

# THE OUTER CIRCLE

## **Twelfth Step Wake Up Call**

**What it really means to 'practice these principles in all our life'**



### **PLUS**

**Taking Back the Web**

**Step Two's Foundation**

**Meditation Book Review**

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.

**March - April 2019**

# CONTENTS

## Columns

- 4 From the Editor
- 5 From the Director
- 6 Dear Grace
- 8 Living in Sobriety
- 20 Dear Will
- 22 Stories of Service
- 24 From the Board

## Departments

- 2 TOC Mission
- 26 ISO News
- 30 Calendar
- 30 Contact ISO
- 31 Submissions
- 32 Twelve Steps

## Shorts

- 19 Tenth Step Inventory
- 23 Shadow of Former Self

## Articles



- 10 **Twelfth-Step Wake Up Call**  
*What it really means to 'practice these principles in all our life'*



- 13 **Taking Back the Internet**  
*New service turns the Web into a recovery tool*



- 16 **Laying the Foundation**  
*How to make Step Two the bedrock of faith and hope*



- 18 **Voices of Recovery**  
*Comparing SAA's new daily meditation books to other readers*

# FROM THE EDITOR

## Are You Working the Traditions?

BY GARY T.

**We must start learning how to 'Twelve-Step' and reconsider notions of attraction vs. promotion that hold us back.**

In SAA, the Twelve Traditions can be like the fine print at the bottom of a bank ad that explains all the terms and conditions. Many of us are simply trying to stay sober and work the steps. But if our fellowship is to continue growing — and if we are all to find solid sobriety — we must start working the traditions just as we work the steps.

That was the message the ISO's Phillip B. presented to our group recently, and his words are still reverberating among our members. Looking at how Alcoholics Anonymous used the traditions to both help members achieve a spiritual awakening and turn AA into a household name, Phillip urged us to start learning how to "Twelve-Step" and reconsider notions of attraction vs. promotion that hold many back from doing more to reach still suffering sex addicts.

That's because, for many of us, "promotion" has been conflated with advertising, hobbling our most vital tools for carrying the message — billboards, TV, radio, newspapers, and the like. But it's not the medium, it's the message that determines whether we're following Tradition Eleven. Additionally, we're too focused on reaching addicts, rather than partnering with allies — therapists, parole officers, treatment centers, and the like. That's the formula AA used to transform alcoholism from a shameful moral failure into a spiritual condition whose treatment is understood and championed.

How can SAA do the same? Phillip and the ISO can not only help guide the way, but also offer a number of tools to get your group started. So reach out to the ISO and find out what you can do to change how you carry the message — and strengthen your own recovery in the process.

# FROM THE DIRECTOR

## **New Executive Director Lays Out New Vision**

**BY PAUL M.**

**We have started  
to upload things  
to YouTube  
and we plan  
to start a more  
comprehensive  
online service this  
year.**

As Joe mentioned in his last article, he retired on Feb 28th. I am now the Executive Director of the ISO. It is bittersweet saying goodbye to Joe, but I hope we will see him in the future in a different role in service.

I am starting a new chapter in my life. SAA gave me the last chapter fourteen years ago when I first walked into these rooms. The recovery I found was a great gift from the fellowship and my Higher Power. I never could have done that on my own. Now, after a short retirement, I am going back into the work force. I have served as a volunteer for many years, but now I take on a new role in service to you.

We have already started some changes. We are moving to using Zoom as our communication service for our committees so they can be more connected. We have started to upload things to YouTube and we plan to start a more comprehensive online service in this year. This will be a place we can connect on many levels; including access to multimedia recovery material, forums for helping each other, more collaborative areas to find recovery and reach out to the suffering addict. Due to your generous donations we will be adding staff to the office this year to help in this effort. Look for more information on this service in the future editions of *The Outer Circle*.

Again, I want to thank the Board of Trustees for selecting me as the new Executive Director. I hope I can be as effective as Joe has been over the last ten years. I hope the volunteers will support me in the coming years and I look forward to a bright future where we reach more sex addicts all over the world.

So please continue to support the ISO so we can accomplish all the things we hope to do. Thank you for the opportunity to serve.

# DEAR GRACE

## Liven up Recovery with Fresh Readings, Resources

BY WOMEN'S  
OUTREACH COMMITTEE

We're happy  
to announce  
we have three  
new pieces of  
literature!

Dear Grace,

I feel stuck reading the same things over and over. Do you have any favorite readings that have helped in your recovery?

Stuck

Dear Stuck,

There certainly is some repetition in the material we read, especially if you attend SAA meetings where the same things are read at the beginning and end of each meeting. (Hint: if you try a new, additional meeting, you may hear different readings, new voices, and new shares!) Although repetition can sometimes feel tiresome, we invite you to remember the first meeting you attended. How did you feel when you first heard words such as, "Our addiction nearly destroyed our lives, but we found recovery through the program of Sex Addicts Anonymous"? (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 1)

Keep in mind that when we attend meetings, we are there to fulfill our primary purpose to "carry the message of recovery to the sex addict who still suffers" (Tradition Five). Perhaps there is someone at the meeting who is hearing the reading for the very first time. Pondering the meaning of those words as they're read, you can reflect on the importance of program principles and assess how they are working in your life. Perhaps this will bring something to mind which you could share with newcomers.

Many of us have also found that after hearing or reading something many times, one day we finally "get it." We may not have been ready to take it in and accept it until that very moment. So, when you find yourself thinking something you read or hear

at a meeting has passed its expiration date, you may gain some small treasures by becoming open to receiving them.

