

THE OUTER CIRCLE

Spreading the Message

One intergroup's
Twelve-Step efforts
have a lot to teach
the rest of the
fellowship

PLUS

Meeting Guidelines

What is Insanity?

Welcoming Newcomers





International Service Organization of SAA, Inc.

TOC articles contain the experiences and opinions of individual SAA members and do not represent the official views or positions of the ISO of SAA, Inc. or the SAA fellowship as a whole.

© Copyright 2019 International Service Organization of SAA, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Except for the purpose of redistributing *The Outer Circle* as a whole, *The Outer Circle* may not be downloaded, copied, reproduced, duplicated, or conveyed in any other way without the express written permission of the International Service Organization of SAA, Inc.

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

The Outer Circle Mission

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

July - August 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
- 23 From the Board

Departments

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

Shorts

- 19 Road Called Blessing

Articles



- 10 **Spreading the Message**
What one intergroup's Twelve-Step efforts can teach the fellowship



- 13 **Healthy Meeting Guide**
Boundaries to keep meetings safe and recovery focused



- 16 **Death and the Sex Addict**
How will you honor your recovery in the end?



- 18 **Best Seat in the House**
A high school play and the gift of recovery

FROM THE EDITOR

Milestones in Service and Self Care

BY GARY T.

The more willing I've been to put service and self care first, the more Higher Power has made it possible.

This July, I'll hit two major milestones, God willing. The first is eleven years of sobriety. The second is my fiftieth birthday.

As I reflect on those two markers, I'm struck by what they mean together: I spent my forties — an entire decade of my life — sober. More than that, I was living in sobriety the whole of that time.

What began for me as a moment of fear and anxiety as I walked through the door for the first time has expanded into a life I never could have imagined. On the recovery end, I truly feel my Higher Power working through me as I do my best to give back what was so freely given to me. As I've grown in recovery, I've made more and more room in my life for service to the point that I now schedule my work around my service and self-care, rather than the other way around.

What's truly amazing about putting service and self-care first in my life is that the more willing I've become, the more Higher Power has made it possible for me to do it. When I started this decade of my life, I was working for a private company that demanded a lot of my time. I now work for myself, and I'm working fewer hours than I ever did, but earning a similar income. With that time, I'm able to sponsor a handful of fellows, chair our intergroup, attend regular meetings, and of course, edit *The Outer Circle*.

Looking toward my sixth decade, I'm excited to see what my Higher Power has in store for me as I continue to open myself up to my possibilities and learn to love myself more fully. I'm convinced that as long as I keep doing that — and being of service — great things are in store, no matter what my age.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Thoughts on Past Convention, Future Meetings

BY PAUL M.

**One thing
that has been
discussed lately
is the issue
of minors in
meetings.**

My first convention serving as the Executive Director is now over. We are still in the process of finalizing the books on that and should have the numbers in the next edition of *The Outer Circle*. Overall, it was a very good experience in many ways. The hotel was stunning and the hotel staff were very accommodating. The Sunday events went well, we had great speakers, and we had many good workshops. On the down side, attendance was a bit lower than usual. I am not sure if that is a symptom from splitting the convention and the conference or not. We will have more information at the next convention in 2020, where I hope many more can attend.

One thing that has been discussed lately is the issue of minors in meetings. One of the speakers at the Convention spoke about that issue on Monday morning and also gave a workshop on the subject. Max and Carol Ann created a teen meeting here in Houston many years ago. They have helped more than thirty young adults get started in SAA. The official policy of the ISO is that all meetings are autonomous and can decide for themselves if minors are allowed in their meetings. The model Max and Carol Ann created was a meeting for the teen with at least two vetted sponsors in attendance. Also the parents need to be informed that their child is in attendance. The ISO Board agreed to list the Houston Teen Boys meeting on our website. The hope is that this model can be replicated around the world. Please contact info@saa-recovery.org for more information.

Our Public Information (PI) and Cooperation with the Professional Community (CPC) projects are expanding. We are attending more professional conferences and we are looking into the possibility of developing more public service announcements.

DEAR GRACE

What if I'm the Only Woman in a Meeting?

BY WOMEN'S
OUTREACH COMMITTEE

Keep coming
back, and you
may find that
instead of being
the 'only' woman
in the room, you
were the 'first.'

Dear Grace,

What are meetings like? What if I am the only woman in the meeting?

Woman Newcomer

Dear Woman Newcomer,

Welcome to the program of Sex Addicts Anonymous! For women new to the program, we suggest attending six meetings — face-to-face and/or telemeetings to discover whether or not Sex Addicts Anonymous is a good fit for you. Be gentle and practice self-care in all areas of your life.

Sex Addicts Anonymous is a fellowship of women and men who come together to help each other find recovery from sexual addiction. “The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop addictive sexual behavior. There are no dues or fees.” Each person who enters the room is courageous, unique, and brave. “Our fellowship is open to women and men, regardless of age, race, religion, ethnic background, marital status, or occupation. We welcome members of any sexual identity or orientation, whether they are gay, lesbian, straight, bisexual, or transgender.” (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, pg. 1-2)

“At our meetings, we read SAA literature and share our experience, strength, and hope with each other, focusing on how the SAA program of recovery works in our lives.” (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, pg 10) SAA meetings offer an accepting, non-threatening environment where all sex addicts can relate to each other's struggles and find solutions to living a new way of life free from sexual addiction. By staying in the solution, members of sex addicts anonymous

find a new way of living and a life that includes purpose, joy, and acceptance as a member of a healthy and supporting community. We practice anonymity and confidentiality in our meetings to ensure a safe place for all sex addicts to share about their struggles and learn how to apply the Twelve Steps of Sex Addicts Anonymous to their lives. Living in the solution and trusting a higher power of our understanding, together, we can be at peace, knowing we have found a place where we are accepted and loved.

