are also choosing to cater to the issues of some, while blocking access to SAA for others. It is tragic that we co-sign this type of gender based discrimination.

If the decisions to have single gender meetings in SAA is rooted in our traditions, it would follow that we could do the same for age, religion, and race. For example, Recovery and Youth: No one over 55 years of age allowed (my grandpa molested me and old white men with gray or bald hair and glasses trigger some bad memories for me).

So, what’s the difference between those meetings and the ones based on gender? We would never discriminate based on religion, race, creed, etc., yet many groups discriminate on the basis of gender on a daily basis. Aren’t these all outside issues that really have no bearing on our re-

When we choose to bar one gender from a meeting because we find them triggering, we have chosen to put our needs above the group’s.

covery? Don’t they change the focus from our solution to my situation, my problem?

Tradition Twelve states “when we are anonymous in this sense, we put aside our outside identities and act only as members of the fellowship, regardless of social position, gender, occupation, race, religion, economic status, appearance, or any other quality that makes us different from one another.

In a very real sense, when we join together for the purpose of recovery, we need to leave all such distinctions behind.” If our meetings are not safe places for members of all genders they are not safe meetings for any genders.

Let’s put an end to our fear and place our trust in our loving Higher Power. Let’s put an end to gender based fear, bias, and discrimination. Let’s honor our recovery, our traditions, our fellowship and the addicts who still suffer. Let us reconsider single gender meetings. ●

Free at Last!



Celibacy leads to a clearer mind — and a new way of life

BY ALBERT T.

I never thought abstinence from sex would have anything to do with me. The thought of going without sex for any period of time, was just out of the question. To make my point, I want to look back at my story for just a few moments.

- » As a child, I was molested three times a week, for five years, by a speech therapist. This created an unhealthy desire for sex. I once masturbated 27 times in one day, before I reached out for help in recovery.
- » In one month I made \$1,000 in telephone sex calls.
- » I was a professional photographer, who used my business as a front to have sex with new, undiscovered models.
- » I cruised adult book stores and picked up “men of the evening.”
- » My mind was on sex 24 hours a day — yes, even as I slept. I would estimate that I have slept with several thousand male partners.

I share my background to give you perspective regarding my addiction. Hope-

fully, this allows you to better understand why the thought of giving up sex would not be in my line of thinking.

I was totally out of control, when I hit rock bottom. I went to my first SAA meeting eleven years ago. Thank God for the SAA program, the fellowship of other people in the program, to my wonderful sponsor and his wife, for being there anytime I needed them. During the last eleven years, there were many calls made in the middle of the night, just to get me home without further acting out.

My original three circles contained sixteen inner circle items that I wanted to change. I now have more than eight years sobriety in many of those items listed.

During my road to recovery, I had to make various life changing choices. One of the hardest was getting rid of so-called friends. These people were trying to pull me down and cause me to forfeit my recovery. They attempted to keep me sexually sick, not wanting me to change, or even believing that I could change.

The experience I am relating may not be healthy for all, but it was my choice. It's been said that there is season for everything. August 8, 2014 was my last sexual experience with a known or an anonymous partner. I can truly say, this time without sex has cleared my mind of stinking thinking and has caused me to appre-

I am still alive; living without sex did not kill me — it has made me a better person. ...Only God knows when, or if, I will return to a sexual life, but sex is no longer in control of my life.

ciate the program at a deeper level.

I am living my personal recovery each day and trying to help others in their recovery. One way I have done this is to place my name on the SAA national phone list for support of others.

I am still alive; living without sex did not kill me — it has made me a better person.

I am proud of myself for being four years celibate. Only God knows when, or if, I will return to a sexual life, but sex is no longer in control of my life.

I continue to struggle with sexual thoughts and dreams and temptations sometimes race through my mind

The bottom line is that, thanks to the grace of God, I am no longer the sex addict I was even a year ago. Growth is possible! ●

Reprinted from The Check-IN, newsletter of the Indiana Intergroup

Passing the Baton



In the race of recovery the Sixth Step is crucial to carrying the message

T

BY INTIMACY & SEXUAL AVOIDANCE OUTREACH COMMITTEE

o use the analogy of a race, Step Six — “were entirely ready to have God remove these defects of character” — is the signal that the “recovery race” is about to begin. The key concept in Step Six is “readiness.” The intent of Step Six is to focus on recovery which is about to happen, not recovery which has already happened. A coach trains an athlete to focus on winning the upcoming race.