As far as SAA literature as a whole, we're happy to announce that we have three new pieces of literature! One is the *Voices of Recovery* meditation book, written entirely by members of our fellowship, which is now complete with 366 daily readings. Since it is newly-minted, perhaps you will not have the sense of "same-old, same-old" that you have been feeling. Each day will bring a new daily meditation to savor and help you through recovery.

We also have two new pamphlets, one called "Recommitting to Recovery" and another entitled "Hope of Recovery." We also suggest reading pamphlets that address specific topics, even if you feel they don't apply to you. You might be surprised by the insights and suggestions found in pamphlets you previously overlooked. You can read all SAA literature online at [saa-recovery.org/literature](http://saa-recovery.org/literature), or you or your home group could call the ISO office at 1-800-477-8191 to purchase pamphlets and booklets.

For a steady supply of fresh literature, don't forget this newsletter! Every bi-monthly issue of *The Outer Circle* has new articles written by members of our fellowship. It can be delivered automatically to your email, or a printed copy

can be mailed to you or your group. To request a copy, either electronic or printed, email the ISO at [info@saa-recovery.org](mailto:info@saa-recovery.org) or call the ISO office. Current and past editions can also be read online at [saa-recovery.org/news-events/saa-newsletter](http://saa-recovery.org/news-events/saa-newsletter). Articles from *The Outer Circle* make great readings at meetings. You can write and submit something to the newsletter, too. Submission guidelines can be found on the last page of each edition, or online at the address above.

As an experienced member of the fellowship, you can play a vital role in bringing readings to your meeting, perhaps selecting topics which haven't been read before (or at least not recently). May you find encouragement and healing as you read the experience, strength, and hope of SAA members and share it with others.

### **Blessings in your recovery!**

#### **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](mailto:grace@saa-women.org)) receives. \*Names have been changed to protect anonymity.*

# LIVING IN SOBRIETY

## Desperation Lead to a New Life

BY EZEKIEL C.

**I took the one  
action that  
saved my life: I  
surrendered every  
thing I thought I  
knew.**

Today, I am free! I have recovered the power of choice. I have renewed confidence and self-esteem, and above all, my abstinence is effortless. There are no words to express the gratitude I have. It has now been eight years since the last time I acted out.

It might seem cliché, but I literally owe my life to this program. In my acting out, I destroyed many relationships, exposed myself to sexually transmitted infections, alienated healthy friendships, stalled my career, placed my life at risk, and worst of all, crushed my self-esteem. The saddest part was that the outlook was becoming darker as the days and months passed by.

I always considered myself independent, successful — able to handle every aspect of life. After giving everything I had to stop my acting out and failing on multiple occasions, I started coming to the rooms and took the *one* action that saved my life: I surrendered everything I thought I knew. I did not question any suggestion and followed diligently what my sponsor and others in the program proposed. Whatever consideration I was given, I would go above and beyond. I was carrying one of the most beautiful gifts that I see in newcomers — desperation! My focus from day one was to work the Twelve Steps. I completed them, however imperfectly, within the first four months. I began to see improvements in my life and I started sponsoring others who wanted what I had.

With the help of my Higher Power, I have stayed away from my inner circle for all these years. I sponsor more than a dozen sponsees, continue to go to five meetings a week, and have a fulfilling relationship with my partner who has stayed by my side. I am now thriving in my career and I've been promoted beyond anything I ever thought possible. To top it all off, I was recently recognized at work for my values, was able to re-establish a healthy relationship with my family (who



actively supports my recovery), and I am witnessing a fellowship grow and prosper.

One of the most powerful tools I use today is writing a short morning guidance and a nightly review in which I answer some questions. One of the questions is, “Have I kept any secrets?” To help me be accountable, I share both exercises with my sponsor every day. Nothing is better at preventing me from going into isolation. This is how I work Steps Ten and Eleven. Some days I’m in bed when I remember that I did not do my evening review, and many times I think, “It’s okay if I don’t do it tonight. It won’t kill me.” As soon as I hear that voice, I jump into action and write my evening review.

Today, I work to free myself from character defects and to live a life based on selflessness instead of selfishness, honesty instead of dishonesty, and forgiveness instead of resentment. Currently, my effort has been to live in the opposite of fear, which is faith. For many years, I thought the opposite of fear was courage or valor. Now, I know courage is not the absence of fear but having fear and walking through it.

I have noticed that my assets continue to grow with each passing day. Though others may cause me harm and I may sometimes get angry, I have learned to let go and forgive. I understand that dishonesty can hurt me as much it can hurt other people. My grandfather used to say, “The truth hurts, but lies poison.”

For the longest time, I thought the poison was something that I was administering to the person I was lying to. In reality, I was hurting them — and my own spirit.

I used to strive for perfection, and that ‘quality’ was to be my Achilles’ heel in this program. It took me a few months to come up with a twist or loophole that would satisfy my desire for perfection. In order to work this program perfectly, there had to be imperfection. This simple thought is something that has carried me past the difficult times when I’ve fallen short of my ideals.

Lastly, working with others is the highlight of my day. I learn to explore intimacy on a completely different level — where honesty, love, and unselfishness are present. I have learned to move away from looking to control someone’s life and simply be a GPS. I try to give the best possible directions, based on my own experiences, that lead me to serenity. The guidance is not always followed by my sponsees, but I keep re-routing if they are willing to continue working the steps. I know that if they do, they will ultimately experience the miracles of the program and the wonderful gifts that this new life has to offer.

*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).*

# The Twelfth Step Wake Up Call



## What it really means to ‘practice these principals in our life’

BY SEAN C.