There are many women in the SAA fellowship, even if you don't see any others in your first meeting. We are a young but growing fellowship, and not all meetings have women attending yet. Keep coming back, and you may find that instead of being the "only" woman in the room, you were the "first" woman in the room. Someone must be the first.

Meanwhile, try the women-only telemeetings! If you have face-to-face meetings in your area, the telemeetings will be a great supplement. If you don't have face-to-face meetings in your area, the telemeetings are a great way to get started. Then consider traveling to other areas for meetings, retreats, and/or conventions. In this way, many of us have found support and encouragement as we begin the journey of recovery.

There is also an SAA women's contact list, commonly referred to as the "Grace List," provided by the SAA Women's Outreach Committee, which includes women from all over the world who are willing to support you in applying the principles of the Twelve Steps into your everyday life. The Twelve Steps of Sex Addicts anonymous are designed to help you find hope, joy, and relief that there is a solution to your problem. It is highly suggested that you work the Twelve Steps under the guidance of a sponsor. If a woman is not available to sponsor you at the meetings you attend, the Grace List is a great resource to find a woman who is available and willing to be a sponsor. For more information about the Grace List, please contact Grace@saa-women.org.

In Service,

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

The Surprising Gifts of Recovery

BY KEVIN C.

**I'm learning to
integrate my
sexuality as one
part of a rich and
healthy life.**

In the course of being battered and pummeled by sex addiction for some thirty-five years, I could occasionally muster as many as five or six days of freedom from compulsive masturbation. But I could never have imagined living into the five years of steady sobriety required to write this column. By the grace of the HP of my understanding, as of August, I am now enjoying twelve years of sobriety, one day at a time, "contingent on the maintenance of my spiritual condition," as the AA Big Book puts it.

I actually came into SAA twenty years ago after having found good recovery in two other twelve step programs, and about ten years after having heard our founder speak at a professional workshop (some of us are slow to get a clue!). What a surprise to finally walk into that church basement for my first meeting and discover the attendees weren't a bunch of weirdos after all... at least no weirder than me! That was actually the first of many surprises I would find in my SAA recovery journey, including the overarching and ongoing surprise of learning to integrate my sexuality as one part of a rich and healthy life, rooted in a loving relationship of joy rather than the desperation and futility of addiction.

Living in sobriety today starts with cultivating a daily spiritual connection and being open to the variety of ways this unfolds. Paradoxically, this takes the onus of responsibility off my shoulders and, at the same time, empowers me to take full responsibility for my own recovery. So I become willing to go to meetings regularly and share honestly, to work the steps to the best of my ability, to sponsor and be sponsored, to read and grow emotionally and spiritually, to practice early intervention whenever I stray into fantasy and intrigue and objectifying. (I

still get plenty of opportunities to practice this!). And to do my part to keep my marriage healthy, mutually fulfilling, and joyful.

One of the best hands-on (or, more accurately, hands-off!) tools I use often is to pray for anyone I find myself sexualizing or objectifying or intriguing about, to pray for her (in my case as a heterosexual) well-being, for her happiness, for her relationships and significant other, etc. My partners in recovery remind me that she is someone's daughter or sister or spouse or mother — a real person who doesn't deserve to be ogled. Cultivating empathy is enormously helpful in derailing the addictive train. Would I want someone looking at my daughter or sister or spouse inappropriately? Would I want to be on the other end of cheating? Would I want to be exploited by a person in a position of trust?

Laughter, in meetings and in all areas of my life, plays a critical role in helping me not take myself too seriously and to feel good about myself and life in general, so I'm less likely to want to practice my sex addiction in any of its potential manifestations. This is part of the repertoire of outer circle activities and foci that enlarge my life and help me be of better use to my program sisters and brothers and in the larger community and world.

Like many in recovery, I have had significant struggles with self-esteem...

or the lack thereof. Living in sobriety gives me the daily gift of self-respect, and I am more and more able to like the person I see in the mirror. This change in self perception makes me less likely to be looking for affirmation through addictive behavior and less vulnerable to the persistent and persuasive voice of the addict doing push-ups in the corner. Another surprise is how good it feels to simply move through a day in sobriety and to be trustworthy in all kinds of circumstances.

Living in sobriety means “suing up and showing up” in all realms of my life, practicing recovery in tasks that aren't recovery related per se and yet play a part in maintaining sobriety. So, I am practicing recovery whenever I: pay bills on time; follow up on routine car maintenance; or face the things I don't want to do and do them anyway, maybe even first!

Finally, it's imperative that I remain humble and not become complacent, remembering to be grateful each day for the amazing gift of sobriety, and being willing to do whatever it takes to keep living in sobriety.

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.

