

THE OUTER CIRCLE



Home Cure

Meetings, Steps, and
Higher Power become
a spiritual – and
physical – solution

PLUS

Why Prisoner Outreach

Recovery Friendships

Forms of Surrender





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.

January - February 2020

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FROM THE EDITOR

Make 2020 the Year of Service

BY GARY T.

**As SAA heads
into a new
decade, there's
more opportunity
and need for
service than ever
before.**

Ah the new year! It's a great time to pause, reflect, and think about taking positive new actions. For those of us in recovery, one of the best actions we can take is being of service. As SAA heads into a new decade, there's more opportunity — and more need — for service than ever before.

For starters, SAA has embarked on a new area structure. That means every meeting needs Group Service Representatives and every group needs people to step up to new area-related service positions, such as area chair and even area representative.

The ISO is also working harder than ever to make sure that our message is available to those who need it. At the local level, I encourage everyone to get involved with their intergroup. Find out what the group is doing to carry the message and get involved. In the Portland fellowship, we're taking a page from other groups and contacting local therapists to make sure they know about SAA. The ISO is providing pre-printed flyers and info packets.

Of course, service is needed beyond the local level. Some of the biggest opportunities are at the international level. There are ten committees along with numerous subcommittees that need trusted servants. All that's needed to make yourself available is a willingness to submit a service resume to the Nomination Committee. You can find the form at saa-iso.org. Email info@saa-recovery.org for login information.

I've heard it said that service is gratitude in action, but the more I serve, the more I'm convinced that it's actually love in action. And the more I give, the more I receive. What better way to kick off the new year!

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Don't Miss the Times- Twelve Donor Matching Opportunity

BY PAUL M.

To maintain and
expand current
services as
well as provide
new resources,
LifeLine donations
need to increase

On October 1st, the ISO announced the \$96,000 Matching Gift Challenge. If you enroll as a new LifeLine Partner or increase your current LifeLine, your donation will be matched twelve times. For example, a new \$20 monthly LifeLine becomes \$240 from the matching fund. These additional funds will help us reach our goal of "Giving Hope a Voice" and reaching more suffering sex addicts than ever.

The ISO is currently reaching out to professionals such as therapists and counselors who are in a unique position to educate and refer suffering addicts to our program. A survey of 600 professionals in March 2019 revealed that 80 percent had never heard of SAA before. The ISO has staffed tables at national conferences such as the American Psychological Association and the American Counseling association to correct this situation.



We are also helping local intergroups staff exhibits at conferences as well. This year SAA intergroups staffed exhibits at thirteen state conferences. An estimated 2,200 professionals received information about SAA through the combined efforts of the ISO and local intergroups.

Groups from thirteen cities sent mailings to professionals in their area. Through November, 804 SAA members have attended training via eighty-nine webinars or in-person workshops. Such attendance and interest is unprecedented.

To maintain and expand current services as well as provide new services and resources, LifeLine donations need to increase significantly. The interim goal is an increase to \$30,000 per month by May 31, 2020. The ultimate goal is \$50,000 per month.

DEAR GRACE

How to Ease Partners' Fears About Mixed Meetings

BY WOMEN'S
OUTREACH COMMITTEE

Together, men and women can share, help each other, and learn how to build strong and sober friendships.

Dear Grace,

I'm a man who wants to attend meetings with women, but my wife is afraid of that. What tools/resources can help?

Man Wanting to Heal with Women

Dear Man Wanting to Heal with Women,

For some addicts, a wife or a girlfriend may not want their partner attending a mixed meeting where women may be present. It is important to respect their feelings.

Sharing that women are at the meeting to get help from sex addiction, too, may be comforting to your wife. You can also tell your wife that attending meetings with women is a great way to learn how to relate to and respect women without getting involved romantically or sexually. Together, men and women can share, help each other, and learn how to build strong and sober friendships — a powerful gift received through working the SAA program.

