

THE OUTER CIRCLE

Taking out the Trash

**A different way of
looking at Higher
Power's role in Steps
Six and Seven**

PLUS

Twelfth Stepping Therapists

Area Formation FAQs

The Serenity Solution





International Service Organization of SAA, Inc.

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

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The Outer Circle Mission

The mission of *The Outer Circle* is to provide information from the ISO and to share the experience, strength, and hope members have obtained from working the SAA program of recovery. As the first iteration put it in 1998, *The Outer Circle* newsletter “carries the message of hope to the sex addict who still suffers” — especially prisoners and others who don’t have the Internet.

Through *TOC*, SAA members contribute articles and poems that focus on working the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. It also communicates ISO news, regional activities, and other items of interest.

SAA meetings are encouraged to reproduce *TOC* at no charge and display it alongside other SAA literature. To keep costs down, please print out the online version.

If you have comments or suggestions, please see contact information on p. 30. To have an article considered for publication, see our Submission Guidelines on page 31.

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

September - October 2019

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FROM THE EDITOR

A Surprising Addition to the Ninth Step

BY GARY T.

I've always thought of the Ninth Step as the place where I admit harm, but there's so much more to it than that.

One of the things I love about the Twelve Steps is how my Higher Power continues to reveal new ways to apply them in my life.

Recently that happened for me around the Ninth Step. I've always thought of the Ninth Step as the amends step — the place where I admit to those I've harmed what harm I caused and my intention not to do so in the future. That's how I formally worked Step Nine. But now I realize there's so much more to it than that.

My epiphany happened when I met a friend for lunch the other day whom I hadn't seen in some time. This was also a friend who had been integral to helping me develop a meditation practice. As we were talking and catching up, it occurred to me that I had never formally thanked him for the help he had given me when I so desperately needed it.

Sure, I had thanked him for this or that, but I had never actually expressed to him how much his help had meant to me, how much the practice of meditation he helped me to acquire had changed my life for the better.

It suddenly occurred to me that this was an oversight I needed to correct. Not coincidentally, I had been working on the Eighth and Ninth Steps with a sponsee. So, the message about the damage from “unfinished conversations” was fresh in the my thoughts. “Clearly,” my Higher Power said to me, “this is an unfinished conversation that would be worth completing.”

And it was! After I shared my sincere gratitude, I experienced a new feeling of wholeness, integrity and even more gratitude. Going forward, I want to remember that expressing gratitude is as powerful way to make amends.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Thoughts on Past Convention, Future Meetings

BY PAUL M.

**Please hold your
group conscience
and send a
delegate to the
Conference.**

As I mentioned in my last article, the books are now closed on the 2019 Convention. In the final analysis, we did not meet our room guarantee or the food and beverage minimum. As a result, we raised \$5,500 less than what we budgeted for this year. But we did still raise \$22,000, which was about \$5,000 more than 2018. Hopefully we will have a better turn out next year. Make your plans now to attend.

Next up is the 2019 Conference. This may be the last year each registered meeting may send a delegate as we come to a vote on the area structure. Please hold your group conscience and send a delegate to this very important meeting. More info at saa-conference.org.

More about areas in this issue. The office is looking at setting up an email address for each area assembly and have a distribution list for the Group Service Representatives (GSRs). More info on how to register your area assembly will be coming shortly.

In July, hopefully you heard about the fellowship survey we are conducting. We hope that every member of SAA will fill out this survey so we can understand how best the ISO can serve you. Go to saa-iso.org and click on the link to see more about the survey. If you need the username and password (it is the same as the convention) call the ISO office. An infographic of the data will be constructed and all respondents' anonymity will be retained.

SAA Connect is slowly coming together. We hope to have some of the workshops uploaded and available publicly at first. *The Outer Circle* will also be posted there and searchable. More to come on this project.

Please watch your emails for more exciting things coming the ISO.

DEAR GRACE

Why We Need Sponsors

BY WOMEN'S
OUTREACH COMMITTEE

**Sponsors are
simply guides
who help
sponsees work
the Twelve Steps.**

Dear Grace,

What is a sponsor? How do I get one? Why do I need one?

New Member

Dear New Member,

A sponsor is an SAA member who is willing to guide you through working the Twelve Steps. The sponsor's role is simply to be an example of recovery in action and to support you in your journey of self-discovery.

It's a good idea to choose someone to sponsor you who has worked the Twelve Steps of SAA with a sponsor of their own, and who has the kind of recovery you want. It is important to listen to the other people in your meeting share about their own experience, strength, and hope. By actively listening, you are not only supporting the other person, but are also supporting yourself. This listening tool will help you in choosing a sponsor. You may also ask another member to help you find a sponsor, but the choice to ask someone is yours alone.

As addicts, we have relied upon ourselves and have lived our lives afraid or unwilling to ask for help. Thus, asking someone to sponsor you may be uncomfortable – and that is okay. Potential sponsors are often open about their recovery process and will talk to you about their sponsorship guidelines. Sponsors are volunteers who give from their heart and will support you as long as you are open, honest, and willing to work the Twelve Steps. Inviting someone to help you in your search for a life filled with love, joy, peace, and security is a great start to an unforgettable relationship and an amazing

journey.