Spreading the Message



What one intergroup's Twelve-Step efforts can teach the fellowship

T

BY THE ISO AND DFW INTERGROUP

radition Six states that cooperation with professionals is "vita" to our efforts to carry the message of recovery. The Dallas/Fort Worth (DFW) SAA Intergroup has taken this message to heart and over the past two to three years has built a robust and effective Cooperation With the Professional Community (CPC) program.

While CPC is not well-known in SAA, it is a very important and active part of Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, and other twelve-step programs. The purpose of CPC is to inform professionals and future professionals about the SAA fellowship to establish better communication and ways to cooperate without affiliating.

The following question and answer interview describes the actions the DFW Intergroup has taken to open communication with professionals and increase the number of newcomers referred by them to local SAA meetings.

Q: Where was DFW SAA/Intergroup a few years ago with CPC? Describe

what your CPC efforts were like a few years ago.

A: A few years ago, we didn't know what to call it; we did not know about Cooperation With the Professional Community. Our CPC efforts were limited to Certified Sex Addiction Therapists (CSATs) that we were familiar with — just a handful. We would reach out via phone calls and e-mail, but there was no formal effort to bridge the gap between professionals in general and more specifically with Certified Sex Addiction Therapists (CSATs).

Q: What prompted you to start developing a more formal/structured CPC program?

A: What prompted us was the influence of the ISO. The ISO introduced CPC to us and it just made sense to start a formal process to make it easier for professionals to contact us and for us to provide information about the program to them.

Q: What were your first steps?

Our CPC Coordinator took the lead and reached out to the fellowship to identify three other CPC representatives who could help cover the sixty-two weekly meetings in the DFW area. We realized that most newcomer referrals come from CSATs so we decided to focus on meeting with them in person at their offices. One of the first things we did was to obtain and organize the materials we needed to

conduct meetings. We put together mini green folders — Client Referral Packets (CRPs), which contain a welcome letter, SAA pamphlets, and a local meeting list. We give CRPs to CSATs and other professionals to make the referral process to SAA simpler. These professionals in turn give CRPs to the clients they want to refer to SAA. We also put together acrylic pamphlet holders with three pamphlets and our intergroup business card to give professionals to display in their office.

Q: What other CPC projects have you completed?

We've done mailings and followed up with phone calls and e-mails to set up one-on-one meetings because we learned that if they meet us and know who we are, they are going to be more willing to refer to us. We sometimes take four to six members to let CSATs get to know them. Our goal is to make therapists feel more confident and comfortable referring to us.

Most therapists are very busy and don't have administrative help. We found we have a higher response rate if we reach out via e-mail. We use e-mail to set up appointments with therapists in their offices. We've met with more than twenty CSATs so far. There are more than sixty CSATs in the Dallas-Ft. Worth area and our goal is to meet with every one of them.

We've also done two information-

al presentations to undergrad and graduate psychology students at the University of North Texas and visited a treatment facility in Princeton, TX, and met with five CSATs and shared what we offer.

In October 2018, we attended a training for CSATs held in our area and handed out SAA materials to the therapists. While there, we met the director of outpatient services at the Meadows treatment center and it looks like they are going to start a weekly SAA meeting at their facility.

In November 2018, we were an exhibitor at the Texas Psychological Association state-wide convention. We spoke with a number of psychologists and handed out information about SAA.

Q: Describe the feedback you received during your meetings.

A: The feedback was very positive. They are very happy to meet us and say they've never met any members of the program before. One CSAT who knew about SAA, however, was negative about the fellowship and said he doesn't refer to SAA but rather refers his clients to Alcoholics Anonymous because he was concerned about the lack of sponsors in SAA. We showed him our sponsor list which lists twelve members who could start sponsoring his clients immediately. This got his attention. This conversation was on a Tuesday and we received the first referral from

him on Saturday; he's sent three referrals total so far. In addition, one of his referrals brought back news that the therapist was happy with the benefits of SAA! This shows the power of face-to-face meetings.

Q: What are your meetings with CSATs like?

A: In the meetings our focus is on the services and resources we offer to professionals and their clients. We explain how the program works and how we will help their client when they come to their first meeting such as providing a "foundation meeting" for all newcomers that covers all of the important points about the SAA program. We emphasize that their clients need to get a sponsor and work the steps in ninety days, and we show them our sponsor list so they know sponsors are available.

Q: What outcomes have you seen as a result of your CPC activities?

A: We're getting referrals almost weekly. One of our meetings in McKinney, TX, used to average ten to twelve attendees. Recently there were twenty-three attendees and people were sitting on the floor.

Whether we find newcomers or not is out of our control, but our sobriety has increased as we focus on helping others. This has been exciting. ●

GUIDELINES



for Healthy Meetings

An exploration of boundaries that make for safer, recovery-oriented meetings

BY DEB V.