There are many other resources for sex addicts to achieve a sense of safety and belonging in meetings. For example, the pamphlet “Safe and Sexually Sober Meetings – Helping Women Feel Welcome in Your Meeting” is a great informational resource that you may want to show your wife. This pamphlet can be found at meetings, read online by visiting saa-recovery.org, or ordered online or by calling the ISO of SAA office (713) 869-4902.

As sex addicts, the most important thing we can do to help a newcomer is to remain sexually sober ourselves. By honestly and rigorously working the

Twelve Steps of Sex Addicts Anonymous, we can achieve a restoration to sanity and a spiritual awakening that will help keep us sober in order to live our lives with purpose, gratitude, and grace.

Encouraging members to share their story and work their way from “Shame to Grace” is a great way for people to feel safe, learn that sex addiction is cunning, baffling, and powerful for everyone, and support each other in living in the solution that the Twelve Steps have to offer.

“A group that maintains spiritual growth and works toward sobriety will inevitably become more attractive to newcomers” (Safe and Sexually Sober Meetings – Helping Women Feel Welcome in Your Meeting).

Making women newcomers feel safe is especially important. Women’s Welcome Packets, which include a welcoming letter from the Women’s Outreach Committee (WOC) as well as other pamphlets that may help women in their recovery, are a great way to welcome the woman newcomer.

The WOC welcome letter includes information about the Grace List, which is a great resource for women to connect with other women in SAA recovery. The Grace List is made up

of about 400 women from all over the world who are willing to support other women. The list also notes women who are available and willing to be a sponsor. For more information about the Grace List, please contact Grace@saa-women.org.

If contacting the women you may have hurt in the past would cause more harm for them or your partner, service work is a great way to make amends. Remember to face everything and recover (F.E.A.R). Seek other members and read SAA literature for additional support.

For information on joining the Women’s Outreach Committee’s (WOC) efforts on inclusivity for everyone, please email Genoutreach.WOC.Chair@saa-recovery.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

Experiencing the Cycle of Recovery

BY JOHN W.

**Being abstinent
frees me to
become sober;
sobriety brings
serenity.**

I waited until I was fifty-eight to join SAA. As a professional religious worker, I thought it enough just to keep my addiction to porn private. I thought my ability to manage it was all God needed from me; I even thought agreeing with God to keep it secret was my bargaining chip. If God did not rip out my compulsion then God must approve my acting out.

Believing I had God's okay made me feel like a sophisticated insider. Enjoying porn with a twist was no different from liking gourmet cooking. Lost in my self-centeredness, I had no time to notice anything wrong in my life.

It took me a very long time to realize that I did not want to expose my family to porn focused. How could I explain that and risk computer viruses that could attack my family's financial security? Efforts to nuance my computer use with my wife just earned me membership in the lying-sex-addict-club with a lifetime renewal clause attached.

The day I knew I was powerless was when I saw myself for what I was: an addict sitting exposed at the downstairs computer, ready to masturbate to yet another image while my girls waited upstairs for me to take them to school. This was the first gift of insight from a Power greater than myself.

A call to an SAA intergroup hotline gave me a sense of relief. But it still took me two months of white-knuckling and my wife's intervention before I attended a Sunday night meeting. From then on, I never missed my Sunday meeting. Later, I even added a weekday meeting as a back-up for a Sunday night that might be impossible.

This has been the key to maintaining my abstinence for more than thirteen years: faithful participation in weekly meetings.

Meetings taught me about a sober life and a new kind of friendship. They also gave me basic tools like being rigorously honest, working the Steps with others, seeking a sponsor, and using the three circles to set hard and clear boundaries. I replaced the time I used to spend acting out with developing a daily spiritual practice and beginning a life focused on service to others in and outside of the recovery rooms.

So after many years of trying to sober up on my own, I now live each day abstinent as a gift from my Higher Power. Being abstinent frees me to become sober; sobriety brings serenity based on doing the best I am able.

