

# THE OUTER CIRCLE

**Meeting  
Magic**

**Our common  
solution  
erases our  
differences**

**PLUS**

**Finding God**

**Why sponsor?**

**Stop slipping**





## 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.

**November - December 2018**

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# FROM THE EDITOR

## Are We Carrying the Message?

BY GARY T.

**While our fellowship is still growing, many groups remain focused on helping sex addicts already in meetings rather than the still suffering addict.**

I'm so grateful that when I was ready to face my addiction, information about SAA was readily available. In fact, when I first Googled sex addiction, SAA's quiz was one of the first things I found.

But not everyone is so lucky. This weekend, I met someone in the fellowship who didn't even know SAA existed for two years before she discovered our program. All she could find were private recovery options she couldn't afford. In the meantime, her addiction progressed and she suffered.

Unfortunately, her story may be typical when it comes to awareness about SAA. The truth is, we as a fellowship haven't done a very good job of sharing our message with recovery to the sex addict who still suffers — and we need to get better at it.

For me, that was the big takeaway from the 2018 Conference. While our fellowship is still growing, many groups remain focused on helping sex addicts already in meetings — providing literature, schedules, sponsorship, phone lists, etc. — rather than trying to reach the still suffering addict.

Some of that is simply the result of our program still being relatively young. But some of it is also because we haven't focused enough on service, especially the service of sharing the recovery message, sometimes known as twelve stepping.

There's a reason the steps end with the emphasis on carrying the message: it's the best way for all of us to stay sober. And now the ISO has more tools than ever to help groups do twelfth-step work, from sending letters to PSAs. I urge you to learn about and avail yourselves of those tools so all those who seek recovery will have an opportunity to find it — and keep coming back.

# FROM THE DIRECTOR

## As Fellowship Grows Group Guide Gets More Vital

BY JOE H.

**The Group Guide  
has many tools  
that can be used  
by recovery  
meetings to help  
with almost any  
problem.**

Our fellowship has more than doubled in the last ten years. We now have more than 1,800 weekly recovery meetings. While this is great news, there are always challenges as new meetings begin to meet. What I would like to address in this newsletter is where to go for help when meetings face challenges/conflicts. The ISO office is always willing to listen to the challenges that our members call us about when it comes to group conflict but our recovery meetings are autonomous so we don't tell meetings what they should do. We will suggest resources to members who call us about meeting conflicts but it is up to the group and its group conscience to decide on the best course of action to resolve conflicts.

The best resource we have available for use by our recovery meetings is our Group Guide. The Group Guide has many tools that can be used by recovery meetings to help with almost any problem. The Group Guide contains the Twelve Traditions of SAA, which can be helpful when a recovery meeting is struggling with making a tough decision. Another helpful tool in the group guide is the group inventory. Groups have found it helpful to take an inventory at least annually to provide a thoughtful review of how the group is doing. Information from an inventory helps the group make decisions about changes based on the group conscience. I would suggest every member download a copy of the Group Guide at [http://saa-recovery.org/Meetings/GroupGuide/SAA\\_Group\\_Guide.pdf](http://saa-recovery.org/Meetings/GroupGuide/SAA_Group_Guide.pdf) and read it. I am sure you will be able to find value for your personal recovery as well as useful information to strengthen your group.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve.

# DEAR GRACE

## Should I Keep Coming to Meetings If I'm Not Working the Steps?

BY WOMEN'S  
OUTREACH COMMITTEE

**As long as you  
have the desire  
to stop addictive  
sexual behavior,  
you belong.**

Dear Grace,

I have got a lot of personal/outside issues going on in my life right now and do not have time to work the Steps. I am on Step Two. Should I keep coming to meetings? My sponsor says she can't work with me if I won't work my steps, but I need her to listen to my problems and help me solve them.

—Lost

Dear Lost,

I'm glad you wrote me. It sounds like you are in a tough spot. Here is what I can offer.

Let's review the basics. SAA is a Twelve-Step program where members work together to achieve freedom from addictive sexual behavior. This occurs through "a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps" (Step Twelve). Let me repeat that because it's the key. In SAA, the spiritual awakening/freedom results from working the Twelve Steps.

Sometimes life happens, and for a while, we can't work the Steps. For example, you have a child. A family member dies. You get called to active military duty. If one of those applies to you, you and your sponsor could work out an arrangement with a timetable for restarting. Honestly, anything other than that is likely to be an excuse.

Step One shows us what a mess our lives are, as the result of our powerlessness over addictive sexual behavior. Step Two offers the hope that a Higher Power could restore us to sanity. It's a hope, and sometimes, it's a challenge. The first three steps require us to let go of our illusion of



control. You may be simply caught in that struggle. Our SAA Green Book warns us to make recovery “our highest priority. We all have responsibilities and obligations. But if we allow ourselves to fall into our addiction again, and not return to recovery, we jeopardize everything we have” (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 68).

A sponsor is here to help us with the Steps. If you can't work the Steps, it's important that you not tie up a sponsor's time and energy. That doesn't mean you can't call her to talk, but only as one member of your support system. It's not appropriate or fair to her and others she is sponsoring to use her as a counselor or therapist. If you need one of those, please find one.

As far as attending meetings, there is no “should” at work here. If you want to keep attending meetings, then do. As long as you have the desire to stop addictive sexual behavior, you belong (Tradition Three). Now, the same caution applies. Meetings are not group

therapy. They are “forums for learning how to integrate the steps into our lives” (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 20). The other members there will be working the Steps, and will probably urge you do so as well. That's because they want you to have the spiritual awakening that comes from working the Twelve Steps. That's why we meet, to carry that message to others, including you.