Most SAA groups have guidelines for sharing that, when followed, keep the meetings safe for all participants. This is true for face-to-face meetings as well as telemeetings. When I was a newcomer, the boundaries for sharing seemed silly — or at the very least, strange. In all my meetings, the guidelines were read at the beginning of the meeting. But in one meeting, those instructions were completely ignored. Over time, I began to notice how much better I felt in the meetings where guidelines were respected, as compared to the one where participants disregarded the boundaries. As I became more aware of my feelings and needs due to my recovery, it became clearer why the guidelines are important. I would like to share a few of my insights here:

Crosstalk

There was one “rule” that I found very odd at first: “No crosstalk.” Speaking directly to or about someone in the room or commenting on their share didn’t seem like such a bad thing. Besides, that felt normal because it happened in

other outside groups I belonged to. Why was offering advice in an SAA meeting or even trying to comfort someone frowned upon? It felt awkward and a little wrong to sit there and let someone cry without making any sympathetic attempts to help them feel better.

Then one day, I was the one crying during a share. I looked around the room and saw other members listening attentively and respectfully with kindness and acceptance in their eyes, or nodding to show what I was sharing had resonated. They were sending the message that it was okay for me to not “be okay,” and they were holding space for me to experience my emotions in an atmosphere of safety and support.

Anonymity

Another situation that I’ve found uncomfortable has been when participants name another member and reveal their relationship outside the meeting. Whether they’re neighbors or coworkers or family, I don’t feel safe when that occurs. Disclosing who is in their life outside the meetings is breaking their anonymity just as much as revealing that person’s SAA membership to someone outside the group. If that person is willing to reveal someone’s outside identity within the meeting, they might also expose me to the world as a sex addict.

The Twelfth Tradition encourages

us to “put aside our outside identities and act only as members of the fellowship, regardless of social position, gender, occupation, race, religion, economic status, appearance, or any other quality that makes us different from one another” (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 95). The concept of putting principles before personalities allows us to bond and operate as a unified whole. When everyone is addressed by their first name, I feel the synergy of belonging to a united group.

Sharing

One of the strange things that sometimes happens in modern spoken English in the United States is the use of “you” and “your” when the speaker actually means “me,” “I,” or “my.” When that happens, it can feel like someone is talking directly to me or putting words in my mouth, and often a part of me is distracted from the actual message of their share. When I make the effort to speak in terms of my own experience, using words like “I,” “me,” or “my,” it’s so much more powerful: “I did this.” “I feel that.” There’s healing in that kind of honesty.

Another distancing technique is excessively quoting literature during sharing. Instead of hearing a person’s own narrative, it feels more like I’m hearing a sermon or being preached at. I find it more helpful when someone shares what a reading meant to them and how it affected their recovery. Those

personal kinds of shares often touch me and heal me in ways that quotes alone cannot.

Tradition Five

I have come to deeply appreciate the tradition of keeping meetings focused on our primary purpose, which is to carry the SAA message “that freedom from addictive sexual behavior is possible through the Twelve Steps of SAA” (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 84). I have found support and insights from several “outside” sources, for which I am grateful. But when the message being carried in my meetings is diluted by messages from non-SAA-approved literature, it brings up controversial feelings in me. I have come to respect and trust the SAA message, and have witnessed a positive difference in the atmosphere of a meeting when participants focus their sharing on how the principles of the Twelve Steps are transforming their lives.

Conciseness

I’ve noticed that evenly dividing the time available for sharing during a meeting feels balanced and inviting to me. It produces a sense of equality and allows as many people as possible a chance to speak. While it can be challenging for me to articulate my thoughts and feelings, I’ve noticed that when I’m given a time limit, I tend to omit details that aren’t directly relevant to the experience, strength, and hope I intend to offer. I enjoy First Step presentations and speaker

shares because I’m given an opportunity to get to know someone a little better by listening to a narrative of their story. And yet, I greatly value when a buffet of comments, observations, epiphanies, and contributions are presented in meetings because I can absorb and receive what resonates with me and allow the rest to remain.

Focusing on the Solution

Though I initially felt uncomfortable talking about sex in general, I appreciated members’ transparency and their respectfully naming addictive sexual behaviors for what they were. When I heard people sharing honestly about their struggles and victories, their experiences and insights, and the practical application of the Twelve Steps in their daily lives, I felt uplifted and enlightened. In meetings where there was no descriptive language and the shares focused on the solution rather than the problem, I left feeling full of hope and healing.

In contrast, I left the meetings in which graphic language was permitted with a skin-crawling sensation on my limbs and a heaviness in my heart.

When the pamphlet, “Safe and Sexually Sober Meetings - Helping Women Feel Welcome in Your Meeting” was introduced, I agreed with the statement that “healthy and safe meetings bond in the solution to the problem,” whereas “unhealthy and unsafe meetings bond in the problem.” ●



Death and the Sex Addict

How will you honor recovery in the end?

BY ALLAN O.

One of the compelling reasons I sought recovery in SAA was that I didn't want to die in the throes of my sex addiction. Even though I committed to recovery relatively late in life, it wasn't too late. I've had time to work the steps with the help of my Higher Power and support from my sponsor and fellows in the program. In the words of the Twelfth Step, I have found that "spiritual principles can guide us in the everyday challenges of life, and they can help us face even loss, grief, and death with fortitude and grace."

Recently I took a course at my church dealing with end-of-life issues called, "Am I ready? Preparing for the Journey." The class leader started by asking, "How many of you are dying?" and, through self-conscious laughter, most of us were able to acknowledge the inevitability of our death. In five sessions, we talked about the medicalization of death, options for the final phase of life, planning our own dying and planning our own funeral or memorial service.