**A**

t the outset of 2018, I finished my first walk through the Twelve Steps for my sex and love addiction. My then-sponsor challenged me with the last of his written “quizzes” coinciding with the Steps. The question posed to me was: “What is a spiritual awakening for me? What have I experienced as a result of working the Twelve Steps?”

As I was in the Twelfth Step and mulling what the Steps’ journey meant to me, there was a startling cosmic serendipity at play as I wrote the answer to my Twelfth Step questions. In short, my life’s circumstances dictated that I utilize every single recovery tool learned on the journey in order to stay sane and sexually sober. My awakening was happening as I was tasked to share on my Twelfth Step.

The awakening I was experiencing was a necessary spiritual and emotional response to my life’s stressors in sobriety. Now that I was feeling all my feelings, and not denying them via acting out, the need to rely on all my spiritual assets was of particular importance.

Reaching the Twelfth Step was an amazing and relieving milestone. It took me about nine years to work Steps One through Twelve.

During that time, it was revealed to me that one of my most-persistent character defects is mismanagement of finances. As I go through the Steps a second time these next few years, I will definitely explore that dysfunction more deeply. I want to own my part in the persistent cycle of income scarcity and debt (and yes, I have seriously thought about joining another recovery group around that issue). And I want to make changes to my fiscal station more aligned with my recovery work and experience.

At the time of working on the final step, I had just come back from an exhaustive two-month search for out-of-state work. I had been barely getting by financially since November of 2017. I was falling further behind on child support and other bills, and I was relying on family generosity, for which I was simultaneously grateful and chagrined.

Come February of 2018, I was suffering sleep deprivation, anxiety, and depression. But I kept moving forward, the best I could. And reaching the final step while going through that tension sort of blew my mind, in a good way.

As I reviewed where I'd been, how I got to where I was, and what changed, I was awakened because I

also had to carefully consider what was still difficult, what was still stubbornly unaltered in my spirit and my actions, and how to move to a better, more solvent place. I was experiencing how to “practice these principles in my life,” just as the Twelfth Step asks me to do.

As such, the Twelfth Step is a culmination of all the Steps. Over the years, I had put to good use the various tools and behaviors I'd learned: taking stock of a day; making immediate amends; surrendering my addiction over and over.

But as I worked Step Twelve, I realized I'd have to take its very instructiveness and put it into rigorous effect every day, every hour, sometimes every minute — in order to surmount my financial issues with my sanity and sobriety intact. My life in recovery was presenting me with an amazing, real-time, teachable moment.

Years ago, my money-related duress would have cowed me and sent me running to pornography and deception like any “good” addict. And so, again, it was kind of awesome that I found a certain vigor and relief in finishing the Steps just then.

The Twelfth Step encourages me to address my life's very real concerns beyond my addiction. As a result of living the Twelfth Step at the same time I was participating in it, I revamped my daily routine. I turned to meditation even more than I had been; I managed my sleep schedule; I took appropriate

countermeasures when waking with my ego talking loudly and negatively to me.

I made the Third Step Prayer my go-to mantra. I'd walk my dog in the morning and repeat the prayer over and over and breathe as it soothed my anxieties. I improved my diet and returned to regular exercise. And I've relied on my program calls and texts for feedback or to vent.

My finances are still an on-going concern, but I can countervail that stress by recalling my assets and blessings, too. I have a roof over my head, food in the fridge, and a fantastic relationship with my kids. I'm sober, having recently celebrated my tenth anniversary. And I have the God of my understanding whose overarching philosophy is love.

The awakening I was charged with articulating to my sponsor reminded me to stay present. My ego, my insecurities, and my fears discourage staying present and would prefer I trip on past regret or future uncertainty. Considering the stress I was under earlier this year, sometimes staying grounded in the present was really all I could do.

In its pivot toward life outside the meeting rooms, the Twelfth Step assures me that everything will be alright — not just recovery, but the practice of my life in general. The Step's awakening effects also revealed to me that sometimes, whether ten days or ten years into recovery, it takes a lot

of energy and wherewithal just to stay right here, right now. My ego wants to capitalize on that tension, on that effort. That fragile, wounded, younger part of me, which was too early exposed to pornography and abuse, still resists the truth of my blessings when the going gets tough.

And yet, as I wrote and shared my Twelfth Step almost a year ago, the universe kept repeatedly sending me the same, positive messages, in different ways and from different sources. Via personal interactions, program calls, in something I read or heard, there was and is a frequent "gospel" which I'm glad to be privy to. I liken that experience to gaining some grace. I consider receiving those messages a big part of the awakening I'm experiencing.

The Twelfth Step encourages me not only to persevere but to thrive in the present, which is rife with strength and opportunity. I can now apply all the principles I learned to accept and surrender my addiction to the other challenging facets of my life, economic or otherwise.

The Step also reminds me to hold on to hope. If I can live a healthy, spiritual life without relying on my terrible addiction, then I can work through this financial worry — along with any other challenges life brings — and ultimately alter my circumstances for the better. ●



# Taking Back the Internet

**New technology makes the web a powerful recovery tool**

*“Before recovery, the way I used the internet definitely did NOT promote healthy sexuality. Objectifying myself and others was an intimacy-killer. And I couldn’t control my internet use — it controlled me.”*

# M

BY DEB W.

any SAA members can probably relate to that sentiment from a member of the Intimacy and Sexual Avoidance (ISA) Outreach Committee. However, a growing number of us feel it’s time we “take back the internet for recovery,” as someone put it during a workshop on technology at the 2018 ISO Convention. A few years ago when a member suggested using the Zoom video platform for intimacy avoidance meetings, the ISA Outreach Committee members felt appalled and apprehensive. But finally we reluctantly agreed to test it out. We were pleasantly surprised at what a positive difference it made. We have been hosting video meetings for a few years, now — and lives are changing because of it.