What we know, and share freely with you, is that you do not need to be “Lost.” Please join us,

—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

## Coming Out of Isolation

BY LES J.

**I attend two meetings a week and share in at least one of them. I work on committees, both locally and internationally, to perform service.**

My addiction history has two parts. In the early era, I engaged in behaviors that progressed in severity to the point where I got into trouble and was forced to get counseling as a condition of my probation.

These behaviors included masturbating in public areas, voyeurism, and exhibitionism. Counseling became therapy, which continued about thirty-four years to this day. (I may be terminating therapy soon.) With the counseling, I stopped most behaviors save one that took about a year. I began participating in a succession of Twelve-Step programs.

“Part Two” of my recovery roughly coincides with walking into the rooms of SAA. My inner-circle includes masturbation and therapeutic massage with female practitioners. The culprit here is fantasy. The behaviors of masturbation and therapeutic massage are not bad in themselves. Other sober addicts might engage in those without ill effects. But for me, masturbation contributes to a fantasy that leaves me feeling frustrated and depressed.

The massage activity would have me wondering who I would get as a practitioner. Would I get sexually aroused? The fact that it was a therapeutic setting made it all the more enticing to me.

I knew that I faced disapproval of the masseuse. Without fail, I would feel very disappointed if I did not receive what I regarded as a high-quality massage. I have had thoughts relating to suicide so I need to take the depression seriously.

I haven't acted out since entering the SAA program. I use a combination of tools and practices. Again, therapy has been an important part of my recovery. I have focused on my sexual addiction in all its manifestations. That includes feeling attracted to

children. I have worked the Steps with a sponsor at least twice through. I have gone at a slow but thorough pace. I think what SAA has done for me was provide accountability. Denial is easy to see in others but difficult to see in myself. It is, of course, a “we” program. Isolation and lack of social skills are problems that I have whittled away at.

I attend two meetings a week and share in at least one of them. I work on committees, both locally and internationally, to perform service.

It can be a challenge to see eye-to-eye with others. Compromise is important. But I can do things that I can't in the “real world.” I can take on responsibilities that are new for me. I can develop skills, both social and technical, that I can use elsewhere in my life.

Things I avoid are activities involving physical contact with children, body-parting or ogling strangers, spending many hours in one day on the computer or otherwise isolating, and engaging in sexual fantasy, especially while trying to get to sleep.

The solution is my outer-circle. Besides program work, it has a number of social activities in it. I am doing meditation and working the Tenth Step, both on a regular basis.

I have yet to engage in much prayer. I grew up acting very independently. My

family was lacking in support. Although I was polite, I still had a large ego. My concept of Higher Power is not well defined. Still, the main thing to know is that my Higher Power is a lot bigger than I am. Humility doesn't come easy. And it is really hard to ask for help.

I am just starting to use the phone to give and receive support. I know it takes time to build relationships. It is risky to be vulnerable. Social activities are regular participation in dance communities, and occasional discussion groups.

There are challenges here, too. I see people do things on the dance floor that are out of bounds for me as an addict. I feel envious and critical at the same time. If it gets to be simply too much emotional stress for me, I can and do choose another community.

I engage in sober online dating, which can seem to be somewhat of an exercise in futility, but I think it is one more option for putting myself out there. I am not currently in a relationship, but I have a lot of other things going for me. Relationship, as well as sexuality, will hopefully be added to my already full life.

*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](mailto:toc@saa-recovery.org).*



# Sowing the Seeds of Love

## A lifelong agnostic's journey from hopelessness to faith in a Higher Power

I

BY IAN S.

've always been a strong technical writer but as a creative writer I was a bust. It was only recently, while reading from "We Agnostics" in *Alcoholics Anonymous*, that I began to understand my problem. I now present what I discovered about myself in the hope that it may help someone else, though I know there are many ways to work our program, and just as many ways to discover a Higher Power. Our path is wide and open to all.

As a child, I placed all my faith in reason and logic. No one took time to teach me spiritual tenets or philosophies. That lack of education combined with trauma and my own brain chemistry led me into strict rationalization of my relationship with god into agnosticism. I didn't think I could fit my Higher Power into a reasonable, logical, framework, so I didn't try. As a result I was spiritually stunted.

In short, I grew up with no spiritual education. Though my aunt and uncle were Methodist ministers they lived and preach in ways that were deeply uninviting. I went to Catholic school, read the Bible and found that my relationship with god

was becoming adversarial rather than helpful. I preferred debating the tenets of Christianity to challenging myself to grow in connection with god. This only hurt me. My college years were no better.

One night epitomizes that time in my life. A friend and I stayed up until morning, fueled on alcohol and drugs, searching for the meaning of life. At the end of our all night binge, we came up with the guiding tenet that “Life Just Is” . . . that’s it. That pithy slogan was the cornerstone my entire spiritual life through age forty-five. I held onto this agnostic belief and allowed my bad habits to metastasize with the attitude that nothing mattered because “life just is.” I was a closet nihilist.

Fortunately, I discovered SAA and reached a point in my recovery where I began sponsoring others. In building an active, loving, relationship with my Higher Power, my friend and sponsee, Mike, has been a huge help.

With his huge heart and depth of belief, Mike was wounded in a different way than me. Where my parents were distracted and self-centered, his were critical and shaming. Like me, Mike drifted into logic and reason to his detriment. Mike, too, became morally stunted as he, like me, drifted toward isolation, and self-centered willfulness as his primary tools for early survival.