There's a bundle of personal, philosophical, moral, ethical, and legal questions for

anyone thinking about death. While reflecting on these, I came up with other concerns which are specific to me as a recovering sex addict.

When I started planning my memorial service, one of my first impulses was to find a way to express my thanks to SAA for helping me live a better life. Maybe I could write a paragraph of gratitude which would be printed in the program. Maybe I could have someone read from the Green Book. Should we say the Serenity Prayer? Then I imagined the distraction and confusion this would cause and the questions my partner and family would have to answer. Breaking anonymity in this context would undoubtedly have unintended consequences.

I called an SAA fellow whom I believed would have considered this matter. He said that I had the right to “out” myself as a sex addict at the service but that I could not impose that decision on fellow addicts. If I’ve suddenly identified myself as a sex addict, my church friends in attendance would probably conclude that unfamiliar people there are addicts. I don’t want to cause that kind of attention. Of course I trust that SAA fellows will also protect my anonymity. The question of “How do you know Allan?” should be left to an ambiguous but satisfying “through mutual friends.”

Perhaps a good way to honor my indebtedness to SAA would be to paraphrase a favorite passage from recovery

literature, retaining enough of the language that friends in the program will understand the reference. To others reading or listening, it will seem to be a source of more general inspiration.

I hope that friends in the program will want to attend the service, especially those who’ve been most important through my recovery like sponsors, sponsees and others from the groups where we share our experience, strength, and hope. I plan to prepare a list of those I consider the most significant people in my program so that my partner or other family member can let them know about my death and arrangements for the memorial service. Undoubtedly my sponsor will be able to spread the word to the fellowship.

Another specific consideration for me as a sex addict is how to dispose of the writing I’ve done for the program. I don’t want my circles, my journal, my first, fourth, or sixth steps to be viewed or read after my death. Currently I have this material in an envelope with the instruction: “Please destroy without reading or give to [name] my sponsor @SAA.”

With the help of Sex Addicts Anonymous, I expect to continue living a full life and to face death with fortitude and grace. I let go in the knowledge that, in death as in life, “Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.” ●



Best Seat in the House

A high school play and the surprising gift of recovery

BY JON S.

Recently I attended a high school play with two of my children. Weeks of rehearsals had finally come to an end and the show was on. The nerves of the first night were gone, and they played their parts beautifully. When I mention first night nerves, of course I mean mine, not theirs. On this night, I was watching for my second time and could relax. Unlike the first time, where I was a ball of anxiousness hanging on every word and choreographed movement, on this night I could enjoy the show.

As I sat in the darkened theater watching this excellent repeat performance it occurred to me that I was present. I was open and aware. I felt good. I even paused and asked myself: why am I feeling this way? And then it dawned on me.

After three years of sobriety, I still get surprised by the benefits of working the steps. It's like these benefits sneak up on you. Here is what I realized:

Prior to entering the program and working the steps I would not have been in the same place, physically or mentally. There is a good chance I wouldn't have been there at all. Deep in my addiction, I was often late or a no show to important events. I excused myself from these events using all the standard rationalizations and excuses that I found so useful: I will only be "five minutes" late; I can't control traffic; they don't need me; I work hard and should get some "free" time, etc.

And then, even if I had made it to the theater, I would have been somewhere else in my mind. Sitting there I would be frustrated about work, angry over something

my wife had done, perturbed with a neighbor's dog barking; the list goes on and on. And overarching all my wandering thoughts and emotions would be two recurring themes: exhaustion and acting-out.

I would have been sitting there in the dark contemplating and planning how and when I was going to act out next. And I would be tired. Not just tired but exhausted. I would hardly be able to keep my eyes open. In that darkened warm theater I would have struggled to keep my head up. For years, I consistently chose acting-out over sleep and so lived in a fog of numbed exhaustion.

But now, I was here. In this theater. In this moment. I was well-rested and awake. I saw the joy in my children's eyes as they danced and sang. I heard the audience laughing in their squeaky seats. I smelled the dust as it flew from worn costumes. I took it all in. My heart was full.

That night I could especially appreciate the wisdom that comes from working Step Eleven: "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."

I realized being present is such a gift. I could live here and have real connection with my Higher Power. Right now. This meditation while I sat in the dark of that theater opened my eyes to how much I can see. What a gift! ●

The Road Called Blessing

By Carol R.

This road to recovery begins with these four steps. I have learned that it is the repetition of them that keeps me on the road. While I use the word, "God," feel free to use any other word that works for the Higher Power of your understanding.

1. God sees.

God sees our choices, decisions, and mess.

2. God asks.

God asks for the simple act of turning our choices and decisions (our lives) over to Him.

3. We do.

This is the hard part. We must do the turning over. Every day.

4. God blesses.

God then puts us on the road called Blessing. We then begin to see the blessings in our lives, and in others lives — and we desire to stay on that road. ●

DEAR WILL

What 'Being Restored to Sanity' Really Means

BY WILL

The powerlessness and unmanageability referred to in Step One are the insanity.

Dear Will,

I am having a real problem with the phrase “restore us to sanity” in the Second Step. I know I did some crazy things, but I just wasn't insane. I think I am going to have trouble going in with the remaining steps if I have to admit that I was insane before I can do so. Can you please help me get past this?