Once someone agrees to be your sponsor, together you will create an agreement as a foundation for your recovery process. This agreement will

include availability, boundaries, education on addiction, and goal-setting. A sponsor is a volunteer and the sponsor/sponsee relationship can be terminated at any time.

It is important to feel safe with the SAA member who agrees to be your sponsor. Your sponsor will be your recovery guide, helping you work the Twelve Steps of SAA. Your sponsor will give you as much time and support as they are available to give. Sponsors have their own sponsors and recovery program to help them on their own spiritual journey. Therefore, it is important that the sponsorship relationship needs to be respected by both the sponsor and sponsee.

Sponsors are not lifelines, parents, or potential romantic partners. Sponsors are simply guides who help sponsees work the Twelve Steps of SAA, so sponsees can discover how to live a spiritual



life filled with hope, facing challenges and disappointments with serenity and support, and one day, thankfully giving back by sponsoring someone else.

For more information on sponsorship, there is a pamphlet called, “Getting a Sponsor” which can be found at meetings, read online by visiting saa-recovery.org, or ordered online or by calling the ISO of SAA.

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 Healing Power of Service

BY FRANK D.

I have come to realize that service work is the way my Higher Power taught me to connect with others.

Today I have nineteen years of sobriety from my acting-out behaviors, and I feel deeply connected with others. But I spent much of my life thinking of myself as a loner. I thought of myself as being an loner long before I became aware of being a sex addict. I would come home from school and go directly to my room, coming downstairs only for supper. My excuse was that I had lots of studying, but even before my addiction caught on, I was living in my own fantasy world. Part of the reason for keeping to myself was that I couldn't bear being around the members of my dysfunctional family.

Nevertheless, I did have opportunities to engage socially in high school and college. A teacher asked me to help with a high school team he coached. I did this for my entire three years of high school. In college, I remember staying in my dorm room, but leaving the door open in hopes that somebody would come in and talk to me. It didn't take long for somebody to do that, which was my first encouragement to start really coming out of my shell. Sometimes this took the form of late-night-before-a-final group tutoring sessions.

I eventually discovered the thrill of a new connection — quasi-anonymous sex. I didn't see the fact that these folks weren't part of my regular social life as a drawback; quite the opposite. I also didn't realize the disadvantages to these connections. I lost interest in connecting with persons with whom sex wasn't a possibility. Worse, these connections, even though they fulfilled my fantasies, were not as satisfying as I imagined they would be. Most of my partners had no interest in pursuing any sort of relationship with me

outside of sex, and I couldn't maintain any sort of relationship with any of them. Still, I was living the life I thought I wanted.

I was basically a total loner when I came to the doors of SAA. If I got to a meeting early enough, I chose a seat that had empty seats around it. I didn't go out for fellowship after the meetings. I was in essence repeating my same behaviors from high school and college.

And yet, buried beneath those behaviors were the same hopes for connection that I subconsciously harbored when I was younger. I would hope that somebody would come and sit next to me, just as when I left my door open at the dorm. Almost always somebody would end up sitting next to me; and Higher Power always brought me the person I most needed to talk to that evening. And even though I didn't think I was good enough to go out to fellowship with the others after meetings, I found a niche in service work, the same niche I found with the athletic team in high school. And that service work helped me to learn to connect with others. I continued to come out of my shell and get to know others, and not just haphazardly or only through service work.

I remember celebrating at a birthday meeting in another twelve-step

program and hearing several folks mention how shy I was. It caught me by surprise that people were mistaking my naturally quiet demeanor for shyness. Finally, somebody said "Frank's not shy at all. He's the first one to go up to the newcomer and introduce himself."

When I began to write this article, the theme was going to be "service work keeps me sober" article. However, I have come to realize while writing this piece that service work is the way that Higher Power taught me to connect with others. Those connections in turn taught me that I had much more to offer others than what I could do for them sexually—what a concept—and that those people would continue to be there for me. It was worth it to me to remain sober just to keep enjoying those connections.

Step One says, "We admitted we were powerless over addictive sexual behavior—that our lives had become unmanageable." Thus the program introduces at the very beginning the concept that this is a "we" program. I have found a lot of comfort in that "we." ●

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.



Speaking Out

Carrying the message to the therapy community is powerful Twelfth Step work

BY CHRIS A.

As a coordinator for the United Kingdom Intergroup, I am always looking for opportunities to carry the message of recovery to the still-suffering addict. It is a real passion of mine and has helped in my recovery too.

This year I led a panel of four SAA members at the annual conference of the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity (ATSAC) in London.

In 2017 I received a request from an ATSAC registered therapist — and recovering addict — to help him deepen understanding of the Twelve Steps amongst his fellow therapists. His first idea was to arrange attendance from some ATSAC therapists at a UK SAA Recovery Day. Recovery Day is officially an “open meeting.” However, when I put this motion to UK Intergroup it was not approved. This did seem like a setback at the time; but more was to be revealed!