The difference between us was that he came into his SAA program with a bent of strong atheism. In hindsight, I think this belief was the key to his salvation. He believed in the absence of god. This was a strong kind of faith that could be put to use in our program. His belief in the absence of god was a powerful force that served him well because, at its core, it was still an expression of faith.

In contrast, my heart was closed to the possibility of a relationship with my Higher Power. I assumed that the spiritual universe worked in ways apart from me. But Mike still felt; he could express love and knew shame. Because he never quite lost touch with a faith that worked for him, his salvation came at a lower price than many, myself included. As a result, his days ahead hold great potential.

But due to my myopic reliance solely on reason, logic, and agnosticism, I write this as a man who will suffer harsh consequences for actions that I trained myself to take since my earliest childhood. These escalating survival strategies made sense at the time: I quelled my fear by hiding, lying, and acting as if I cared, while maintaining my hyper-vigilance and pushing emotion and faith to the side.

But these anti-social tendencies grew into huge and horrible defects of character, which led to my downfall. As a result, I did lasting harm to my family. I hold deep regrets and I now

am forced to accept that my journey back to sanity and serenity will be long and challenging.

My walk back to good health will be difficult, but Mike's path gives me inspiration. I watched Mike's example of moving in his program from atheism towards a relationship with his Higher Power. During that time, he went from abstinence built on faltering willpower and fallacious reasoning toward a sustainable sobriety centered in his faith in the presence of a Higher Power.

I've learned from Mike that to live my life as an agnostic is to live without hope. I see that I must change. I must give up on a dead-end life once lived purely in pursuit of logic and reason to quell never-ending fears that stemmed from my childhood. I must leave behind a life without passion or belief in anything other than my ability to manipulate people and situations.

I see now that, from age four until forty-three, I lived without hope. After finding the SAA community, working the Twelve Steps, and integrating service into my life, it is clear now that the character defects I held so close as the keys to my survival were, in fact, leading me to a slow, agonizing, death.

Today, because of the program of SAA, my fellows in recovery, and my friend and sponsee Mike, I am no longer agnostic. I believe in something greater than myself. My heart is full. I live in gratitude. I have friends. I feel love. I accept pain and remorse. I no

longer hide from problems. I have hope for us all. I know now that it is in the arts and in faith that we learn of beauty and love. Though I mourn for my inner child who did not learn these lessons, I'm proud of the man who now works to find the courage to let go of my addiction and live in hope.

At this point in my program I see that actively living in faith and actively living in sobriety are synonymous. By contrast, my early program work based in abstinence, was a necessary step of acting "as if" I had faith. During that time, it was crucial to refrain from inner circle behaviors so I could move past my agnosticism and find faith in a Higher Power I needed to achieve sobriety.

Essentially, I made the discovery for myself that my faith and my sobriety were symbiotic and something I would always be working toward. It's a process, not a destination.

So thank you Mike. Thank you also to my greatest teachers and my dearest friends. By sharing your faith with me and being patient while I've learned, you have brought me the gift of courage, faith, and hope. These words will never begin to express my profound gratitude, but, for right now, they are what I've got.

God bless every fellow who strives to find the courage to move from agnosticism to faith. That is the key to success in our program, in this life, and the beyond. ●

# Sponsorship's Hidden Value



## Three ways working with sponsees strengthens recovery

BY MIKE K.

I had been in twelve-step recovery for many years and had worked the steps with a sponsor in another program when I finally got honest enough to admit that my sexuality was a twisted wreck and decided that I had to do something about it. I came to SAA with serious self-image issues, including the idea that I had nothing of value in terms of recovery to offer anyone else. Why would I even consider sponsoring someone?

Still, like so many people coming in from other fellowships, I thought of myself as a twelve-step expert. I didn't need a sponsor. However, sobriety eluded me. After struggling with the program for some time, my honesty and humility increased, and I became willing to share vulnerably with others about how I was doing. I worked the steps with a co-sponsor and at retreats. One day, I realized that I was sober, and was in the midst of an ongoing spiritual awakening.

But still I didn't have a sponsor. Although I had worked the steps with a spon-

sor in another program, that particular relationship had ended painfully and badly, contributing to my reluctance to get a sponsor in SAA. Because I have such difficulties in my relationships involving authority, including one with a sponsor, being a sponsee was difficult, and I didn't even want to attempt to sponsor anyone else.

However, I did start getting involved with service work, and first one, then another person asked me to sponsor them.

At first, I really struggled with how to help my sponsees work the steps, because my own approach to them had been somewhat erratic and disorganized up to that point in this program. Because I was afraid to reach out and ask for help from others about how to sponsor my sponsees, I found it difficult to develop a plan for sponsoring them. In my codependence, I struggled with putting a particular approach out to them strongly. I was recovering, so I could just share that, right?

Wrong.

One sponsee relapsed and quit the program, despite my best, desperate efforts. Another got frustrated with my style. I got discouraged and thought "See, I'm not the perfect sponsor, so I just can't do this."

In time though, I learned from both situations. I learned from the sponsee

who relapsed that I can't get or keep anyone sober or in the program.

The sponsee who was frustrated had been working a good program in another fellowship, and taught me how to sponsor her. I had experience, strength and hope, and could offer support, but I needed to learn how to help someone work the steps.

What we did was start reading through the Green Book, discussing each paragraph, each sharing from our experience, strength and hope. I asked questions about the points raised in the book. By doing this, I was actually able to help my sponsee work the steps and grow spiritually. Not coincidentally, she was also able to weather some particularly rough patches with her sobriety intact.