Not Insane

Dear NI,

The difficulty that a lot of people have with the concept of insanity as used in a number of Twelve-Step programs is that they want to think of strait jackets, padded cells, and the like. Insanity in Twelve-Step programs is something completely different and nothing like the definition of insanity that we grew up with.

Let's start with the phrase itself. While the Steps don't use the actual word “insanity,” the Second Step talks about being “restored to sanity.” So the idea of insanity is implied, since that is what we are being restored from.

In our search for an answer, we look backwards to Step One. It is interesting that you used the phrase “admit that I was insane,” since the First Step says, “we admitted we were powerless.” One dictionary I consulted for a definition of the word “admit” indicated that the idea of reluctance is implied, and I am sensing some reluctance in your question as well.

So perhaps, NI, the idea of insanity can be found in the First Step. It states, “we were powerless over addictive sexual behavior” and “our lives

had become unmanageable.” The first time I read this Step and for some time afterwards, I assumed that the two phrases were a way of saying the same thing. I could not have been more wrong. For one thing, the phrases have different subjects. The first has “we” as a subject, whereas the second has “our lives” as a subject. So let’s break it down. What is “powerless” and what is “unmanageable”?

“Powerless” has to do with me. If I can’t help but drive down a particular street while going home because I think a new “adventure” might be awaiting me there, I am powerless. If I am lying in bed at one am unable to sleep because I know the night is slipping away and that I need to get out there and act out before it is too late, I am powerless. If I say to myself, “I’m going to wait fifteen more minutes and then I’m going to go home,” and I end up waiting three hours in twelve fifteen-minute increments, then I am powerless.

On the other hand, “unmanageable” has to do with my life. If I stay up all night trying to act out, and so I am driving to work at 7:00 am exhausted and facing a very difficult day because I got so little sleep the night before, my life is unmanageable. If I’m spending money that I do not have on the addiction, and then I am unable to pay my mortgage or



rent or my electric bill, my life is unmanageable. If I end up in the hospital because something I did has backfired on me, or if I wind up in jail because the police caught me engaged in an illegal activity or in some place where I had no business being without an explanation, then my life is unmanageable.

Do any of these examples ring a bell? You may be able to come up with other examples of each of these two concepts. So I would propose to you that the powerlessness and the unmanageability referred to in Step One are the insanity from which we are restored in Step Two. Please take a look at this different view of insanity and see if any of it fits your situation and if these are behaviors and attitudes that you may want to be restored from. If so, then you should be back on your way in Step Two.

Will

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

STORIES OF SERVICE

The Different Faces of Service

BY SARAH B.

I now have sponsees in three states, am more than eleven years sober, and am closer to my Higher Power than ever.

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

Early on, I did service because my sponsor did it, and I wanted what she had. She knew everyone in program and seemed happy and at ease in meetings. I was anxious and emotional. In those early days, being a literature person was a perfect fit. I felt a part of the community as newcomers and old timers alike came up and talked to me about literature. After a few years, I got more involved internationally as a delegate to the Conference and speaker at retreats and conferences. That is when I got to really see how far Higher Power had brought me, as I shared my experience, strength, and hope.

Then I moved to a small, rural town. It was almost exclusively straight, cisgender men in meetings and they never had business meetings. Here, just being present was huge. Now when women showed up, they stayed because there was another female available to sponsor them. And when I pushed for business meetings, I was in awe as newcomers spoke up and offered amazing suggestions about changes we could make to be more welcoming to newcomers. We adjusted our language and became more intentional about making people who were not white, male, or straight feel welcome.

Then I moved back across country to another major city. This time, service was about helping my transition. I knew from experience that nothing helped me feel a part of a Twelve-Step community like service. I attended every business meeting, event and intergroup meeting I could. I shared and asked questions. I immediately felt at home as I was embraced and encouraged.

I now have sponsees in three states, am more than eleven years sober. and am closer to Higher Power than ever. Thank you for letting me be of service.

FROM THE BOARD

Is Your Group Unwittingly Alienating Newcomers?

BY MIKE L., AT-LARGE BOARD MEMBER

Newcomers don't benefit by being told at the end of a first meeting, 'You would be happier in this other program.'

During this year's convention, the Women's Outreach Committee presented after the Sunday lunch an interactive and fun workshop designed to demonstrate some of the issues that tend to cause people to feel alienated from their meetings and even from the program.

The basic concept was that of a series of goats each crossing a bridge to get to the other side where the meetings could be found.

The stern but ultimately kind gatekeeper stopped each goat in turn to learn the key to the issues that prevented it from attending or fully participating in the meetings. The gatekeeper would then turn to the audience and ask for ways that those particular issues could be addressed. Ultimately, once enough solutions had been proposed by the audience and accepted by the gatekeeper, the goat could happily walk across the bridge and presumably head off to a meeting.

While I have seen these ideas themselves addressed in various meetings, in our literature, and in our convention workshops, it made for a more memorable experience to see them dramatized in this way. It helps to be reminded that a newcomer does not benefit by being told at the end of a first meeting, "You would be happier in this other program than in SAA."

These reminders about keeping meetings more welcoming and accepting come up during the convention most years, not to mention often at various points during the year. The fact that they still do serves to point out that they are needed.

So it may be helpful to take a look at whatever

things we as individuals or even as groups are doing to alienate newcomers who may in some way or another be different than the average member of that meeting or of the program.