In a serendipitous moment, a few days after, I received an e-mail from the chair and convener of the ATSAC conference asking if SAA would like to run a panel

at the forthcoming ATSAC conference. At the time this really felt like a Higher Power moment and vindication of my efforts. I didn't know how best to be of service, but my HP evidently had some ideas! I ran it by some fellows and got together a group of willing volunteers with good sobriety and we made a plan to attend.

So, I turned up with my fellow, Tony, at 8.30 a.m. to work a stand and we set out 400 leaflets (we had given away 250 by the end of the day). We were then joined by Nick and Alastair — all of us long standing SAA members with decent sobriety and working a program.

Our intergroup chair, Alastair, began by giving an introduction to SAA the organization, when it was founded, our primary purpose, our meetings, our program, the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions. We each then shared our experience, strength, and hope for seven minutes.

It says in a preamble to my home meeting that “our stories have several characteristics in common.” We are also told to “look for the similarities and not the differences.” Never was this truer than in this forum. We each told searingly honest stories of personal transformation. We told how we had been broken down by our addiction, how we knew we needed to find a different way to live but didn't know where to turn. We told how disaster brought us all to the brink — for one

of us thoughts of suicide, for another, a personal psychological crisis, for another a broken relationship due to his infidelity and for a fourth, arrest and humiliation by the police.

What was so beautiful about us sharing together was to witness unity in diversity and how the common threads of our stories wove us together. Our stories were different but also exactly the same: shot through with the pain, growth, and spiritual rebirth that is core to any recovery path. In our own different ways, we had found recovery, a safe harbor within which to heal, and we had started to get better.

We talked of the warmth of the rooms, the mystical beauty of the Steps, and the gentle but powerful path of spiritual transformation. We spoke of the need for sponsorship and outreach and that we needed to give what we had in order to keep it. Above all, we bore enthusiastic testimony to the fact that, without SAA, we wouldn't have the life we enjoy today. Really our only message was: this stuff works, and we believe many others can benefit from our wonderful SAA program and fellowship. We had a Q&A afterwards with therapists and did our best, as individual members, to answer questions honestly and within the guidance of our Traditions.

After the talk we had multiple people coming up to us in order to tell us that they had been touched by what

we had said, felt we were very brave, or that we had humanized the fellowship. They added that they had a much better understanding of the Steps or fewer reservations about referring potential clients.

One of the ideas circulating amongst some in the fellowship is a sense that twelve-step recovery and therapy often work at counter purposes. Tellingly, all four of us doing service that day and sharing our stories said we'd had extremely positive experiences of therapists and view therapy as a working hand-in-hand with Twelve Step programs. For me, personally, it works alongside my meditation, mindfulness, and Buddhist practices. I hope that we managed to dispel some of the fears, prejudices, and false beliefs about the fellowship through bearing our testimony.

I hope many more people get into recovery as a result of our initiatives. But the one thing I have now learned is that twelve-step outreach is like sponsorship: it's not easy. Not everyone agrees on how best to carry the message.

There can be disagreements and setbacks within the fellowship. There may be ignorance or resistance outside amongst the gatekeepers within the medical profession or the criminal justice system. So, it's a great way to practice not only Step Twelve but also Step Three!

Just because we are striving to carry

the message of recovery, it does not mean that we will always be well-received; just like some Step Nine amends might be reluctantly heard. I need to remind myself that I need to just act and hand over the outcome and to be aware of how my Step

Six/Seven defects come up. My issues here are control and a sense of self-righteousness — that everyone should see what a martyr to the cause I am!

More specifically, I need to be aware that the expectations I harbor, even unconsciously, when doing outreach, can lead to resentments. My courtesy calls to STD clinics or welfare officers at university in order to send them SAA leaflets may be greeted by a rude or disinterested admin person. This can test my emotional sobriety. I often feel indignant they should be "grateful" for the help, but then I need to remember: I am just a humble servant of the fellowship.

Acceptance is the answer. I need to accept that some may not have the willingness to help. Yet. I need to curb my impatience. The answer will come in God's time. The shocking ignorance around sex addiction in the UK is none of my business. My job is just to keep plugging away at outreach to provide a beacon of hope to those who want recovery, but who would otherwise not encounter routes into the Twelve Steps. I'm so grateful. ●

Area Formation



Still confused about areas? Or unsure how to proceed? Read on.

BY THE ACC

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 (2), Kentucky, Tennessee and Western NC, the Mississippi Delta, Virginia and Iowa/Southern Minnesota, the Telemeeting intergroup, Southern Florida, San Diego and Canada — Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. Hopefully more are in the works.

The current state of the areas in the draft alignment can be viewed at the service website (saa-iso.org) 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 38 area proposals covering roughly 65 percent of all meetings. We expect to have more than 40 proposals in by the October annual meeting of the Conference. We have received enthusiastic responses to the last few Outer Circle articles.

Here are some additional FAQs to help groups that have yet to propose areas:

1. What Do We Do Next to Get Our Area Up and Running?

For many of us, this is the first time we have had to try to “bootstrap” a new organization into existence, and we might be a little intimidated. Questions arise: what is this new entity supposed to do? How do we get past an inertia barrier and get people involved? What are the rules we need to operate under? How do we get money to send a delegate to the annual meeting and do any of the other things we might want the area to accomplish?