She also gave a formal First Step presentation, did a column-based Fourth Step and shared it with me, which in turn helped her come up with a good Step Six list of character defects, and so on through the other steps.

I gained three key lessons from that experience:

- 1.** I gained a model for helping sponsees connect with the steps and my experience, strength, and hope. It really works! There are other things I do, but this is the backbone.

- 2.** I learned that, surprisingly enough, I actually had something to

offer someone in terms of guidance with the Steps. It was a tremendous boost to my self-confidence and self-acceptance.

**3.** I had to make progress with my self-centered fear and codependence to be able to work with this sponsee.

Not long after, the relapsing sponsee came back, and was able to dig much deeper into the steps. He did some work using outside material, and we did some worksheets, lists, etc. and read from the Green Book about the various steps. Through that process, I went from feeling dismayed and helpless to being thrilled to see, and even better, be a participant in his spiritual awakening. I wouldn't have missed that for the world!

Both sponsees are starting to be of service, and are now working with their own sponsees. These situations are deeply satisfying to me personally. I have grand sponsees, and some of them are doing well!

Finally, as I have worked through the Steps with these and now with other sponsees, I have been able to gain intuition on what the unique needs of each sponsee are at the moment.

I have also gained a much deeper understanding of the steps, how they work, fit together, the role surrender plays in a successful program, and what surrender does and doesn't look like.

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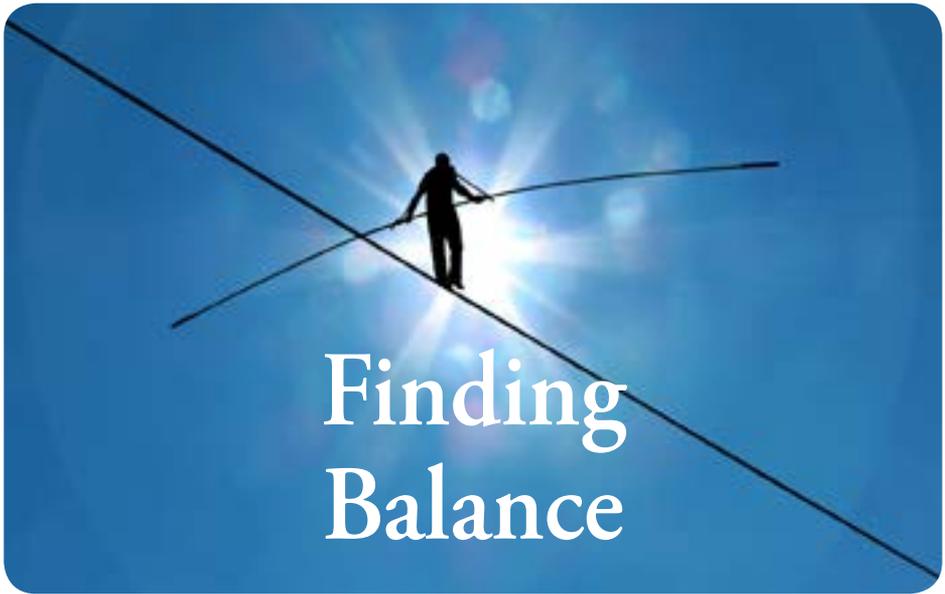
**Through the process of sponsorship, I went from feeling dismayed and helpless to being thrilled to see, and even better, be a participant in, my sponsee's spiritual awakening. I wouldn't have missed that for the world!**

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Often, my sponsees have acted like mirrors to let me see where my own program is weak and needs work.

All this and more have been my gifts from being a sponsor. Far more than I could ever have imagined! As it says on page 75 of *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, "The paradox is that service helps us to stay sexually sober ourselves, regardless of the benefit that others may receive from us."

For me, this is because I have had to grow to be able to sponsor others, learn and work the steps better myself, and connect deeply to my fellow addicts to be of service to them. I'm so glad people asked me to sponsor them, and that I decided to give it a try. I would like to encourage others who are hesitating to give sponsorship a try too. ●



# Finding Balance

## Two fatal flaws that led to repeated slips — and how to fix them

BY BRIAN H.

**I**t is rare indeed to have someone enter our program and not have at least a few slips along the way. Why is this true? I was not at a bottom when I got into the program. Before I began attending meetings in 1989, there was no program that I had ever heard about and if I had heard of one before that I would have gone.

I hated my addiction and was eager to stop my acting out behaviors. I went into recovery like a race horse and yet ten years later, I was still having periodic slips. I have since gone deep into myself to figure out why it is a person who wants recovery with all their heart sometimes has a tough time getting it.

Here are a couple of reasons that I figured out about myself. My hope is that these insights will help others who have the same issues. I had two-character defects that interfered with my First Step.

**1. Dishonesty.** I was (and am still prone to be) a liar. Getting totally honest

with anyone, or trusting anyone – sorry, can't do it (at least on my own). Lying and not trusting were self-defense mechanisms that were burned into my sub-conscious. Whenever I am backed into a corner, I still reach turn to those defects of character.

**2. Unreliability.** I was un-trustworthy (still a battle for me). If I became trustworthy I would become vulnerable to that person and vulnerability equals pain. So, to keep my precious wife, my kids, my employers and friends from being able to trust me I would always arrive late. I sub-consciously wanted them to think “we can't trust that guy.” I did not want anyone to get too close. My early childhood trauma said that I had to be in control at all times and that trusting people (especially the ones who say they love you) will result in pain.