To return to the example above, rather than using the default comment mentioned above about how the newcomer might be happier attending meetings of this or that other program, the Women's Outreach Committee pointed out that, for example, a small committee, even one or two, could welcome the person to the meeting and to the program.

Many helpful suggestions along these lines can be found in the SAA pamphlet "Safe and Sexually Sober Meetings: Helping Women Feel Welcome in Your Meeting." I have always found this to be a most wonderful pamphlet because there is so much in there that could apply to other groups that could tend to be a minority within the meeting.

Not only that, but the pamphlet can offer food for thought as to other things that could cause some people to feel alienated or triggered within a meeting.

For example, a man attending a men's-only meeting might figure that it doesn't much matter how he dresses to attend the meeting, perhaps

likening the environment to that of a locker room at the gym.

However, he might not have stopped to think that his overly casual manner of dressing might make a real difference in how safe that meeting is perceived to be by some of the other men attending it. I remember a particular men's meeting many years ago where a man took a couple of minutes during the final announcements to remind the other men of that very thing.

I sometimes see it recommended that groups hold an annual group conscience to take a look at what things about the meeting itself could undergo some improvement.

As a part of that group conscience, part of the time could be set aside just to address the question of how welcoming the meeting is. If it is a men's-only meeting, the group might go as far as to address the question of whether it is serving any particular purpose to keep it a men's meeting.

Anyway, these are just some thoughts. While SAA is already involved in outreach to bring more people into the fellowship, there is a lot that we as individuals and groups can do to keep those folks around once they get here.

ISO NEWS

ISO Sends Out Call to Delegates for Annual Conference

As prescribed in the Bylaws of the International Service Organization of SAA, Inc., the Board of Trustees convenes an annual meeting of the members of the corporation (delegates). Each member group of SAA that is registered with the ISO may elect one delegate to participate as a voting member of the Conference. Groups may also elect an alternate delegate to attend the annual meeting.

Our service year for the delegate conference will run from October 2019 to October 2020. As per our bylaws, delegates can resign at any time, and new delegates can be elected by groups to replace the previous delegate.

This year will be very important in deciding if we going to continue with the area formation and holding an area delegate-only conference in 2020. Please register and let your group's voice be heard.

The 2019 annual meeting of the ISO Delegate Conference will be held on October 11-12. Delegates are encouraged to arrive on Thursday evening, October 10, as the delegate meeting will convene promptly at 8:00 AM on Friday, October 11. The meeting will run all day Friday and Saturday from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm on each day. There may also be activities scheduled on Friday/Saturday evenings, including regional caucuses.

The advance registration fee for the delegate meeting is \$60.00. This covers the cost of the meeting and includes lunch on Friday. The registration fee must be paid by September 17, 2019 to qualify for the early registration fee.

To register for the conference, you need to go to our conference website: <http://saa-iso.org/main/mbrs/delinfo/index.php>. Call or email the ISO office for the password and hotel information. Delegate registration after September 17, 2019, will be \$75.00, and must be done on site.

Delegates will be able to pick up their packets of materials for the annual meeting or register on site between 5:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m. on Thursday, October 10. The registration desk will open at 6:30 AM on Friday morning, October 11 before the meeting begins at 8:00 AM.

All hotel registrations booked under the ISO group code will receive the

ISO NEWS

following: \$12 Hearty Breakfast Vouchers for each person included in the room (two per room max), complementary internet and free parking. As of this letter the cost for the Hearty Breakfast is \$17.95, so with the \$12 voucher, you would still need to pay \$5.95 plus taxes for the breakfast buffet.

Please note: We have a limited number of rooms reserved under our contract so make your reservations early.

ISO Outlines Delegate Responsibilities for 2019 Conference

The Guidelines for International Service for Delegates can be found at the website listed above. These guidelines will aid you in choosing a delegate who has sufficient time in the program and sufficient sobriety and who has enough Twelve-Step service experience to represent your group and the fellowship thoughtfully and effectively at the Conference meeting.

Delegate Responsibilities:

Each delegate is encouraged to prepare for the annual meeting of the Conference by becoming familiar with the Bylaws of the ISO, studying the motions coming before the Conference, and discussing the motions with the group he or she will be representing.

Business motions must be submitted to the ISO office by June 30th in order to be considered for the delegate conference. If your group or service committee you serve on cannot meet the June 30th deadline due to the short notice you are being given, please let the ISO office know that you intend to submit a motion. The Conference Planning Committee may then consider those motions that may be submitted after June 30th but before July 30th.

The delegates will vote to fill vacancies on the Board, Literature Committee, Nominating Committee, and Area Coordinating committee. To apply for these open positions, candidates must fill out service resumes which can be found on SAA service website and should be sent into the office by June 30th, 2019. To access the service website, contact the ISO office.

All of the advance information needed by delegates and the official “Call to Conference” will be posted in the “Member Services” area of the ISO

ISO NEWS

service website, as it becomes available.

The ISO wishes to encourage every eligible group to elect a delegate for the annual meeting of the Conference. This is a very specific way your voice can be heard and that you can be involved in the future direction of the ISO. Remember that the ISO exists for the primary purpose of supporting member groups in carrying the SAA message of recovery to the addict who still suffers. This is your opportunity to participate in that exciting mission.