More importantly, perhaps, sobriety allows me to focus on the addict who still suffers and the ones in full recovery. Each day is better when I intentionally look outward, which ironically serves to make me keenly aware of how self-centered I can be.

Having many years sobriety one day at time teaches me recovery often comes in small steps. Mostly all I have to do is make sure those steps are on the path to recovery.

Some personal results: I no longer have to white-knuckle to be abstinent. I can work the steps in a more relaxed way to create a better life for others and me. I get more freedom from saying “I am wrong” than explaining how I am right. I find recovering addicts have a funny bone. For example, when my group was struggling with a concept, I realized I had forgotten I knew something relevant, so I exclaimed, “I am an idiot.” Before I could get to the point, another sex addict said, “Sorry, that meeting is down the hall.” The laughter that followed was shared medicine.

On exceptionally clear days, I see that a troublesome person I is human. More embarrassingly, that person’s faults often embody my own character defects. (Is irony flattened-humor?) I remember that all information is good if used rightly.

Just as plants use humus, whence comes the word humility, to grow strong, being grounded in modesty does not mean keeping clean, but rather getting down and dirty in humble service.

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.

Home Cure



Meetings, Steps, and Higher Power: a spiritual – and physical – solution

BY DAN L.

I was badly wounded when I joined the program at age 50. I'm a slow learner and so I arrived half-dead. Freshly divorced, I moved to the big city to have freedom to fully live my way, which ended up being nothing but sex workers, alcohol, and porn. I started having severe neurological problems including devastating vertigo that made it hard to walk.

I figured out what was wrong: I had a fatal brain tumor. I went to the neurology department and found myself sitting with a counselor asking me lifestyle questions. Because I was dying anyway, for the first time I answered honestly: Sleep? No, just partying with strippers or my digital girlfriends (porn). Did I drink alcohol with my meals? No, alcohol was my meal. Did I have risky sex? Actually, that was the only kind I had.

And then, through her, God spoke a revelation.: She said, "I'm canceling the MRI brain scan. You have no tumor. You are a sex addict. And yes, you are dying: at your age, your addiction is killing you. So now you make a decision, remain enslaved and die, or decide to fight for your soul, for your life. There's a

program that can help you. Are you in or out?”

In that instant everything changed. I knew she was right. I agreed to go to a SAA meeting.

I was in NYC for business, so I got a hotel near Times Square — at the time a sex emporium — so I could efficiently access the strip joints after checking out this odd self-help get-together. I thought “sex addicts” meant perverts and pedophiles, but I found the meeting included many smart and interesting men. Strangely, they were enthusiastically “telling on themselves,” admitting all the crazy sex things they were thinking and doing! Me? I hid everything from everyone, using fake names, paying cash to cover my trail, juggling multiple affairs sometimes the same day.

Here’s the first revelation: these men said to me that our secrets make us sick. We speak them, are relieved, and move on. One of the men offered me a ride back but drove away from my hotel. “Oh God,” I thought, “they are perverts and he’s kidnapping me!” Suddenly he offered, “Sorry, I forgot to tell you, I have a guy, called my sponsor, and we have an agreement that I never enter Times Square, so I’m driving around it now.” And I said, “What! All this traffic, and every day you drive in extra circles around places?” He said a strange thing, “We go to any lengths. To avoid unnecessary trouble.”

We sat in his car in front of the hotel

and he explained the program. I was amazed. I got out of his car. I went straight to my hotel room to bed. I did not go to those strip joints, their neon lights flickering in sight. Since that night, eighteen years ago, I have never gone back to a strip joint, a massage parlor, or to paying for sex.

This helpful SAA fellow became my first sponsor.

I thought I was religious, but my God existed inside a small white church on Sunday morning. The idea that God is present and loving in every moment of my life or that a Higher Power could give me patience, remove my faults and lift my burdens was pretty trippy.

Here’s the second revelation: it’s true! But with two conditions: first, I must remember that truth, even when angry, depressed, or confused. Second, I must be willing to surrender to this greater wisdom, over and over. That takes a lot of practice. But it always pays off.