Understandably, some SAA members have reacted strongly to the idea of video meetings. Many feared it would trigger desires to act out, or evoke shame or fear due to their past. Some cannot join video meetings because they have cho-

sen to stop using the internet. However, for many of us, “Living without the internet need not be a permanent necessity or solution. Once we gained a significant amount of continuous sobriety from this kind of addictive behavior and had more experience working the SAA twelve-step program, most of us found we were able to use the internet again safely” (“Sexual Sobriety and the Internet”).

Some of us were scared to be seen or preferred the invisibility of phone meetings. One member said she felt “outright dread and panic” at the thought of being on video, anticipating feeling “exposed and trapped.” Another described feeling unnerved by seeing his own face on the screen next to the others’ faces. Even some members who have attended in-person SAA meetings for years have felt anxiety in regards to video recovery meetings. For some, it seemed easier to trust members of their own community SAA groups to respect their confidentiality and anonymity rather than members from different parts of the world, even though they’re far less likely to bump into video meeting participants at the grocery store or church!

Even though many of us acted out with strangers in person or online without thinking about our anonymity or confidentiality, the vulnerability of allowing others to witness our thoughts and feelings feels threatening. However, other members — es-

pecially those from countries outside the US — were accustomed to video meetings for school or work, and they welcomed the opportunity to connect with SAA members from around the world.

Ultimately, nearly everyone who has regularly attended ISA Zoom meetings has felt changed for the better. To their great surprise, many who felt highly anxious were pleased to feel, as one person put it, “comfortable and at ease,” once the newness wore off. Nobody is excluded, since those without a working camera or internet may join by phone call.

Video participants on ISA Zoom meetings can see other participants’ faces and the first names of non-video members who have introduced themselves. For many, seeing who’s in the meeting feels safer than the blind telemeetings, and being seen is motivation to be present instead of “multitasking” during meetings.

What’s more, many of us have found that attending video meetings with participants from around the world has been extremely beneficial. Our assumptions or things we may have taken for granted have been illuminated as we listen to the experiences of SAA members from many different countries. For some of us, our narrow-mindedness, which resulted from lack of contact with SAA members beyond our own cities, is expanding and opening. We’re finding ourselves

thinking more inclusively and globally, and many of us are experiencing an increase in love for our brothers and sisters in recovery and appreciation for cultures and viewpoints different from our own.

Profound personal growth is happening, too — particularly in those who have worked the Steps together on intimacy avoidance. Some of the friendships that formed in the ISA step studies have continued beyond the conclusion of the meetings.

Working the Steps has helped us learn to trust ourselves and our Higher Power, allow ourselves to feel our emotions, speak up for ourselves or set appropriate boundaries, and such practices have established the framework for deeper connection with self and others.

Working the Steps together and seeing the same people each week, we began to share more honestly. We practiced active listening and validating each other. We bonded and connected, and began experiencing genuine intimacy.

Building on that foundation, some of us have experienced greater connection in our families and with our romantic partners. Instead of “using sex as a way to escape from reality, cope with anxiety, or deal with emotions we didn’t want to face,” we started learning to “express our affection rather than seek power and control,” by practicing “trust in an-

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**For many, seeing who’s in the meeting feels safer than the blind telemeetings, and being seen is motivation to be present instead of ‘multitasking’ during meetings.**

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other person, trust in ourselves, and faith in a Higher Power” (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, pages 70 and 72). For some of us, our step work helped us start to relax and be emotionally present during sexual experiences, allowing ourselves to be nurtured sexually. “Healthy sexuality, we have found, is a by-product of a spiritual process, not the goal or solution in and of itself. Through applying the Twelve Steps of Sex Addicts Anonymous with guidance from a sponsor, our groups and our Higher Power, sex, and relationships [are slowly taking] their rightful place in our lives” (“Recovery From Compulsive Sexual Avoidance - A Return to Intimacy”).

For more information about Intimacy and Sexual Avoidance or Zoom video meetings, email the ISA Outreach Committee at [Avoidance@saa-recovery.org](mailto:Avoidance@saa-recovery.org) ●

# Laying the Foundation



## How to make Step Two the bedrock for faith and hope

*Step Two: Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity*

BY MILTON G.

I believe Step Two is the foundation of faith and hope. But I had to break this step down into its different parts to truly come to believe. For me the first part of that undertaking is understanding what sanity actually is. Webster's Dictionary defines it this way: "The condition of being physically and mentally free from bondage of disease." Next, I asked myself, what does "came to believe" really mean? Here, all I had to do was believe in myself have faith, a little confidence, and trust in others to help me fight my addiction.

I also had to come to believe in a Power. There has to be something out there that will help me arrest my addiction. Some form of "help" that will bring order to a chaotic way of life. I found that help through prayer and participating in Sex Addicts Anonymous.

But Step Two isn't just about power, it's about a Power "greater than myself." This



Power has to come from somewhere other than my own “will power,” because that obviously didn’t work. My will power failed me at the most crucial time. I needed to recognize that my best efforts to address my addictions weren’t nearly strong enough to kill it off.

Once I accepted that Power, I could be restored. But to what? I found the answer if that this Power greater than myself returned to my pre-sex addicted life, to the life I was living prior to losing the ability to choose, a time that I still used those morals and principles that were installed in me by my parents and family.