Male, Female Audiobooks Now Available for SAA Green Book

We are pleased to announce that the audiobook version of *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, commonly known as the Green Book, is available for purchase from various vendors including Audible, Google Play Books, and Apple Books. The audiobook is not available for purchase from the SAA website.

Two versions are available: one read by a male voice, and one by a female voice.

Currently both versions are available through Google Play Books and Apple Books, but only the male voice version is available through Audible. We hope to have the female voice version available through Audible very soon.

Area Coordinating Committee Receives Flurry of Proposals

During the last few months the Area Coordinating Committee (“ACC”) has been continuing to firm up the areas, concentrating on getting area advocates to fill out formal area proposals and send them in.

We have been grateful to get a flurry of proposals for NYC (two), Kentucky, Tennessee and Western NC, the Mississippi Delta, Virginia and Iowa/Southern Minnesota, the telemeeting intergroup, Southern Florida and Canada – Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, with more in the works.

The current state of the areas in the draft alignment can be viewed at the SAA-iso.org service website on the ACC part of the site. If you don’t have credentials, please contact the ISO office.

As of this writing, the ACC has received thirty-six area proposals. We expect to have more than forty proposals in by the October annual meeting of the Conference. We have received enthusiastic responses to the last few *Outer Circle* articles.

ISO NEWS

Board Spring Actions Center Around New Committees, Finances

The ISO Board of Trustees had a busy spring, taking a number of actions around new committees, subcommittees and finances. Here's a look at all the happenings:

April

- » Approved \$123,000.00 in grants (withdrawals) from the Greater Houston Community Foundation Endowment Fund. The Executive Director is approved to withdraw \$70,000.00 now. The Executive Director is approved to withdraw the remaining \$53,000.00 later in the year, when necessary to fund budgeted expenses.
- » Approved funding for up to five Area Coordinating Committee representatives for the annual conference and one additional day to coincide with the 2019 Conference dates. It is estimated that this will not exceed \$4000.

May

- » Approved that the Bylaws Committee will be a subcommittee of Policy ISC, to be chaired by a Board member and report to Policy ISC.
- » Approved that the former Office Oversight Committee members be placed on the F&O ISC as non-voting advisory members and to sunset the OOC.

June

- » Approved the name change of the Intimacy and Sexual Avoidance Outreach Committee to the Intimacy and Sexual Avoidance Awareness Committee.
- » Approved the formation of a Board Standing Committee to address public awareness and engagement with the professional community (formerly known as the PI/CPC Committee).

»

ISO Deficit, Expenses Far Lower than Expected in May

In the month of May we had a net income deficit of \$4,893.72. We had budgeted for a deficit of \$16,336.00. Our expenses were \$4,772.20 lower than our estimated expenses of \$66,224.00.

Our SAA Green Book sales were below our estimate by \$1,472.85 in May. For the year we are at 80.87 percent of our estimated sales. This number now includes the audio book sales. Female voice version is still not on Amazon or Audible, we are following up. Our Green Books sales from HCI are down by

\$1,345.34.

Here's a complete breakdown of finances:

- » Our book *Voices in Recovery* sales for May were \$4,531.03. For the year we continue to be over our estimated sales.
- » Our pamphlet and booklet sales was below our estimate by \$23.74 in May. For the year we are at 99.57 percent of our estimated sales.
- » Our plastic chips sales were above our estimate by \$50.75 in May. For the year we are at 102.82 percent of our estimated sales.
- » Our bronze medallion sales were above our estimate by \$345.00 in May. For the year we are at 112.82 percent of our estimated sales.
- » Our total sales for May exceeded our estimate by \$2,745.031 in May. For the year we are at 114.28 percent of our estimated sales. This was mainly from *Voices of Recovery*.
- » Individual donations were below our estimate by \$200.42 in May. For the year we are at 99.15 percent of our estimated individual donations. This was mainly from our General Donations being below our target.
- » Group donations were below our estimate by \$1989.49 in May. For the year we are at 83.69 percent of our estimated group donations. This was mainly from our General Donations being below our target.
- » Our product inventory is valued at \$68,830.04.
- » Our expenses exceeded our estimate by \$4,772.20 in May. For the year we are at 107.21 percent of our estimated expenses.
- » Our operational reserve is fully funded at \$200,021.00.

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

The Outer Circle

Editor: Gary T.: toc@saa-recovery.org

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

Board of Trustees and Literature Committee

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);

Office Staff

Executive Director: Paul M.: director@saa-iso.net
Associate Director: Chris F.
Publications Manager: Cody S.
Public Information, Cooperation with the Professional Community, and 7th Tradition Manager: Phillip B.
Project Manager: Tracy R.
Information Technician and Prison Outreach Manager: Jonathan C.
Information Technician: DJ B.
Administrative Assistant: Jerry B.
Administrative Assistant: Evan E.
Administrative Assistant: Harvey A.

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

CSC: csc@saa-recovery.org

LitCom: litcom@saa-recovery.org

Calendar - All times are CST. To attend a meeting email 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.

First Wednesday of the month

Prisoner Outreach: 7:00 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

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

ISOP Committee: 2:00 p.m.

Fourth Saturday of the month

Area Handbook Workgroup: 11 a.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 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.