The third revelation was that I create my own misery. I thought I was a great guy who was right all the time, and that misery came from other people being particularly controlling, dumb, or crazy. The Fourth Step turned that around. In every conflict, I can find one of my precious character flaws at work. When I turn them over, my interpersonal misery fades away.

Five years into program I arrived at an

uncomfortable place. My new sponsor pointed out a pattern. In my normal waking daylight life, I was a nice guy. But in the darkness of my addiction I pursued weak or disadvantaged women. Bottom line: my addict is a predator. Hunting for weakness to exploit. This is yet another reason I can't afford to act out. Because that predator is not under my control.

Fortunately, our literature explains it: the root cause of my problems is my self-centered fear, in a thousand forms. This is why I do a Fourth Step inventory and a regular Tenth Step: to map my madness. Otherwise, I'll believe my fears!

I recently had a rough patch. I regularly got thirty days of abstinence and then fell into a porn and alcohol binge for three days. I told myself I was sober for thirty days at a time and maybe that's as good as it gets. What was recently revealed to me was that I was in the bubble the entire time.

Over the months I was:

- » Acting out.
- » Crashing from days without sleep, with a terrible hangover, and painful regrets.
- » Suffering withdrawals from my binge, dreary and depressed.
- » Resisting: I'd just start getting my life going, then urges returned, and the struggle began once again.
- » Middle Circle: fantasizing, planning, getting high on anticipation,

searching for provocative internet content.

I was powerless at each turn. The wreckage was growing. I wasn't treating my wife well. I had little to offer program fellows. I had little enthusiasm for work or play. Yet that didn't stop me. Stubborn man that I am, it took health problems to force me to face the truth.

Eventually, the porn madness, sleep deprivation, alcohol damage, dehydration, bad nutrition, and emotional stress triggered an existing arthritic gout problem, an attack so painfully crippling I couldn't walk more than ten feet. I also developed stomach problems so severe they mimicked a heart attack. I started doctor visits.

And then a spirit came to me in the night and said, "Dean, cancel the gastroenterologist. This pain, it's not your stomach, or your chest. You're a sex addict, and at your age it is killing you. Now you have to decide: will you stay enslaved or fight for your soul and your life... Come back. Come home to yourself, to your God, your program."

I am back, admitting my powerlessness and reworking the First Step with a new sponsor who expects accountability and steady work, especially from a late-stage addict like me. And I'm in ongoing touch with my Higher Power, saying thank you for this grand adventure and humbly asking you to reveal once again what I need to see and do next. ●

Keys To Freedom



Why SAA — and service — is especially vital to prisoners

BY DANIEL M.

I want to explain why SAA is so important to me and my fellow prisoners. For us, taking action has many meanings — from taking that first step of attending our first meeting, to working through the Twelve Steps, to the decisions we make every moment of every day.

Most, if not all of us have lived the majority of our lives knowing that we are different, but not knowing why. Our sexual desires and thoughts were overwhelming. We found ourselves falling deeper and deeper into the shadows and darkness of our addiction. We did not understand what was happening to us. Many of us tried to suppress these desires, but to no avail.

Finally we found ourselves to be completely controlled by our addiction. Worse, we could find no way out. Many of us knew that disaster was just around the corner. Nevertheless, we could not control the addiction and found ourselves falling prey to it more and more each day. Finally disaster struck.

Our group is very diverse. Our members are from different countries and cultures,

racism, economic and social classes, ages, sexual orientations, and religious beliefs. But we do have some things in common. We are all sex addicts. Though the addiction has manifested itself in different ways, we do not judge or compare as the underlying disease is the same. We have all lost everything we had that was important to us; we have all lost friends and family who now ostracize us; we have all lost our freedom; we are all inmates, we are all now “sex offenders” and social outcasts. Most important, we all have a very strong desire live sober lives.

Many of us went to our first SAA meeting out of desperation. We were hoping against hope that we would find understanding, acceptance and most of all, healing.