A “wanna-be-successful” athlete fails when focusing on the defects of “who I am,” believing a complete overhaul is needed. A good coach does not look for a perfect athlete, but rather trains the “wanna-be-successful” athlete to use imperfections to work for, and not against, the good of the team.

In the same way, the “readiness” of Step Six focuses the “wanna-be-successful” recoverer to turn character traits from defects to assets. In Step Six, the program prepares those in recovery to be winners in the future, not repairers of the past.

A relay race is a contest won by the team which works well together: one runner is strong in the blocks, one makes effortless transfers while another is strong in the finish.

In recovery, the “recovery team” that best uses the tools of recovery to-

gether is successful. The Intimacy and Sexual Avoidance (ISA) tele-meetings are “training grounds” for those in recovery to work the SAA Twelve Step program as a team.

The “ISA recovery team” nurtures each other in Step groups, is formed into a team during tele-meetings and enhances communication skills through outreach calls. The “ISA recovery team” stresses balance: the “ISA approach” deals with both the addictive and the anorexic tendencies of those in recovery. Some describe this balance as the masculine and the feminine sides of the character of each human being.

On a recent call, an “avoidant” noted that Step Six focuses on “readiness” while Step Eight on “willingness.” To use the analogy of a relay race: the starter’s commands – “ready...set...” are Steps Six and Eight — signals to prepare for the recovery race. In the AA Big Book, the “Promises” are given at the onset of Step Ten, promoting those in recovery who have dealt with the pains of becoming “ready and willing.”

Step Twelve is the starter’s gun signaling the recovery team to carry the message together — the message is the baton being handed off in the lane, carried to the still suffering “wanna-be-successful” addict and anorexic. ●

What Matters Today

By Jamison B.

In addiction,
What mattered most was lust,
What mattered most was my fix,
What mattered most was
gratification,
What mattered most was pleasure.

In recovery TODAY,
What matters more, is love.
What matters more, is helping
others.
What matters more, is being
authentic.
What matters more, is the joy of
connection with God, others, and
my true self.

Most of all, what matters more to
me than anything in the world, is
sobriety. ●

DEAR WILL

Should Interruptions be Allowed During First Steps?

BY WILL

It is my opinion that the default during First Steps should be 'no interruptions.'

Dear Will,

I am about to do my First Step in front of my home group. My sponsor showed me a section in the pamphlet "First Step to Recovery" that says "If you wish, you may request that no one interrupt you during your presentation. However, several members have affirmed that on reflection, such interruptions have helped to guide them and to make the First Step experience more meaningful." My sponsor did not express an opinion about whether I should allow interruptions during my presentation. Do you think I should allow interruptions?

In a Quandary

Dear IQ,

I generally dislike statements during debates about conference approval for a particular piece of literature such as, "Sentence x of paragraph y on page z was not my experience, so I oppose conference approval." However, in this case, and with all due respect to the authors of this pamphlet, I think this sentence should be jettisoned or at least revised.

We generally try, IQ, to make meetings safe for all in attendance. Even a seemingly harmless thing like referring to another person's share is considered crosstalk because it might contain some unintended judgment of the previous share that will cause the person who originally shared to feel that the meeting is unsafe. And that is just during an ordinary share. I cannot think of a situation in SAA where a person is more vulnerable than when giving a First Step. If anything, a meeting should especially strive to make First Step presen-

tations safe.

I would believe this even if the feedback were couched in non-judgmental language. However, on very rare occasions I have heard feedback where the language used was by any standards pretty harsh. One time the feedback ended with, “I’m not saying you’re not a sex addict, but.” Such a statement can drive someone away from the program for good. Why subject yourself to the possibility of some judgmental feedback, regardless of the words used?

Even the language used in the text causes me to question the wisdom of allowing interruptions: “several members have affirmed that on reflection...” “Several members”—not even “some members”—is not much of a quorum. And “on reflection” implies the possibility of an attempt to rationalize and justify the behavior of the other member after the fact.

It is entirely possible, IQ, and indeed reasonably likely that nobody will interrupt your presentation. I think nonetheless that you are potentially subjecting yourself to some real and unnecessary risks by not requesting that nobody interrupt you during the presentation, and I hope that you will not allow some misguided attempt



to people-please to cause you to do otherwise. Unless you are absolutely certain that no feedback, no matter how harshly delivered, will have an effect on you, I would support you in requesting no feedback during your presentation.