When I meet with a new-comer, I now talk about the meaning and importance of total honesty — we go over the pre-amble of “How It Works” from *Alcoholics Anonymous*, and together, we look at all the absolutes. We spend time on what it means to have “rigorous honesty”, be “fearless and thorough,” and to “let go absolutely.”

Truth means: not lying, not giving me half the story and not embellishing it either. I just might be the first person he can be totally open with and if that happens there is a hope big-time.

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**I have gone deep into myself to figure out why it is a person who wants to recover with all their heart sometimes has a tough time getting recovery.**

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One final comment: How should a person feel after a slip? I hear some at the meetings counseling the person who slipped to “not feel bad about it.” In my opinion that's the wrong answer!

If I did not feel bad about my slips, I would not need the program in the first place. We are supposed to feel bad! True, we no longer need to feel shame, but we are supposed to feel guilt. Shame is about who you are. Guilt is about what you have done — big difference!

The root cause of slips is simple for those of us who are SAA members. It's not the behavior — it is not “I mistakenly got off the freeway”, or “I was home alone” or “I was away on business” — these are all symptoms of the real cause.

The cause? I didn't work my program. Our program really is easy if you work it hard, but it is impossible if you work it easy. ●

# Meeting Magic



**Our common solution erases our differences**

BY BRUCE MC

**I**t is always so amazing to look around a room of recovering sex addicts, noticing how different we all are, yet knowing we all share the same affliction. When we hear each other's stories, we find solace and comfort even when our own issues may be somewhat different. What is that all about? How can we receive so much from people who are so different?

I travel some, so I find myself in meetings in different parts of the country. I am often amazed at how similar — and different — those meetings can be. The Twelve Steps readings are always constant. So much of what I hear in my home group exists in the other groups as well. There is such comfort in that.

But there are differences as well.

I remember being in a meeting out of town and when the phrase, “We are not saints” was read, I chimed in (out loud), “What’s the point?” Turns out that in that particular meeting, they did not use this responsive statement as part of their routine. Everyone looked at me with sideways glances and the reader went on with, “The point is we strive for progress, not perfection.”

Oops. I explained how that response was part of my home group and apologized for interfering with their routine. However, some months later I was in town again and attended the same meeting. When we

got to that point of the reading, everyone said, “What’s the point?” How fun is that?

Some meetings give members little time to check in, opting to only state your name, period. Others allow members to state their name and their months in recovery and/or length of sobriety. Some, like my group, allow each member to check in with an overview of their past week, good and bad, and report where we are at the moment. This takes time, but is so helpful and rewarding. It helps each of us cleanse our spirit and provides incredible insight into how other addicts function.

And look at all the different kinds of people sharing: young-old, large-small, white-brown-black, wealthy-destitute, professionals-blue collar workers, educated-not, male-female (in some groups), straight-other, working hard-sluffing off, successful-struggling, etc. We are all so different in our private, individual lives, yet so connected in our addiction.

So, how does it happen that every single time I leave a meeting I feel better, refreshed, emboldened to work as hard as necessary to stay sober?

It is simply magic; the magic of recovery in action. I thank my lucky stars that I have found SAA. ●

## Recovery Rag

By Laura T.

*I could languish over  
Thermopylae  
then throw myself  
into the sea  
but I won't do it  
I'm so glad I  
washed the dishes  
and my teeth last night  
before I hit the bed  
Bad habits sneak in  
so easily  
the self-pity  
the paralysis  
the disgust  
like a lifelong practice  
of apathy  
Now I try  
not to give up  
put one foot forward  
then trudge  
make a phone call  
finish the novel  
open up the window  
greet the day  
then remind myself  
one more time  
that I'm worth it*

# DEAR WILL

## The Difference Between Sobriety and Abstinence

BY WILL

**In SAA, sobriety  
does not mean  
complete sexual  
abstinence,  
although  
members can  
choose temporary  
or permanent  
abstinence.**

Dear Will,

I hear the word “abstinence” a lot in meetings. Frankly, Will, that word scares me. I know I don’t want to go back to what I was doing for all these many years, but I don’t even want to think about the idea of abstaining from sex for the rest of my life. Can you offer me any hope? Do I need to become a monk?

**Still Trying to Overcome the Past**

Dear STOP,

No, you don’t have to become a monk. The short answer to your question can be found at the top of page 9 of the booklet Getting Started in Sex Addicts Anonymous: “For many members of SAA, abstinence means the same thing as sexual sobriety.” Now that brings us to another word possibly fear-laden word: “sobriety.” So let’s see what’s behind that word.

There are several twelve-step programs where sobriety means total and complete literal abstinence. “If I indulge in this or that substance or activity, I start counting my sobriety over.”

However, in SAA, sobriety does not mean complete sexual abstinence, although members can choose temporary or permanent abstinence. I don’t think this is what you want.

How do you know what counts as sexual sobriety, if it is not complete abstinence? Unlike the situation in some twelve-step programs, one can make that determination oneself — and with the help of a sponsor.

The second part of the answer, STOP, involves

coming up with a way of determining what constitutes sobriety. I have the option of doing it in several ways. The way I first did it was to make a list of all of the things I wanted to avoid, and call all of them acting out. This did not work out too well. For one example, I called looking into the window of the car next to me acting out. This alone was good for twenty acting-out behaviors a night. The other disadvantage to this way of defining “sobriety” was that the first time I did it, I was already in a position of having acted out, so I was “free,” so to speak, to do whatever I wanted for the rest of the night. In other words, I was setting myself up for failure, night after night.