The good news is that people are already working on answering these questions, so we don't have to reinvent the wheel. In the May-June issue of *The Outer Circle*, we heard stories from several different areas with a wide range of experiences and relationships with their local intergroups. We can also look at other somewhat analogous entities such as intergroups and borrow from their experience, strength and hope.

For example, the Intergroup Communications Committee (ICC) has a wiki with many documents that can be helpful in terms of bylaws. Contact the ISO office for instructions and permissions to the website. The service website saa-iso.org also has resources such as FAQs about area formation, previous Conference business motions related to areas, and the area assembly handbook.

2. How Can We Find the Necessary Trusted Servants?

The areas need Group Service Representatives (GSRs) to represent the groups at area assemblies. The areas may need trusted servants – how are we going to get them? A common response to this challenge is to simply start talking about what's going on – sort of like word-of-mouth advertising. People hear about it, get interested and then start talking about it with others.

The message that “the ISO is coming to us rather than making us come to the ISO” is pretty exciting! All of a sudden, one reason why the fellowship is doing this becomes something people can grasp and get excited about. We believe that persistently getting the message out, and “letting it begin with me” is going to be the best way to get local fellowships moving on this. And the “me” could be you!

Finally, the locations where areas are getting organized are deciding that “areas are here, we might as well get started.” They are not waiting for the dust to settle before getting started. They seem to be adopting the principal of “progress, not perfection.”

If you need some assistance, please feel free to send an email to acc.feedback@saa-iso.org. The Area Coordinating Committee is here to help!

3. Does the ACC “Approve” Areas?

Please understand that the ACC doesn't "approve" or "disapprove" of any proposed areas. We look to see if a proposal we receive is in line with the guidelines in the business motions that established the process and is consistent with the boundaries proposed by other areas.

With the proposals received and filling in unproposed areas based on our best available information, the ACC is putting together a proposed alignment – a "map" of all meetings into areas. Hopefully, the Conference will approve of the alignment – and hence all the proposed areas – at the annual meeting in October. If we think there are issues with a proposed area, we will let you know. Groups that are not happy with the area where they are currently included can send an appeal to acc.feedback@saa-iso.org.

4. Can area proposals still be submitted?

The Area Coordinating Committee is getting new proposals on a regular basis — many thanks to those willing to get the ball rolling in their areas! We are of course open to hearing what local fellowships think and are more than willing to negotiate whenever possible. We would very much like to see more area proposals before the annual meeting of the Conference. It's not too late, and it is not necessary to have 100 percent GSR registration for an area to send in a proposal. Please consider sending one in soon! ●

The Other Side

By Paul P.

I came into the program
Confused and afraid
Would these people accept me?
Understand what I conveyed?

So afraid to speak,
Would anyone relate?
I listened to the stories
Some with perilous fate.

Such incredible tales
Each one illustrated the pain
Good ordinary people
Decisions not so sane.

I was told what was required
Things I could expect
Honest and willingness
The dots began to connect

Others were sharing their victories
Days turning into years
Changing from the inside out
Eliminating many of their fears.

I too wanted what they possessed,
A new attitude of faith and gratitude
It was mine for the taking
As I would very soon conclude.

The other side seemed scary,
Full of unknowns I hardly could have
gussed,
Safety, security and peace,
Sum it all up the best.

I am glad I took this plunge,
Gaining insight from each step and
tradition
My life is forever changed
An improved spiritual condition. ●

Taking Out the Trash



A different way of looking at Higher Power's Role in Steps Six and Seven

BY TOM J., KRISTAL G. AND DEB W.

E

very week the garbage is removed from our house. The city makes this process smooth and painless. Today, concerns for the environment have made the trash removal process more sophisticated. We separate items into containers labeled for different things, such as paper, plastic, glass, or biodegradable waste.

In recovery, Steps Six and Seven can be seen as a spiritual “trash removal” process. In the Sixth Step, we become entirely ready to have God or a Higher Power remove the unhealthy or undesirable characteristics we discovered in our Fourth Step inventory. In the Seventh Step, we humbly ask our Higher Power to remove these defects of character.

However, some of us may not want to throw anything away! For some of us, our lives resembled a hoarder's home — a cluttered mess. On the other hand, some of us are obsessive cleaners, and our lives looked like designer homes — perfect and sterile, but unlivable. Both approaches to separation and trash removal left us wanting.

It is clear that the “trash remover” is God or the Higher Power. But unlike the hoarder or perfectionist, God has a different “trash removal plan.” The hoarder removes trash by getting rid of as little as possible, whereas the perfectionist removes trash by getting rid of everything. In contrast, God is a selective trash remover, and

the “separation step” gives us time to discern our part in God’s removal plan.

While it is the Higher Power that actually removes the unwanted aspects of our character, Step Six helps us prepare ourselves for this process. For some of us, our preparation included taking a closer and more compassionate look at our defects, contemplating the needs those defects were attempting to meet.