It is my opinion that the default during First Steps should be “no interruptions,” and that the presenter should be asked to positively state that he or she is allowing interruptions. I would also support, despite what “several members have affirmed,” a similar change in the language of the pamphlet. I hope, IQ, that your first Step is very successful.

Will

*If you have a question for Will,
please send an email to
men4saa@saa-recovery.org.*

STORIES OF SERVICE

The Self-Respect Service Brings

BY TROY C.

I feel so much more part of the fellowship, and it means a lot that people take me a little bit more seriously.

When I hit rock bottom, I knew that I had a thinking problem, and finally became teachable. My sponsor told me that if you want to build self-esteem, then do esteem-able things. Also, the only way I could change my thinking was by taking different actions. He told me that a great way of doing this was by doing service work.

The Tuesday night SAA meeting needed a new Chairperson so I grabbed it. I reliably get there early, set the meeting up, greet new comers, and start the meeting on time every week. The regulars have all thanked me for carrying the torch. I feel so much more part of the fellowship, and it means a lot that people take me a little bit more seriously.

I am the one who is most grateful for the golden opportunity to rebuild my life. I now do service work for three meetings and counting, because of what it's doing for my self esteem, and character. The accountability is helping me get much distance from isolation, self obsession, self loathing, and self pity.

Early on I certainly felt some fear about not being reliable or making some kind of mistake. Actually, in one particular commitment I have slipped a little, but no one has shamed me. I simply got myself back on track. Today, I feel the self-confidence and self respect that you are helping me build.

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

FROM THE BOARD

Help the ISO Board with Strategic Goals

BY MIKE L., AT LARGE BOARD MEMBER

If any of these goals speak to you, please give some thought as to how the board can best implement them.

I thought it might be valuable to talk a little bit in this issue of *The Outer Circle* about the Board's vision, mission and strategic goals, the latter in particular.

A lot of the information found in this article is available by going to the ISO's service website, <https://saa-iso.org>, and then going to the Member Services section. This section is password protected, and the login and password can be obtained from the ISO office at 800-477-8191.

The ISO Board's vision is "to be a premier global resource for recovery in support of SAA and the sex addict who still suffers." Its mission is stated as follows: "The ISO serves member groups by helping carry the SAA message of recovery to the sex addict who still suffers."

I went through a training session some twenty years ago where I came up with a vision and a mission for myself, and so I understand the importance of other organizations having their own missions as well.

The most important topic of this article is the Board's strategic goals. To quote from the introductory paragraph on the Board's page under Member Services: "In February 2018 the Board updated the Strategic Goals for the next 5 years. There will be ongoing discussions and planning of tactics and metrics to reach these goals." Here are the Board's strategic goals for the next five years. They cover a wide variety of areas:

1. Finance

a. Revenue goals: Increase by 20 percent each year for the next 3 years with 2017 as the base (\$800,000)

2. Information Technology

a. Have implemented, no later than 2021, appropriate technologies to necessary to communicate more effectively with ISO volunteers, ISO member groups, and members of the fellowship at large.

3. Volunteer Training

a. Use our most recent technology to substantially increase recruitment, training, and retention of a diverse base of volunteer trustee servants for implementation by January 2021.

4. Diversity

a. Increase gender, age, and ethnic diversity by 20 percent by 2022.

b. Increase the percent of meetings outside the U.S. by 20 percent by 2022.

c. Increase the percent of non-English meetings by 20 percent by 2022.

5. Board Development

a. Complete comprehensive education plan for both new and sitting board members.

b. Increase engagement of board members in the activities and oversight of the ISO.

c. Recruit new board members with the legal and financial leadership abilities to adequately fulfill their responsibilities.

The introductory paragraph mentioned above ends with the words, “Fellowship input is requested in helping the ISO of SAA achieve these goals.”

So now, over to you, fellowship members. This is a pretty ambitious agenda. Please read over the strategic goals and ponder them.

If one or more of them speaks to you in particular, please give some thought to any suggestions you might have for how the Board can best implement them.

You can contact the Board at ISO. Board@SAA-ISO.org or by calling the ISO office at 800/477-8191.