“So,” you ask, “what is a better way of defining sobriety?” Well, some very smart person in SAA came up with such a way, and this is the three circles. I draw three circles, one inside the next. In the inner circle I write down the behaviors that I definitely consider acting out, the ones I am committing to avoid. In the middle circle, I place those activities that can often lead me to the inner circle behaviors that I have already defined. Finally, in the outer circle, I place those activities that I consider healthy, that now take the place in my life of activities that I previously engaged in. They could be things I used to do when I was younger but gave up on, things I al-



ways wanted to try but never did, and so forth. Am I allowed to put healthy sexuality in the outer circle? I will likely have to work with my sponsor about what is healthy, but yes! So that right there tells me that I can be sober or abstinent, and still have sex in my life.

Following these new guidelines for my life, guidelines that I have determined in discussion with my sponsor, are sexual sobriety for me, and they include healthy sexuality. And I encourage you, STOP, if you haven't done so already, to get a sponsor and start putting some circles together. Once you have done so and start following them, I think it will make more sense to you how sexual sobriety or abstinence can work in your life. Good luck.

## Will

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

# STORIES OF SERVICE

## Helping Yourself by Helping Others

BY TONY M.

**Being of service has transformed my self-esteem and has been the primary factor in coming to believe that I am worthy and lovable.**

When I came into the fellowship I was desperate, I had extremely low self-esteem and didn't believe I was a worthwhile person. After defining my three circles with my sponsor, he told me service work would be vital to my recovery.

He said finding a small way to contribute in each meeting would help me stay accountable. He encouraged me to attend an intergroup meeting so I could learn more about the fellowship and how the larger group helps the addict who still suffers.

After my first meeting, I knew those people had what I wanted, and I was committed to coming back. The members of that meeting were like the Jedi Council of recovery, and I have been fortunate to be able to lean on them in my journey.

Being of service has transformed my self-esteem and has been the primary factor in coming to believe that I am worthy and lovable. I know service has made me willing to take a deeper dive into our literature so that I can understand how it works.

Being part of the intergroup has been the single most impactful action I have taken toward my recovery. Attending the intergroup meeting once a month and finding a place where I could fit in has exponentially accelerated my growth in the program.

Service work saved my life. I would encourage anyone to find their service calling and take action to help the still suffering sex addict. By doing so, you'll help yourself more than you can imagine.

*Stories of Service inspire others to be of service. Send your 250-300-word story to [toc@saa-recovery.org](mailto:toc@saa-recovery.org).*

# FROM THE BOARD

## Use Matching Donations to Help SAA

BY PAUL M., OUTGOING  
BOARD CHAIR

**As long as the  
money matches  
my donation, or  
gets donated in  
my name, it aligns  
with the Seventh  
Tradition.**

I used to think that the Seventh Tradition meant I could not use matching donation services to donate to the ISO of SAA. Every SAA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions. But I was wrong. As long as the money matches my donation, or gets donated in my name, it does align with the Seventh Tradition.

For example, my company has a matching donation fund, so every year I can tell them how much I donated to the ISO of SAA and they match that amount. To do it easily, I asked the ISO office for the EIN (Federal Employer Identification Number). Before I retired, I used to be able to do this on a website, but I had to send the EIN to the administrator to get the ISO in the system.

Another way to donate is to use Amazon Smile ([smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com)). You can sign up and donate to International Service Organization of SAA Inc. This takes a very small amount of your Amazon purchase and donates it to the ISO. In August of 2018, the ISO received \$90.62 from those that have signed up. But as Gus Gorman (Richard Pryor) in Superman III found out, taking ½ cent from everyone's paycheck netted him \$85,789.90. So, if everyone in the fellowship did it, cents can add up. And I know you do buy things on Amazon, right?

Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCDs) are another way to give. If you are over 70 ½, you can make QCD donations from your IRA. A QCD is a direct transfer of funds from your

IRA custodian, payable to a qualified charity. QCDs can be counted toward satisfying your required minimum distributions (RMDs) for the year, as long as certain rules are met.

In addition to the benefits of giving to charity, a QCD excludes the amount donated from taxable income, which is unlike regular withdrawals from an IRA. Keeping your taxable income lower may reduce the impact to certain tax credits and deductions, including Social Security and Medicare.

So, if you are in recovery and want to help the ISO of SAA with these types of donations, contact the ISO office to find out more information. There are so many projects on our wish list that cannot be accomplished due to lack of funds. I owe my life to the help of the Twelve Steps of SAA, and I never would have found out about SAA unless there was an ISO of SAA. Please donate, sign-up as a LifeLine Partner, and use these other sources to help the ISO accomplish its vision of being "... a premier global resource for recovery in support of SAA and the sex addict who still suffers."

## Letters to the Editor

Re: the article "Closing Doors" from the September-October 2018 issue of *The Outer Circle*: I don't think it's likely that this article will encourage healthy discussion within the fellowship. Healthy discussion requires civility, and respect for those with differing viewpoints. I don't see either of those qualities here.

The author's communication style makes a better case FOR women's meetings than it does against. If I had seen this article before I attended my first mixed-gender meeting, I might not have gone.

If SAA truly does not wish to engage in controversy, then why is its newsletter publishing such a combative article? "The path is wide enough for everyone who wishes to walk it."