We also looked for the good aspects of our less-desirable thought patterns and behaviors. Realizing that our defects were actually distorted versions of character strengths fostered a willingness to let God’s loving, healing touch convert them into useful or healthier beliefs and actions. Like the process of sorting recyclables into specific containers, we allowed our Higher Power to show us what needed tossing and what needed transforming. Then in Step Seven, we asked for God to do the work, instead of trying to control our character defects or change them on our own.

In the process of becoming entirely ready to have God remove her defects of character, one member took a closer look at her activism. She realized she was trying to get something from others or attempting to prove something. Activism fed what she called her “entitlement to be enraged.”

Recently, when something came up that she felt very passionate about, she instantly wanted to “go into activist mode.” However, as she sat with and allowed herself to be present to her

manic energy and rage against injustice, she remembered that in the past, intense rage energy had exacerbated her health issues.

When she asked her Higher Power for help in removing and transforming the character defect of her urge to be an activist, an idea came to her. “Rather than give into my rage,” she said, “I started to search for what I could do to make a difference that was aligned with my health, self-care and self-nurturing. I found that instead of charging at the issue head-on with my entitled rage, I could do volunteering that would directly affect the people I wanted to support. I could reach out to those I wanted to support and share my love through being of service.”

Sometimes it takes time to become willing to let go of our defects, and sometimes our “trash” isn’t removed as quickly as we would like. As we wait for these changes, some of us have found it helpful to remember Tradition Five. “The purpose or goal of our service 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) Many of us have found that some of these changes happen quietly within us as we strive to help the still-suffering sex addict. When we are ready to do without a defect — when we are ready to have a trait become useful, God will remove it so our character trait will more effectively carry the message of recovery to those who need it. ●



The Serenity Solution

Changing your sobriety focus can make all the difference

BY TOBY H.

I acted out last week. I woke up Monday with four months and eight days of sobriety. Then, I acted out around lunch, and again around 4:00 p.m. I went to dinner with two fellows without saying a word about it, then went to my usual meeting with, again, no mention of acting out.

Then to top the day off, I acted out on my way home. I acted out three different ways in the same day, and fully expected that I'd be able to keep it to myself and move on to the next sobriety coin.

I had six months of sobriety once and at six months and one day I hired a sex worker and we spent three hours together in a hotel at \$200 per hour. At six months and two days I was at the Columbia River on a beach with my shirt and pants off on the phone with my sponsor who was talking me out of swimming to the other side. I thought that killing myself was the only way I would make it stop.

It was always like that. I'd get a couple of weeks. Thirty or maybe sixty days.

Then I would lose it. I would tell myself how worthless I was, how careless I was to take those kinds of risks, how stupid I was to throw away my time, and I'd ask why I can't seem to do what other people in SAA are doing. Then, you know the drill, I would act out to not feel bad about acting out.

But when I woke up Tuesday, I did not wake up with shame like in the past, but instead sadness and isolation. When I was a kid, I had three younger brothers and I used to play this trick where I would trade them a nickel for a dime because the nickel was bigger and so it must be worth more. Yes, I was that brother. Yes, I should probably make amends.

That's how I felt. Like I had traded something that was a treasure for something that was worthless. That amount of time is a pretty good block for me.

But I will take sadness over shame any day because shame just pulls me back to the same kind of thinking that made me act out in the first place. But sadness serves as a reminder to keep what has true value. That, ladies and gentlemen, is progress!

Even though I didn't feel shame, it was still a tough morning. I felt the isolation before my eyes even opened. Step Ten says, "Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it." Isolation in my addiction nearly killed me. Several times.

I have found honesty to be the very most important part of my recovery. I did nothing but lie for thirty years. I was really good at it.

Now I don't seem capable of lying. The loneliness from keeping Monday a secret even for just twelve hours woke me up at 5:00 am. I texted the friend that I had dinner with the night before and then was able to focus on getting on with a new start.

I did not lose my days, I still had four months and eight days, they didn't really go anywhere. I was just starting another set of days, one day at a time, and with work, support from my fellows, and trust in my Higher Power I will get to four months and nine days- and then keep going.

This might sound odd but my goal is not sobriety. My goal is serenity. Serenity is not dependent on the calendar, it takes care of the calendar. I know that I can white-knuckle it and knock out a few months of sobriety, but until I achieve serenity, the focus will be on not doing something rather than on enjoying something that's better.

My prayer for you is that you achieve a life free of acting out. But if you are still struggling from time to time, or battling it every day, be honest but kind with yourself. There is more to you than acting out. Read Step Ten and follow the advice around honesty. Tell someone if you are struggling. And keep coming back! ●

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Questionable Word Choice Violates Traditions

BY AMY L

**This month, I read
something and
I felt upset and
uncomfortable.**

Editor's note: The following is a response to a previous "Dear Will" column. The "Dear Will" column is written by a single male individual but the whole TOC, including "Dear Will," is reviewed by a committee of more than three dozen men and women. If you would like to be part of that committee, please email toc@saa-recovery.org."

This month, I read something and I felt upset and uncomfortable. I wanted to tell you about it and offer two suggestions.