Finally, Step Two takes me back to sanity. That’s the freedom from sex addiction and its ravages, the freedom to be able to choose how to live.

Now, thanks to Step Two, I’m living to live — not living to act out and harm myself and others. Being restored to sanity has taken years of hard work. I’m now able to see the world clearly. All I had to do was change my attitude and ideal.

Before coming to the program and working Step Two, I was lost in my insanity. For twenty-two years during the early stages of my life, I took on a life that was bigger than I was. I was completely out of control.

Today, the question is: If I’m going to be saved, who is it that will save me from my destructive behavior? My

insanity was rooted in thinking that acting out sexually was the normal way to live. I kept taking dangerous risks as if I were destined to die — until I found God and sponsors.

When I began working with my spiritual advisor and others I came to understand that my life had become unmanageable, and that I was powerless to change my foolish, pathetic behavior. Because of my ego, my frustration grew. I justified my actions, whether they were right or wrong.

There were times when I was so sick of acting out, but my ego (that justifying voice) led me back to time and again. Even a near-death experience didn’t stop me. Only by admitting to my powerlessness more than twenty years ago, seeking help from a Higher Power, and practicing the steps daily, did I come to realize that there is a better way to live and new conquests to explore.

It is through the combination of therapy, sponsorship, self-help, and especially SAA and contact with my Higher Power that I am able to enjoy a clean and sober life today, as well as a sense of “normalcy” in my life.

I constantly remind myself that, if I want my life to change, I have to change. Each positive change I make builds my self-esteem. I realize that I am different, and I’m acting differently. Thanks to the foundation I built with Step Two, I am strong enough now to face life on life’s terms. ●

## Voices of Recovery



### How SAA's new daily meditation book compares to other daily readers

BY MIKE K.

I was very excited to receive the email that *Voices of Recovery* was available for sale and can be read for free on the SAA website ([saa-recovery.org/literature](http://saa-recovery.org/literature)). It's now available in ebook form as well. I had been eagerly awaiting this book literally for years. Finally, it was here!

I must admit to having some trepidation – would it be any good? How would it compare with other other daily readers I had been reading for years? To my delight, not only was it very good, but it focused heavily on the Steps and Traditions – the heart of the SAA program.

As helpful as other meditation books are, this one focuses on the SAA program as no other. Here is a partial listing of relevant topics from the index, and the minimum number of pages each one appears on:

- » References to the Steps – 153
- » References to Sponsorship – 13
- » References to the Traditions – 32

A comparison showed that the one I had been reading had only a little more than ten percent as many references to the Steps and no references to the Traditions or sponsorship whatsoever.

There are many other helpful readings in *Voices* on prayer and meditation, powerlessness, the importance of phone calls between meetings, love, isolation, loneliness, intimacy, honesty, Higher Power, fellowship, healthy risks, healthy sexuality, shame, self-love, and many more. I felt like a kid in a candy shop while I was reading the index!

This book is SAA program-focused in a way and to a depth that other meditation books really aren't. That's understandable because it was written by us and for us, and the Literature Committee was the final arbiter of whether or not a meditation carried the SAA message. This is a completely different process and approach to commercial meditation books, and the results really show it.

It is written largely in the first person singular ("my experience, strength, and hope"), so there isn't a sense of someone "preaching" to me. The meditations are well-written and easily read. It is my hope that this book will be read at meetings and in between meetings for years to come and bring helpful perspectives on recovery to many. ●

## Tenth Step Inventory

By Nick F.

I was introduced to a Tenth Step checklist while at a treatment center, which I now complete every night. Simply ask yourself:

A. What did I take from the SAA meeting today that will assist me in my recovery, and how does it apply to me? Who did I meet at the meeting?

B. Who is my sponsor, and did I call him/her today? What step am I on?

C. What occurred today that made me feel selfish, afraid, controlling, defiant, angry, resentful, frustrated, etc.? What role did I play in it? How could I have dealt with it differently?

D. What recovery "stepping stones" occurred today (other than number of days sober)?

E. What were my tasks today, and were they completed? If not, why?

F. What addictive behaviors / attitudes / emotions (character defects) do I need to work on?

G. How balanced is my recovery at this time? (I rate each of these five aspects of my recovery on a ten-point or an A-F scale): physical, mental, emotional, social, & spiritual.

H. What were the highlights of my day? ●

*Adapted from the Winter 2017 issue of The Check-IN, the newsletter of the Indianan Intergroup*

# DEAR WILL

## How Can I Start Meditating?

BY WILL

**The idea of  
meditating can  
be daunting  
for those who  
haven't tried it  
before.**

Dear Will,

My sponsor wants me to start meditating each morning. I'm really at a loss as to what to meditate on, and how to go about doing it. Any suggestions?

**Drawing a Blank**

Dear DAB,

Well, I say bravo to your sponsor for suggesting that you start meditating. I admit that the idea of meditation can be daunting for those who haven't tried it before. I sort of draw a comparison between the idea that the Fourth Step has to be perfect and the idea that the results that one gets from a particular meditation have to be earth-shaking.

One major goal of meditating, after all, is to bring us into a more peaceful frame of mind. I remember a friend once telling me that his wife, who was something of a firebrand, would suddenly halt from tearing around the house in the morning to pronounce: "I have to stop to meditate." She would immediately calm herself down and move into her meditation. Presumably, she said meditation calmed her down; I was afraid to ask. But I digress...