If you are interested in working to help implement any of these goals, we can also find a way for you to do that service work.

ISO NEWS

NomCom Encourages Service Resume Participation

Have you considered serving our fellowship? The Nominating Committee invites you to fill out a service resume. This does not obligate you to any specific position. After you fill out and submit your resume The Conference Nominating Committee (NomCom) will work with you to find the right service position that fits your availability and skills.

If you don't have a specific position in mind, or aren't sure if you are ready to serve at the moment, but know that you want to serve at some point in the future, fill out a resume today. NomCom will review all of the resumes and nominate eligible candidates at the Annual ISO Conference in Houston. We are working to build a large and diverse pool of potential trusted servants, which can be used as a resource of nominees from year-to-year.

The service resume form may be found on the service website at <https://saa-iso.org/svc/>. You can enter your information directly into the Microsoft Word form (.docx) which can then be saved and emailed to the ISO office, or you may print the form and send to the office by postal mail. Information submitted on the service resume will be treated as strictly confidential. Completed service resumes should be emailed to info@saa-recovery.org or mailed to Nominating Committee, ISO, PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270.

You can use the QR code below for a direct link to the resume.



ISO NEWS

Host Needed for Women's Retreat

The ISO Women's Outreach Committee (WOC) is accepting proposals from local fellowships to host one of its annual International Women's Retreat in 2017, 2018 or 2019. The hosting fellowship will have the full support of the WOC, including financial help with start-up expenses. The host will be responsible for planning the retreat and making all local arrangements. It is anticipated that the retreat would be self-supporting, so that start-up funds would be available for future retreats.

The retreat has been held at various retreat centers/campgrounds to encourage participation. It should be within reasonable driving distance of a major airport using local member (men and women) support for transportation.

Weekends usually include meetings, workshops, breakout sessions, activities offered by the venue, a meditation room, and other fun activities. Host groups and committees are encouraged to create their own retreats as new ideas are always welcome.

The WOC has a budget to help financially with startup expenses such as the site deposit. It is our intention that the retreat be self-supporting, thus freeing that budget for the following year's start-up expenses. We ask that the event not be in April or May. (Past retreats have been in March and September.) Groups may express their interest by filling out the proposal form (Word Document) and sending to the WOC chair.

LGBT Subcommittee Seeks Survey Input, Fellowship Feedback

Hello from the LGBT Outreach Subcommittee of SAA! This is the first of what we hope will be a regular series of updates of what our subcommittee is doing to support the LGBT members of SAA.

We also hope to use this venue to solicit feedback from the SAA fellowship — regardless of how you identify across the entire LGBT spectrum as well as from straight men and women — to better serve everyone. Our subcommittee was stood down in 2015 at the Washington, D.C. international conference, but was re-established at the Chicago Conference in 2016.

Our Mission: The LGBT Outreach Subcommittee of the General Outreach Committee is tasked with developing and providing outreach activities to sex

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addicts in the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender communities, as well as to current LGBT members within SAA. SAA members of all genders and sexual orientations are invited to participate in developing methods to best carry the message of SAA recovery to sex addicts within these communities.

We are currently conducting a survey that has been sent to each SAA LGBT meeting. The Survey seeks answers to determine how we can better serve LGBT members of SAA. For instance, do we need more LGBT literature, and if so, what do we need to write about? We ask how you have done outreach to the still suffering LGBT sex addicts in your local area or how we could do a better job reaching out to them on a national/international level. The answers you provide will go a long way in developing the future work of our subcommittee.

However, we realize that there are many LGBT members who do not have a LGBT meeting in their area. Further, we realize that many straight members of SAA have valuable feedback that they can provide as well. Therefore, we have posted the survey on the SAA Service website www.saa-iso.org. We want to hear from as many of you as possible.

In closing, please help us spread the word that this subcommittee is back and that we are anxious to hear from and work with you. Talk about us at your individual group meetings and intergroup meetings! You can contact us at glbt@saa-recovery.org or by calling the SAA ISO office at 1-800-477-8191. Let us hear from you!

Literature Committee Reviews Accomplishments

The ISO Literature Committee (LitCom) has made significant progress during this service year on its agenda of more than sixteen active projects, which are designed to further the ISO mission of helping member groups carry their message to the sex addict who still suffers.