First: Since coming to SAA I have felt welcomed and safe, especially when reading SAA literature, which promotes unity among its members. However, in the "Dear Will" column of the March-April 2019 *The Outer Circle*, it read:

"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..."

After reading this I wondered why, as a female, I felt put down and demoralized. So I looked it up.

- » From Vocabulary.com – A firebrand enjoys pushing buttons and stirring up passions. Someone who deliberately foments trouble.
- » From Merriam-Webster.com – One that creates unrest or strife (as in aggressively promoting a cause) Agitator

The way it's used in this instance suggests it was meant in jest, as after it follows, "I was afraid to

ask. But I digress...”

But I didn't laugh or find it funny. I felt hurt. It is my understanding that this column is answered and edited by several individuals of the fellowship. A committee, if you will.

May I present to these members this kind of verbiage sounds critical and fault-finding. This example and usage, to me, implies a jab on the ribs from one male to another as if to say, “Well, you know those women,” followed by an eye roll and head shake. This does not, as it should, offer member unity and support.

In the SAA Green Book it mentions safety and unity in Traditions One, Two, Three, Four, Five, Six and Twelve, the latter of which this issue was all about.

- » From Tradition One – “As a fellowship, our commitment is to the common welfare of recovering sex addicts everywhere. The First Tradition makes it clear that each member's recovery depends on the strength of that commitment” (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, p. 79).
- » From Tradition Three – “The Third Tradition is based on trust rather than fear....We are challenged to open our hearts and our meetings to those different from us and to seek ways to show the compassion and hope that have been given to us”

(*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, p. 82). It might have been more appropriate to say instead, “...who was a very busy person...” or “...who rushed from day to night.” Also perhaps eliminating where the husband was “...afraid to ask,” as this doesn't feel like an example of healthy communication in relationships. Or just delete the paragraph altogether. It reads fine without it.

Second: The column actively promotes seeking answers to meditation in A.A. literature instead of SAA literature.

“If you are looking for more ideas on how to meditate... 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.”

Why? SAA now has a wonderful mediation book, *Voices in Recovery*, and the topic of meditation is offered in both *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, (Step Eleven pages 56-57), and the “Tools of Recovery” booklet, (pages 19-20). Neither one of these sources were mentioned.

I was taught if I am uncomfortable, chances are others are as well. I wanted to speak up for myself and those who may not be able.

Sincerely,

Amy L.

STORIES OF SERVICE

Speaking Up for Recovery

BY LAUREN C.

**Every one of our
voices matter
and we can
make a world of
difference in our
fellowship.**

I, like many of us, have struggled with low self esteem. I didn't think I had anything to offer, but my experience with service in this fellowship has showed me that I do have a lot to offer; that my voice matters and can make a difference.

I was encouraged to become an intergroup representative for my local women's group. They were holding elections one evening and I had just reached one year of sobriety: the sobriety requirement for chair.

Someone in the group nominated me and I was terrified! I also felt my HP nudge me to accept. I did and I was voted in as chair and served for three years. I felt inexperienced, but slowly, with a lot of help, I was able to thrive in this new position. I loved seeing how people came together to strengthen and support the fellowship. I had this idea that people serving were somehow better than me, but I started to see that we are all just addicts, no one better or worse than the other.

I was elected to serve as a delegate to the conference for three years. My first year I was scared but soon found myself with a lot of interest in the motions that were being passed. I wanted to say something at the mic on behalf of the motion, or against the motion, but thought that my opinion didn't matter that much, and was scared that people would think I was attention seeking (I had just finished my fifth step so my defects were pretty clear in my mind!)

My HP nudged me to get up there and speak my mind anyway. I eventually became more comfortable and confident in sharing my opinion, and also being a mindful listener to others. I also

had people come up to me afterwards and share that they appreciated my share, that it was a perspective they hadn't thought of, or that it changed their perspective on the motion.

At the conference in Orlando, my hometown, my sponsor suggested that I fill out a service resume and put my name in to serve on the Nominating Committee. I had that same initial feeling of inadequacy but followed my sponsor's direction anyway. I was voted in, and was elated and nervous.

Serving on this committee has given me a sense of deeper purpose and connection to the fellowship and my recovery. I was voted in as chair this year, and even though I still feel that tug of self doubt, I've seen my HP work through me to show up, do my best, and make a difference.

We are all addicts just trying to stay sober. Every one of our voices matter and can make a world of difference in our fellowship. If you feel the tug from your HP to serve at the ISO fill out a service resume. You'll be glad you did.

The Nominating Committee would like to have a substantially larger pool



of potential to fill needed positions before the Conference in October. Members who submit a service resume will be entered into a raffle for a chance to win free registration to the 2020 ISO Convention.

The resume form may be found on the service website at www.saa-iso.org under the "International Service" link in the left-hand menu or visiting: <https://saa-iso.org/docs/SaaServiceResume.docx>

Completed service resumes should be emailed to info@saa-recovery.org or mailed to Nominating Committee, ISO, PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270.

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

FROM THE BOARD

Service Opportunities Come in Many Forms

BY MIKE L., AT-LARGE BOARD MEMBER

SAA needs skills of varying types, a few that can make use of formal education and others that just require a variety of life experiences.