Nowadays we have all kinds of books with suggested meditations, divided into all kinds of categories. There are books for men, books for women, books designed to be used at night as opposed to in the morning, books related to every sort of Twelve-Step program, and so forth. There is even a meditation book taken from the writings of one of the ancient Romans. There are also

books on how to meditate. So finding something to meditate on should not be difficult.

One thing that my friend's wife understood was the idea of setting the things of the world aside for the minutes involved in meditating. My experience is that this comes easier as time goes on.



Of course, it is not necessary to meditate only on those things that can be found in meditation books. After all, there was a time, and not so long ago, when there were no such animals. But let's start with something shorter and sweeter and a text that most recovery folks are familiar with: the Serenity Prayer.

There are various ways of approaching the Serenity Prayer as a means of meditation. So what I'm about to describe is just one possibility. The Serenity Prayer begins with the word "God." Accordingly, one way for me to begin a meditation based on the Serenity Prayer would be to focus on my Higher Power. Who or what is my Higher Power now, and how is that different than it was at some point in the past?

From there, I can move on to other topics: How do I see serenity and what would be the good of having it? How about the ideas of acceptance, courage, and wisdom? How do they relate to

each other, and how do they relate to serenity as a concept? That's a start, anyway.

If you are looking for more ideas on how to meditate, there are books, as I said, that talk about that very thing. Or you can go back to the co-founder of Twelve Step programs, Bill W., who goes into a detailed discussion of how to meditate on pages 99-102 of the Twelve and Twelve. I can promise you that you will find your own way, and the more you meditate, the deeper you will be able to go.

## **Will**

*If you have a question for Will,  
please send an email to  
[men4saa@saa-recovery.org](mailto:men4saa@saa-recovery.org).*

# STORIES OF SERVICE

## Why Say 'Yes' to Service

BY ALISA S.

**When I got out  
of myself and  
started giving  
back, it gave  
me a life I never  
thought I could  
have.**

*"When you live a life in the service of others, you live a life worth living" - Unknown*

When I came into SAA, my life was all about me, about who I could blame, who I could manipulate, who I could con. When I say blame I mean who I blamed for my life and all its problems. I manipulated everyone around me, to feel sorry for me, to do things that I felt I deserved, to payback a slight I believed they had caused. But the biggest con was convincing people that I was a victim — that I played no role in how my life had turned out.

Through the process of the Twelve Steps I saw who I really was, broken and afraid, barely surviving most of the time.

Early on, my sponsor asked to take a service role in the group and I responded by saying, "I don't know? What if I get a life?"

He laughed and said, "So you don't want to say yes to the one thing that is giving you life, just in case you get one?" So, I said yes to the service position.

About a year into the fellowship I was asked to be the first female representative of our inter-group. I said yes because my sponsor always encouraged service work and because I was learning to step out of my normal selfish space and be of service, learning what it was to be selfless.

I went to my first convention/conference six

*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).*

months later not having a clue as to what I was getting into. I was overwhelmed and full of anxiety. I was nominated for a committee by a fellow addict and spent a year on Conference Steering Committee in it's infancy. I was challenged in ways I had never been. I saw the fellowship from another perspective and the passion of others for this fellowship.

I then was nominated and appointed to the ISO Board of Trustees the following year. This position entailed a separate set of challenges, but showed me the same passion for this fellowship.

My second term on the Board has been one of the most challenging and enlightening roles in my life. I have met some of the most amazing people. Some I connect with easily and some frustrate me. But all have helped me grow in my program.

When I got out of myself and started giving back to the fellowship that gave me my life back, no, gave me a life I never thought I could have, I have grown beyond any expectations I could have ever had.

So why say YES to service?

*“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.”* — Mahatma Gandhi

## A Shadow of My Former Self

By Paul P.

*Back then I felt helpless  
Acting out was my only way  
It promised to solve my problems  
What would be a high price to pay.*

*It lurked in the corners  
Ever ready to create more harm  
I didn't have a defense toward it  
Went off in my head like a loud alarm*

*Bad choices  
Made me ever so tired  
Got me into more hurdles  
Some intervention would be required*

*I started attending meetings  
Heard insights beyond belief  
Change was now possible  
I would find everlasting relief*

*People I would meet  
Their stories were mine  
I began to feel hope  
Although it would take time.*

*My new self would emerge  
Based on principles I would learn  
Integrating the steps into my life  
So the bad behaviors wouldn't return.*

*I remember the former me  
I was broken and full of shame  
Proud to honor this new self,  
The shadow I no longer claim.*

# FROM THE BOARD

## Groups Urged to Adopt New Meditation Book

BY MIKE L., AT-LARGE BOARD MEMBER

**All of the steps and all of the traditions are addressed somewhere in the book, almost always more than once.**

By now you may have noticed that the SAA meditation book, *Voices of Recovery*, is available through the ISO office and very possibly at some of your meetings as well. The long-awaited release of this book could be one of the most exciting moments in the history of our fellowship, up there with the release of our Green Book at the 2005 convention in New Orleans.

I have had the opportunity, as chair of a couple of meetings in our local area, to start using the meditation book as the meeting topic, using the text that relates to the day listed in the book. I have been very gratified at the response the book has received.

I have had folks come up to me after the meeting and tell me how much they liked the book and the reading of the day. I have been even more pleased to see other groups in my area using the meditation book for meeting topics.

I understand that the book has been selling very well also. The brisk sales of *Voices of Recovery* tell me that it is filling a real need within the fellowship.