**Mary H**

The "Closing Doors" article overlooks Tradition Eleven's principle of attraction rather than promotion. I was thinking about this at church, where everyone else there is black except me. Self-imposed segregation or discrimination? Naw, just folks enjoying being with others they identify with. Gender specific meetings may operate on a similar principle of attraction. The lone bird who sees a flock of his or her own kind may join in whereas the isolated who sees only "strangers" may not. Then too, some don't feel comfortable at a meeting where they stick out like a sore thumb. Our public relation policy is based on attraction, not promotion, and I'm okay with that.

**Harvey A**

# ISO NEWS

## Area Formation Committee Proposes Draft Areas at Conference

The Area Formation Committee presented a map and list of proposed areas at the 2018 Delegate Conference. The maps (and lists) include the areas formally proposed by groups and those “formed” by the ACC based on communications with members and groups and consideration of other background factors. To see the complete report, go to the service website, [saa-iso.org](http://saa-iso.org). Write to [info@saa-recovery.org](mailto:info@saa-recovery.org) for username and password.



Area	Area Name	Count	Area	Area Name	Count
1	US-S Florida	27	26	US-Iowa & S Minnesota	32
2	US-N Florida	38	27	US-N Dakota, S Dakota & Nebraska	8
3	US-Georgia*	19	28	US-Dallas/Forth Worth*	65
4	US-Florida*	20	29	US-Houston & SE Texas*	66
5	US-Charlotte Metro*	22	30	US-Central & W Texas	36
6	US-E North Carolina*	32	31	US-S Arizona & S New Mexico	26
7	US-Virginia	27	32	US-I-40 Desert Area*	77
8	US-SW DC & N Virginia*	22	33	US-Colorado*	26
9	US-NE DC, Maryland & Delaware*	19	34	US-Idaho, Montana & Wyoming	26
10	US-Pennsylvania & New Jersey	28	35	US-Nevada & Utah	12
11	US-New York City	47	36	US-Los Angeles	64
12	US-New England and SE Canada	35	37	US-S California	24
13	US-Upstate New York*	32	38	US-Orange County	31
14	US-Ohio & West Virginia	49	39	US-Central California	34
15	US-Lower Michigan	42	40	US-Southern Bay	33
16	US-Indiana*	43	41	US-Northern Bay	29
17	US-Kentucky	18	42	US-N California	29
18	US-Tennessee & W North Carolina	25	43	US-Oregon	41
19	US-Alabama & NW Florida*	28	44	US-Great Northwest*	20
20	US-Louisiana & Mississippi	32	45	US-Seattle-Tacoma*	21
21	US-Arkansas, Oklahoma & Texas panhandle	15	46	US-Hawaii	5
22	US-Kansas & Missouri	19	47	Canada-British Columbia & Yukon Territory*	26
23	US-Illinois	35	48	Canada-Alberta, Saskatchewan & Manitoba	25
24	US-Wisconsin & Upper Michigan	25	49	Canada-Ontario & Quebec	26
25	US-Gopher*	53	50	Spanish Language	58

## Board Reviews Important 2018 Actions

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*The following is an excerpt from the ISO Board of Trustees' 2018 Annual Report to the Delegates:* The Board has been very busy this year. We continue to support the Conference Steering Committee (CSC) and Conference Committees as we move to our new area-based organizational structure. The areas will be an intermediate level of service and allow the local fellowship to have a greater voice in the fellowship. The Board, of course, retains legal and fiduciary responsibility for the ISO. The Literature Committee will retain responsibility for the content of SAA literature.

One important Board activity this past year was its review of our executive director's performance and suggestions for improvement. He is doing a fine job and works very hard on behalf of the ISO. He has decided to retire, and an Executive Director Search Committee has been formed. His replacement may be selected by the time of the conference.

I would like to reiterate a couple of motions passed by the board that will impact the fellowship. In September 2014, the Board voted to hold the annual meeting of the ISO Conference separate from the ISO convention. In October 2015, the Board voted to hold the annual meeting of the Conference annually in Houston, TX, on the third weekend in October commencing with October 19 - 20, 2018. Most people on a survey opted for a two-day conference. In May of 2017, the Board decided to hold a two-day conference on the second weekend in October for the 2018 and 2019 conferences instead of the third weekend.

Since its inception, the International Service Organization, in accordance with its bylaws, has conducted an ISO Annual Conference and an ISO convention. These events have been held during the same approximate time frame in a location that serves as a host facility. While this practice served a practical purpose for the fellowship of SAA and the International Service Organization for many years, it has become abundantly clear that there is not sufficient time available in one long weekend for both gatherings. The events of the annual convention intrude upon the time available for members to efficiently attend both events while meeting the demands of the important business that needs to be addressed at the annual conference.

# ISO NEWS

Having the annual meeting of the Conference in the home city of the ISO office will facilitate the ability of the ISO office to plan and support the event and will save money and time for the conduct of the event. Personally, I was grateful for the opportunity to attend many workshops this year unlike past conventions.

The Board maintained its Long-Range Convention Planning committee that has formalized and educated interested parties about the process by which cities may be encouraged to host our annual convention. Since we now have conventions scheduled through 2021, the Long-Range Convention Planning committee is in hiatus. If your local fellowship would like to host a convention, please check out the page on the service website: *saa-iso.org*.

Other Board activities over the past service year include:

- » Increased per issue pay for *The Outer Circle* editor from \$500 per issue to \$1,000 per issue.
- » Approved a proposal from the Columbus team to hold the 2020 convention. The 2021 convention will be held in Atlanta, Georgia.
- » Oversaw the operation and performance of twenty board committees, including General Outreach and Information Systems & Online Presence (ISOP-Com).
- » Approved a motion that the ISO office have an audit of the finances every four years and a financial review all other years.
- » Reviewed and approved the ISO's 2017-2018 budget.
- » Approved funds for the Program Manager of Public Information and Cooperation with the Professional Community to attend several professional conferences.
- » Developed new strategic goals and posted them on the service website.