By the time you read these words, the annual conference will be just about upon us. The meetings of the three big committees: the Board, the Literature Committee, and the Conference Steering Committee, take place all day Wednesday and Thursday, and again on Sunday morning.

Friday and Saturday are reserved for the delegate meetings. You may be a member of one of the big committees, or perhaps you are a delegate, maybe even for the first time. Particularly in the case of the latter, this may be a good time to see if you are interested in stepping up your involvement in the service side of SAA.

There are a variety of ways that you can get more involved in the many service activities that SAA offers. To give one very specific example, you may be fluent in a second or third language, possibly even one of those languages that is not spoken by the majority of the people on earth. As SAA continues to expand, there could well be a need for your skills in this area.

And, as I said, this is something of a specialized example. SAA needs skills of varying types, a few that can make use of formal education and others that just require a variety of life experience and skills.

While most SAA meetings I have attended do not need somebody to make coffee, for example, as is the case in some fellowships, a number of meetings have a need for example, somebody to set the chairs up at the beginning of the meeting and take them back down at the end.

This is a basic form of service at the local level. And it goes on from there. There are any number of other ways of being of service at the local level, including sponsoring, occupying service positions within a particular group, serving as an intergroup representative or officer, and so forth.

Many people begin to do for service for SAA on the local level. Then later they begin to look at the kind of service work that can be done on the national and international level. One possibility that straddles the local and the international is chairing one of the many meeting teleconferences we now have in the fellowship.

And thus, we come back to the to the Conference, and to the delegate portion of it in particular. Discussions and decisions take place at each conference as to people who can occupy service positions.

While the switch from regions to areas has changed the way this setup looks — for example the election of representatives for each region to the three big committees I mentioned above is being phased out — the need is as great as ever.

That need will always be with us. While there are still some service workers who were around and active when I attended my first SAA

convention in 1995, the door does continue to rotate, if perhaps more slowly than it does in some other organizations. There is always a need for new people.

If you are interested in doing international service work for SAA, a vital part of this process is to fill out what is known as a service resume. You can let the Conference Steering Committee know of any particular interests you have.

For certain service positions, the conference delegates elect the people to occupy those spots. And in other cases it is just a question just stepping up; the CSC can also help in matching your skill set to the needs.

Thanks to the modern communications networks, it is not necessary to be in a particular geographic location to do be of service in an area that interests you.

Doing service work has been a primary way, maybe even the primary way, of maintaining sobriety in twelve-step recovery since long before SAA came into being.

There are opportunities that fit a variety of interests and schedules. With the many opportunities available, I encourage you to look around and see what a good fit for you might be.

ISO NEWS

Committee Launches ‘Giving Hope a Voice’ Fundraiser

At the beginning of the 2018-19 service year, the Seventh Tradition Committee set out to develop a new fundraising campaign that would provide vital information about the ISO’s role in supporting the SAA fellowship and carrying its message of recovery. The committee also sought to convey specific strategic goals established by the Board of Trustees and the amount of money needed to reach them. The ultimate goal of the 7th Tradition Committee’s new campaign is raising enough money for the ISO to achieve all of its objectives.

With the help of a professional creative marketing firm, the committee developed an impactful theme and tag line and designed an attractive brand-mark (logo), the genesis of the “Giving Hope a Voice – Global Awareness with Your Help & Support” campaign. A dynamic infographic flyer was also created to help broadcast the campaign’s message, highlighting three key areas in need of additional resources to help the ISO continue to effectively carry the SAA message and support recovering sex addicts active in our fellowship. These three focus areas, aligned with the strategic goals of the ISO Board, include Public Information and Cooperation with the Professional Community (PI/CPC), SAA Connect, and technological improvements to the ISO’s business and office infrastructure.

The Giving Hope a Voice campaign was introduced to the general SAA fellowship at the 2019 International Convention in Houston. Based on new and increased LifeLine Partnership commitments and a substantial amount of other donations received at the convention, it appears the new campaign is already making an impact. In the future, with the infographic flyer and other promotional materials developed for the campaign, the 7th Tradition Committee is well prepared to inform and engage the fellowship through its fundraising activities.

Recently, the ISO office informed the Seventh Tradition Committee that the same SAA member who sponsored the “matching gift” fundraising program in 2015, helping boost LifeLine Partner contributions by \$2,500 per month, was willing to sponsor another campaign. Complete details have yet to be finalized, but the new program is structured this time as a “double-matching challenge.” A goal of increasing LifeLine Partners by \$8,000 per month has been established as the first challenge, while the second

ISO NEWS

encourages additional one-time contributions from other donors up to \$48,000. If both challenges are met, the sponsor donor has pledged a personal gift of \$48,000 to the ISO. More information will be announced soon!

Motions Submitted to Delay First Area-Delegate Only Conference

As of this writing, the ACC has received 39 Proposed Area Registration Forms. We expect to have received more than 40 proposals by the October annual meeting of the Conference.