We in SAA have never lacked for material to meditate on or to use as topics for meetings. There are other meditation books that deal with sex addiction, as well as meditation books of a more general nature that can be used to glean discussion topics more directly related to sex addiction. All of this is well and good.

But *Voices of Recovery* is special, even in this



plethora of books, in that it speaks directly to sex addiction as it is addressed in the SAA fellowship.

For example, the quote at the top of every page comes directly from a piece of SAA literature. So it is no longer necessary to “translate” a quotation from, say, world literature, as wonderful as some of those definitely are, into SAA terms.

Instead, we can, for example, supplement the text in the quote with the surrounding text in the referenced literature for a deeper understanding of the quote and of the meditation.

Additionally, the editor and the meditation book committee worked diligently to maintain the voice of the various authors, SAA members all, in each meditation. So, while the committee corrected obvious spelling or, when it could agree on them, grammatical errors, it tried not to give in to the temptation of “that’s not how I would have said that.”

The placement of the meditations themselves is not directly related to the months of the year. This means that you will not find a meditation on Step Six in June, or a meditation on Tradition Nine in September. The single meditation on Tradition Six is

placed in January.

However, all of the Steps and all of the Traditions are addressed somewhere in the book, almost always more than once. A glance at the index reveals, for example, that there are seventeen meditations related in one way or another to Step One, and eighteen related to Step Three.

Speaking of the index, it is an invaluable resource. Using the index, a group could, besides just focusing on the meditation of the day, choose to spend several months studying, to give one example, Step Two.

Or it could study one particular meditation in depth by finding the various topics related to the meditation on a particular page and reading the meditation several weeks in a row, each week focusing on a different topic covered on that page. These are just two possibilities.

From where I am sitting, it looks indeed like *Voices of Recovery* is quickly gaining a wide acceptance in the fellowship. If you or your groups have not yet investigated this beautiful little volume, written and assembled with such love on the part of the authors and the committee, I strongly support you in doing so.

# ISO NEWS

## ISO Conference Nominating Committee Accepting Resumes

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In preparation for the 2019 annual meeting of the ISO Conference, the Nominating Committee (NomCom) is asking all members of the fellowship who are interested in serving at the ISO level to complete and submit a service resume\*.

At the annual meeting of the Conference in Houston in October 2019, the NomCom will present slates of nominees for election to the Board of Trustees, Literature Committee, and Conference Area Coordinating Committee.

The NomCom is seeking potential candidates with solid program experience, long-term sobriety, and an appreciation of the value of active service. In addition, the NomCom will strive to nominate candidates who reflect the broad diversity of our fellowship.

### **The process is simple:**

1. Download the form off the service website. [www.saa-iso.org](http://www.saa-iso.org) under the “International Service” link in the left-hand menu. Or you can enter this direct URL into your browser: <https://saa-iso.org/docs/SaaServiceResume.docx>
2. Complete the form.
3. Email it to [info@saa-recovery.org](mailto:info@saa-recovery.org) OR mail it to Nominating Committee, ISO, PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270.

\*All resumes are encrypted and only viewable by Nominating Committee members. The resumes cannot be downloaded or copied.

## Women’s Intergroup Lays out Vision, Mission

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SAA Women’s Intergroup (WIG) was established in April 2018. The Women’s Intergroup is an autonomous entity. The WIG may partner with the Women’s Outreach Committee (WOC) at times but differs in that it is not a board committee like the WOC.

We seek to provide a bridge for the fellowship in supporting women through our vision and mission statements. Vision statement: “To carry the message of recovery to the (woman) sex addict who still suffers and to support the (woman) sex addict who continues with her journey of recovery.

# ISO NEWS

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Mission statement: “To produce, support and financially assist women-only retreats, workshops, events, activities and initiatives focused on sexual addiction recovery; to support the women’s outreach initiatives of other SAA groups; and to provide information, encouragement and financial assistance for individual women to participate in these events.”

The Women’s Intergroup welcomes feedback and participation from all fellowship members of any gender, group, or Intergroup, as well as board and committee members. We currently meet on the 4th Thursday of the month at 8PM CST. Email [info@saa-recovery.org](mailto:info@saa-recovery.org) for call-in information.

WIG is available as a resource for the fellowship in helping groups support women that attend face-to-face, telemeetings, and internet or digital meetings. We will offer sisterhood, support, and sponsorship.

Primary activities will be to lead, develop, and fund retreats, workshops and activities, and to support individual women members at these events or through these initiatives. The WIG may partner with the ISO, Women’s Outreach Committee and various other groups, intergroups, committees, and areas.

WIG will register as a 501(c) (3) corporation and are currently writing bylaws to support its mission. As an autonomous entity, WIG can engage in fund-raising and maintain our own bank account. Contact the Women’s Intergroup by email [saawomensig@gmail.com](mailto:saawomensig@gmail.com).

## Twelve Concepts Group Seeks Fellowship Feedback

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SAA, like most other twelve-step fellowship will soon have its own proposed set of concepts. We on the concepts subcommittee are looking to you to review the concepts we have written in order to let us know what you think of them: if they are clear, whether they are an accurate description of the way SAA does service work, and so forth.

You can access the proposed concepts by contacting the ISO. And you can give the concepts subcommittee feedback by sending an e-mail to [TwelveConcepts@saa-iso.org](mailto:TwelveConcepts@saa-iso.org) or sending a letter to ISO, P.O. Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270-0949.

We hope you will get involved in this very important project, which will be ongoing until the delegates approve the concepts. Thank you.