## **Committee Aims to Grow LifeLine Giving to \$50,000 Per Month**

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At the 31st Annual International Convention of the ISO of SAA, Inc., it was announced that the ISO was launching a new partnership with its members to achieve an unprecedented \$50,000 per month in sustained giving.

In June 2018, the ISO achieved and exceeded the \$20,000 per month goal,

# ISO NEWS

which was set back in 2012. With a successful effort in Houston by ISO staff member, Phillip B. who heads up Cooperation with the Professional Community and Outreach for the ISO and who is himself a member of the ISO Board's Seventh Tradition Committee, SAA has accomplished what no other 'S' fellowship has been able to achieve to date – a mechanism by which SAA fellowship members, regardless of where they are located, are able to commit to the ongoing and sustained financial wellness of their growing International fellowship.

With this \$240,000 in annualized giving that the ISO Board and staff can rely upon, long-range planning and program development can take on dimensions that were previously not possible.

Joe H., the ISO's Executive Director had this to say about the LifeLine Partner Program's success to date, "There is no doubt that LifeLines have transformed the ISO's ability to provide an unprecedented level of support to SAA groups who are carrying the message of recovery to more people in more places than ever before."

But the growth and challenges SAA faces in the future are greater than ever. Since 2012, the ISO has seen SAA's growth average more than a hundred new meetings a year. With each piece of literature that's translated and made available, the demand on staff time and resources only grows. More and more SAA groups are conducting Public Information (PI) or Cooperation with the Professional Community (CPC) projects to make SAA's presence and message known and need ISO support. The ISO Board and SAA's Conference have set new goals and direction for SAA with the structure that continues to take shape with the formation of new Areas leading our fellowship into a future that seems to expand both in the U.S. and beyond.

The Seventh Tradition Committee recognizes the LifeLine2020 goal to achieve \$50,000 per month is a bold goal, reflecting not only the Board's commitment to achieve continued financial health for SAA, but also to allow all of us (both Board, staff and the Conference) to take bold steps in facing the many challenges ahead. We invite you to be a part of this dynamic new vision to ensure that we have the resources to reach still suffering sex addicts wherever they may be.

Becoming a LifeLine Partner is fast, easy and secure using your credit or debit card, with the ISO automatically making your regular monthly contribution of \$5, \$10, \$25, \$50 or even \$100 each month on an agreed upon date. Your

# ISO NEWS

contribution continues automatically until you stop it. Your monthly contribution appears simply as “IN \*INTERNATIONAL SERVICE713-8694902 TX” on your monthly bank or credit card statement. It is simple as that, but like we often here in the rooms, “our program is simple, but it is not easy.” You have to choose to be in action and be a part of the future of SAA’s mission to serve still suffering sex addict wherever they may be found.

Won’t you become a LifeLine Partner today?

**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](mailto: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](mailto:info@saa-recovery.org)  
The Outer Circle e-mail: [toc@saa-recovery.org](mailto:toc@saa-recovery.org)  
Website: [www.saa-recovery.org](http://www.saa-recovery.org)

## The Outer Circle

Editor: Gary T.: [toc@saa-recovery.org](mailto:toc@saa-recovery.org)

## Office Staff

Executive Director: Joe H.: [director@saa-iso.net](mailto:director@saa-iso.net)  
Associate Director: Chris E.: [chrisf@saa-iso.net](mailto:chrisf@saa-iso.net)  
Information Technician, Prisoner Outreach: Jonathan C.: [webmaster@saa-recovery.org](mailto:webmaster@saa-recovery.org); [outreach@saa-recovery.org](mailto:outreach@saa-recovery.org)  
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Program Manager of Public Information, Cooperation with the Professional Community, and 7th Tradition : Phillip B.: [phillipb@saa-iso.net](mailto:phillipb@saa-iso.net)  
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Administrative Assistant: Harvey A. [harveya@saa-iso.net](mailto:harveya@saa-iso.net)  
Publications Manager: Cody S. [codys@saa-iso.net](mailto: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](mailto:oochair@saa-recovery.org).

## Board of Trustees and Literature Committee

### Intermountain

Board: Bob H.; Alternate: Vacant  
[BoardIM@saa-recovery.org](mailto:BoardIM@saa-recovery.org)

### North Central

Board: Dawn S.; Alternate: Thea L.  
[BoardNC@saa-recovery.org](mailto:BoardNC@saa-recovery.org)

### Northeast

LitCom: Don R.; Alternate: Valerie G.  
[LitComNE@saa-litcom.org](mailto:LitComNE@saa-litcom.org)

### Southeast

LitCom: Garrett I. (Chair); [LitComSE@saa-litcom.org](mailto:LitComSE@saa-litcom.org)  
*org*

### At Large

Board: Lisa S.; Bob L. (Chair); Mike L.; Stephen N.; Carl D.; Les J.; Mike S.; Richard N.; Wayne B.  
[BoardAL@saa-recovery.org](mailto:BoardAL@saa-recovery.org)  
LitCom: Doug S.; Mike B.; Robbie H.; David M.; Steven P.; Bruce Mc.; Byard B.; Carol R.; Charlie K.; Deb W.; Gary T. (*The Outer Circle* editor)  
[LitComAL@saa-litcom.org](mailto: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](mailto: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.