The ACC has combined the proposed areas from the forms received, information gathered from communications with groups and members, and its own best guesses to put together a proposed alignment — a “map” as it were — of all meetings into areas. It will be presented to the Conference for approval at the annual meeting in October 2019. This will pave the way to convene the first area-delegate-only conference to be held starting in following years.

The ACC is aware of concern by some in the fellowship that the areas will not be ready to send delegates to the 2020 annual meeting of the Conference as the timeline approved with the bylaws amendments establishing areas requires. For this reason, the ACC has submitted motions to the Conference to delay implementation of this requirement until the 2021 annual meeting.

While the ACC as a whole does not have a firm commitment one way or the other on this issue, there was unanimous agreement that conference delegates should be given an opportunity to discuss and vote to delay or not.

CSC Lays Out Tasks, Goals and Seeks Feedback

The 2018 Conference helped the Conference Steering Committee (CSC) as we got excellent feedback during a brainstorming activity about how the CSC needs to better meet the needs of the fellowship as we transition to an area format. The CSC condensed this feedback into eight major themes:

1. Seek the guidance of our Higher Power in all deliberations.
2. Promote study of and adherence to the principles contained in the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and Twelve Concepts for World Service (AA).
3. Emphasize the unity of the fellowship and sobriety among trusted servants.
4. Develop a bi-directional communication and education plan that involves members of the fellowship, GSRs, area delegates, and the ISO, so that the fellowship is well informed, and the Conference can truly serve as the effective voice of the fellowship within the ISO.

ISO NEWS

5. Encourage year-round participation by delegates.
6. Promote importance of service at all levels within the fellowship and the ISO.
7. Encourage delegates to place the best interests of the fellowship as a whole above personal or local preferences.
8. Encourage outreach at the local level and assist local groups and intergroups as needed

The CSC focused on work structures to address themes four and five. Along those lines, we have formed tasks that we will take up and clarify during our meetings on the fourth Sunday of each month:

- » Establish periodic delegate-wide Zoom meetings with CSC agenda / topics
- » Develop training for area delegates including Delegate responsibilities and conduct at Conference, the business of area assemblies, and GSR training.
- » Develop and implement a plan for the effective use of online platforms like the wiki, SAA Connect, the ISO website, *The Outer Circle*, and Zoom to improve document transparency and communication with delegates, GSRs and the fellowship as a whole.
- » Conduct breakout sessions during 2019 Conference for brainstorming “what is the role of the area delegate” facilitated by CSC.
- » Continue implementing procedures for the CSC and the Conference that are transparent in addressing adherence to the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, Concepts, and (soon) Twelve Concepts of World Service for SAA.
- » Promote the “Guidelines for World Service” in all ISO activities.
- » Act as the main channel for matching trusted servant availability with Conference needs.
- » Include training, as needed, down to the GSR level (may be covered in the Communication change statement).
- » Set up a formal liaison with the ICC

Some of these tasks are part of the routine work of the CSC, and some are new. We intend to have a number of delegates be part of the work done by the CSC throughout the year, especially maintaining communication with the areas and determine how to make the areas effective. If you have any feedback, questions, or concerns, don't hesitate to contact the CSC at csc@saa-recovery.org.

Late Donation Makes for Better Budget Projections

In the month of July we had a net income deficit of \$3,635.06. We had budgeted for a deficit of \$11,251. We had a surplus in total income of \$11,766.17, which was higher than our budgeted income of \$57,558.

- » Our expenses were \$2,287.53 higher than our estimated expenses of \$61,139.
- » Our SAA Green Book sales were above our estimate by \$1,949.18 in July. For the year we are at 121.42 percent of our estimated sales. This number includes the audio book sales. Our Green Books sales from HCI are over the budgeted amount by \$2,106.74. Audio sales were \$221.18 above our budget of \$200.
- » Our book *Voices of Recovery* sales for July were \$2,761.72. For the year we continue to be over our estimated sales.
- » Our pamphlet and booklet sales were below our estimate by \$1,041.38 in July. For the year we are at 100.64 percent of our estimated sales.
- » Our plastic chips sales were below our estimate by \$361.50 in July. For the year we are at 99.44 percent of our estimated sales.
- » Our bronze medallion sales were above our estimate by \$25.00 in July. For the year we are at 98.93 percent of our estimated sales.
- » Our total sales for July exceeded our estimate by \$1,949.18 in July. For the year we are at 125.17 percent of our estimated sales. This was mainly from *Voices of Recovery* and increased HCI Green Book sales.

Individual donations were above our estimate by \$6,214.46 in July. For the year we are at 140.64 percent of our estimated individual donations. This was mainly from a late Houston Giving Thanks donation.

Group donations were above our estimate by \$3,474.10 in July. For the year we are at 96.57 percent of our estimated group donations. This was mainly from our general donations being above our target.

- » Our product inventory is valued at \$69,018.42.
- » Our expenses exceeded our estimate by \$2,287.53 in July. For the year we are at 102.14 percent of our estimated expenses.
- » Our operational reserve is fully funded at \$200,021.00.

If you have any questions, please email me at director@saa-iso.net.

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

Intimacy and Sexual Avoidance: 9 a.m.
Author's Group: 4:00 p.m.

Second Saturday of the month

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.