## Two Intimacy and Sexual Avoidance Events Planned

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Sex addiction is an intimacy disorder, meaning the ability to be grounded in reality and genuinely connected emotionally with another person can be damaged by compulsive sexual behaviors. In addition, some SAA members have found themselves “shut down’ sexually in recovery, afraid of sex because of its association in our minds with our addiction or with past sexual trauma, or because of a fear of intimacy and vulnerability.” (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 72)

The SAA telemeetings, which focus on applying the Twelve Steps to heal from the avoidance of true intimacy, would like to invite you to learn more. Two Intimacy and Sexual Avoidance (ISA) awareness events are taking place: Tuesday, March 26 at 8:00 p.m. US Central time and Saturday, March 30 at 2:00 p.m. US Central time. The events will be held using the Zoom video platform (participants can also join by audio only using a phone).

To join by video: Visit [zoom.us](https://zoom.us) to download the app (click “sign up free”). On the website, click “join a meeting,” or using the app, click “join,” and enter the meeting ID which can be obtained by emailing [info@saa-recovery.org](mailto:info@saa-recovery.org).

For more information, visit [https://saatalk.info/us/members/my-events/edit-event?x-event\[id\]=165](https://saatalk.info/us/members/my-events/edit-event?x-event[id]=165), email the ISA Outreach Committee at [Avoidance@saa-recovery.org](mailto:Avoidance@saa-recovery.org), or call 724-2HEARTZ (724) 243-2789.

## Board Approves SAA-Connect Business Plan and Time-line

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Here’s a look at actions the ISO’s Board of Trustees took January through February including approval of the coming SAA-Connect business plan and time-line:

### JANUARY

- » Approved the 2019 budget.
- » Approved Chicagoland Intergroup Use of SAA Logo

### FEBRUARY

- » Approved change of access to bank accounts corporate accounts (due to new Executive Director)
- » Approved SAA-Connect project business plan and time line.

# ISO NEWS

## New Meditation Book Creates Unexpected Budget Surplus

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In the month of January we had a income surplus of \$1,948.58. We had budgeted for a deficit of \$8420.00. The increase in our surplus was due to our sales of *Voices in Recovery* which resulted in an excess of \$10,368.58 over our budget.

Our SAA Green Book sales were below our estimate by \$1,350.25 in January. For the year we are at 82.46 percent of our estimated sales.

Our new book *Voices in Recovery* sales for January were \$12,325.92. For the year we are way over our estimated sales but expects sales to even out for the remainder of the year.

Our pamphlet and booklet sales exceeded our estimate by \$882.75 in January. For the year we are at 115.92 percent of our estimated sales.

Our bronze medallion sales exceeded our estimate by \$180.00 in January. For the year we are at 106.43 percent of our estimated sales.

Our total sales for January exceeded our estimate by \$11,047.40 in January. For the year we are at 157.45 percent of our estimated sales.

Individual donations were below our estimate by \$11,968.59 in January. For the year we are at 64.34 percent of our estimated individual donations.

Group donations exceeded our estimate by \$2,707.24 in January. For the year we are at 121.92 percent of our estimated group donations.

Our product inventory is valued at \$76,646.40.

Our expenses were below our estimate by \$6,265.85 in January. For the year we are at 90.85 percent of our estimated expenses.

Our operational reserve is \$186,536.00 will be increased by \$13,485 to fully fund this account for 2019.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

In Your Service,

Paul M.

Executive Director

# 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: Paul M.: [director@saa-iso.net](mailto:director@saa-iso.net)  
Associate Director: Chris F.  
Information Technician and Prison Outreach Manager:  
Jonathan C.  
Information Technician: DJ B.  
Public Information, Cooperation with the Professional  
Community, and 7th Tradition Manager:  
Phillip B.  
Administrative Assistant : Jerry B.  
Administrative Assistant: Harvey A.  
Publications Manager: Cody S.

The ISO of SAA Board of Trustees also has an e-mail  
box, which may be used to register comments, positive  
or negative, from the fellowship about the ISO staff:  
[board@saa-recovery.org](mailto:board@saa-recovery.org)

## Board of Trustees and Literature Committee

### Intermountain

Board: Bob H.; Alternate: Vacant

### North Central

Board: Dawn S.; Alternate: Thea L.

### Northeast

LitCom: Don R.; Alternate: Valerie G.

### Southeast

LitCom: Garrett I. (Chair);

### At Large

Board: Lisa S.; Bob L. (Chair); Mike L.; Stephen N.;  
Carl D.; Les J.; Mike S.; Richard N.; Wayne B.

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)

Board: [board@saa-recovery.org](mailto:board@saa-recovery.org)

CSC: [csc@saa-recovery.org](mailto:csc@saa-recovery.org)

LitCom: [litcom@saa-recovery.org](mailto:litcom@saa-recovery.org)

## Calendar - All times are CST. To attend a meeting email [info@saa-recovery.org](mailto:info@saa-recovery.org) or call the ISO

### First Sunday of the month

CSC: Policy & Procedure: 2:00 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: 10 a.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 Thursday of the month

Seventh Tradition: 6:00 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

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

### Fourth Sunday of the month

Conference Steering Committee: 2:00 p.m.

# SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

## Get Your Story Published in *The Outer Circle*

*The Outer Circle* newsletter relies on submissions from the SAA fellowship. It's a great way to carry the message to other sex addicts in the spirit of Step Twelve — and be of service! Articles may be submitted to [toc@saa-recovery.org](mailto:toc@saa-recovery.org) or to the ISO office. Please submit articles via email in Microsoft Word format with the **RELEASE FORM** at the bottom of this page.

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

Here are some general writing guidelines:

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

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

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

### 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.