Most Literature Committee projects are assigned to specific subcommittees, chaired by Literature Committee members, which also meet regularly by teleconference. All concerned group members are welcomed to attend and participate in many of the on-going Literature Committee projects.

Here are highlights of accomplishments in 2017-2018:

- » Completed reviewing all thirty-six 2017 convention recordings for potential sale on ISO outreach website. Submitted an article to The Outer Circle announcing availability of the workshops.
- » Finalized approval of 366 meditations for the SAA Daily Meditation Book
- » Completed work with ISO on an audio version of Sex Addicts Anonymous (Green Book)
- » Completed review of all 120 literature requests from the assessment of fellowship literature needs survey. Most requested topics already exist so decided to first publish a topical index of all SAA literature. Submitted an article to The Outer Circle presenting the results.
- » Submitted Recommitting to Recovery pamphlet to ISO for publication
- » Reviewed submitted “SAA Promises” and decided not to approve/publish. Submitted an article to The Outer Circle announcing the decision and its reasons.
- » Rescinded Literature Committee Approval of Abstinence and Boundaries in SAA. Submitted an article to The Outer Circle announcing the decision and its reasons.
- » Rather than publish just “one” step working guide, decided to publish a step working workbook that includes multiple ways to work the steps as submitted by the fellowship
- » Approved changes to First Step to Recovery: A Guide to working the First Step (Name changed to First Step to Recovery)

Sales Down, But Audio Green Book, Meditation Book Expected to Help

In the month of July we had a deficit of \$11,158.99. We had budgeted for a deficit of \$12,363.

Our SAA Green Book sales were below our estimate by \$1,087.35 in July. For the year we are at 78.09 percent of our estimated SAA Green Book sales. Our pamphlet and booklet sales were below our estimate by \$2,110.76 in July. For the year we are at 83.38 percent of our estimated pamphlet and booklet sales. Our bronze medallion sales exceeded our estimate by \$125.38 in July. For the year we are at 96.42 percent of our estimated bronze medallion sales.

Our total sales for July were below our estimate by \$3,238.5 in July. For the year we are at 83.34 percent of our estimated sales. We expect our estimate to be closer to our budget once our Audio Green Book and our Meditation Book are made available later in the year. Individual donations were below our estimate by \$1,848.13 in July. For the year we are at 96.28 percent of our estimated individual donations.

Group donations exceeded our estimate by \$724.98 in July. For the year we are at

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109.27 percent of our estimated group donations.

Our product inventory is valued at \$54,280.05. Our expenses were below our estimate by \$4,401.62 in July. For the year we are at 102.23 percent of our estimated expenses. Our operational reserve is \$186,536.00 and is fully funded.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

In Your Service,

Joe H.

Calendar — Here are tentative ISO outreach and committee meeting times for the next several months. Meetings times change often. All times are Central Standard Time. To attend a committee meeting, you must be a member or be invited. If you're interested in joining a committee, email info@saa-recovery.org or call the ISO office.

First Sunday of the month

CSC: Policy & Procedure: 2:00 p.m.

Audio Review (odd months): 2:30 p.m.

Intergroup Communications: 3:00 p.m.

LGBT Outreach: 5:00 p.m.

Prisoner Outreach: 8:00 p.m.

First Saturday of the month

Author's Group: 4:00 p.m.

Second Saturday of the month

Intimacy and Sexual Avoidance: 8 a.m.

Women's Outreach: 4:00 p.m.

Second Sunday of the month

CSC: Conference Committee Structure:
2:00 p.m.

Literature Committee: 4:00 p.m.

General Outreach: 6:30 p.m.

Second Tuesday of the month

Seventh Tradition: 6:00 p.m.

Third Tuesday of the month

Nominating Committee: 5:00 p.m.

Third Saturday of the month

Area Coordinating Committee: 4:00 p.m.

CSC: Twelve Concepts Work Group: 12:00 p.m.

Third Sunday of the month

CSC: Charter & Bylaws: 2:00 p.m.

Information Systems and Online Presence
Committee: 2:00 p.m.

SE Region: 6:00 p.m.

Fourth Sunday of the month

Conference Steering Committee: 2:00 p.m.

CONTACT THE ISO

Want to connect with the International Service Organization website, staff, board of trustees, trusted servants, or special workers? Here's the contact info you need:

Office

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

Phone: 713-869-4902 -or- 800-477-8191
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

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Administrative Assistant : Jerry B.: jerry@saa-iso.net
Administrative Assistant: Harvey A. harveya@saa-iso.net
Publications Manager: Cody S. codys@saa-iso.net

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: oochair@saa-recovery.org.

Board of Trustees and Literature Committee

Great Lakes

LitCom: Cara A.; Alternate: Vacant
LitComGL@saa-litcom.org

Intermountain

Board: Bob H (treasurer).; Alternate: Vacant
BoardIM@saa-recovery.org
LitCom: Vacant.; Alternate: Vacant
LitComIM@saa-litcom.org

North Central

Board: Dawn S (vice secretary).; Alternate: Thea L.
BoardNC@saa-recovery.org
LitCom: Fred T.; Alternate: Vacant
LitComNC@saa-litcom.org

Northeast

Board: Tim A. (Secretary); Alternate: Carl D.
BoardNE@saa-recovery.org
LitCom: Don R.; Alternate: Valerie G. (secretary)
LitComNE@saa-litcom.org

North Pacific

Board: Cliff G.; Alternate: Vacant
BoardNP@saa-recovery.org
LitCom: Les J.; Alternate: Charlie K.
LitComNP@saa-litcom.org

South Central

Board: Paul M. (Chair); Alternate: Vacant.
BoardSC@saa-recovery.org
LitCom: Vacant.; Alternate: Vacant.
LitComSC@saa-litcom.org

Southeast

LitCom: Garrett I.; Alternate: Byard B.
LitComSE@saa-litcom.org

Southern Pacific

LitCom: Carole D.; Alternate: Dwight B.
LitComSP@saa-litcom.org

At Large

Board: Lisa S (vice chair).; Bob L.; Mike L.; Ray L.; Stephen N.
BoardAL@saa-recovery.org
LitCom: Doug S., Mike B. Robbie H. (2nd chair)
David M (chair); Steven P.; Gary T. (*The Outer Circle* editor)
LitComAL@saa-litcom.org

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Get Your Story Published in *The Outer Circle*

The Outer Circle newsletter relies on submissions from the Fellowship. It's a great way to carry the message to other sex addicts!

Deadlines for Submission and Topics

Jan/Feb:	"Taking Action"	Nov 5
Mar/Apr:	"Healthier Sexuality"	Jan 5
May/June:	"First Three Steps"	Mar 5
July/Aug:	"Prayer, Meditation"	May 5
Sept/Oct:	"Steps Six and Seven"	July 5
Nov/Dec:	"Giving Back"	Sept 5

Articles may be submitted by email to toc@saa-recovery.org or by mail to the ISO office. If possible, please submit articles via email in Microsoft Word format. All articles must be accompanied by the **RELEASE FORM** at the bottom of this page.

Here are some general writing guidelines:

Articles can be anywhere from 500-1,000 words. The main guideline is to share your experience, strength, and hope in the principle of Step Twelve. 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.

Please don't worry about grammar and spelling. We'll clean that up for you.

General Release Form

In consideration of being reviewed for possible publication, I hereby transfer and release to the ISO of SAA, Inc (assignee) all legal rights to the publication of my submission(s) or any edited version thereof in any official ISO publication, including Sex Addicts Anonymous, The Outer Circle, the SAA meditation book, the SAA websites, or any other SAA program material, such as pamphlets, booklets and audio recordings.

With this submission, I transfer to the assignee without limitation the legal title and all literary rights, including copyright and/or trademark and the full right and license to reproduce, copy, edit for content, modify, distribute, and create derivatives from the submitted work. I understand that every effort will be made to safeguard my personal anonymity in the publication and distribution of this material. I also understand that I may or may not receive further communication regarding my submission prior to its publication.

I hereby further attest that I possess full legal capacity to exercise this authorization, and I hereby Release the assignee from any claim whatsoever by me or my successors.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Printed name: _____

Witness: _____ Date: _____

Printed name: _____

SAA TWELVE STEPS

- 1.** We admitted we were powerless over addictive sexual behavior - that our lives had become unmanageable.
- 2.** Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
- 3.** Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.
- 4.** Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
- 5.** Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
- 6.** Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
- 7.** Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.
- 8.** Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
- 9.** Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
- 10.** Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
- 11.** Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood God, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.
- 12.** Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other sex addicts and to practice these principles in our lives.