We are all aware of the controversy playing out in the media, academia, and politics as to whether or not sexual addiction is really an “addiction” or a “disease.” We know there are many who claim that sexual addiction is not real but a choice made by people who use the word “addiction” to justify their actions. We have heard that there is no cure for those who may be afflicted.

We also know the reality of our own personal struggles and the hopelessness these uninformed and misguided people cause within us. We are made social pariahs with nowhere to turn. We felt we are left with the choice between giving up and giving in to this horrible disease and all that that means, or isolating ourselves in self-loathing and liv-

ing in darkness and shame. Some even chose a third option of self-destruction. Most are convinced they are the only one who experiences these problems.

What a relief it was when we attended our first meeting and found that we were and are not alone. Finding that there are others who not only have the same affliction, but that there are those who have overcome it and found healing was a godsend. That others have turned their lives around offers hope for tomorrow that has never been there before. It is like opening a window in a stale and dark dungeon and letting in the morning sunshine and fresh, cool air. It is impossible for words to express the relief one experiences when they find that they are not alone. Not only is there hope of recovery, but others have actually made it and will show you the way to sobriety.

The importance of SAA in prisons cannot be overemphasized. Most people do not understand what happens to a person who goes through the criminal justice system. The system does not seem designed to help anyone. It is designed only to catch, convict, and incarcerate as many people as it can who may or did break a law.

For the sex addict it is a dangerous place, where the mere accusation of a sex crime causes intense animosity in everyone you meet. You are often vilified and assumed to be the worst kind of monster the human mind can conceive regardless of the actual charges and guilt or innocence. You are pre-

sumed guilty of the most heinous acts any person can picture in their mind. To find a place where anyone is accepted without judgment or questions is the exactly the help needed to conquer addiction.

Many prisons offer programs such as the Sex Offend Education and Treatment Program (S.O.E.T.P.). In many cases these programs are mandated by the legislature or the prison system itself. Sometimes participation by inmates is also mandated. These programs are run by government employees who may or may not be trained in sex addictions.

In one program I attended, the facilitator had a doctorate in history, but no training in psychology. This person told us in one class that there was no such thing as “sex addiction,” and that there was no cure for the so-called sex addict. She was only teaching the class because she was being paid to. Add to this the horror experienced by many inmates at the hands of the criminal justice system and one can begin to understand why so many inmates will not trust in the programs or those who run them.

In some states these programs are being curtailed due to budgetary concerns. Faced with a choice between sex offender education and treatment or drug rehab, many are choosing drug rehab for political reasons.

Due to the misinformation and sensationalism perpetuated in the media and capitalized upon by some politicians, it is becoming more and more politi-

For the sex addict, prison is a dangerous place, where the mere accusation of a sex crime causes intense animosity.

cally expedient to put sex offenders in prison for longer and longer periods of time while at the same time cutting the programs to help them. SAA is quickly becoming the only hope for the incarcerated individual suffering with sexual addiction.

We would all like to thank SAA for its prison outreach program. Along with appropriate rules, the SAA program provides an inviting and safe environment in which to take action to achieve victory over our sexual addiction.

We especially want to thank the volunteers who ignore the inconveniences and challenges they face to come into a prison to motivate and help us. I would like to encourage you and your readers to start as many prison groups as possible.

The volunteers who come to our group tell us that they get as much from us as we get from them. Most of all, I hope this will give you pause and will encourage you to take action so you don't end up where we are because of something you do. Please, please do not let things go that far. Take action now. ●



Friends in Need

Recovery fellows offer vital support — and a connection to our Higher Power

BY MARTIN J.

Early in recovery, I was pleased with myself. I knew I had a long way to go and that recovery never stops, but I also knew that I was not acting out. My secret life had ended. Admittedly in being discovered the lives of those around me were destroyed. It was hard for me to balance the hope in recovery and the sadness around me.

At my ninety-day sobriety mark, I went to an in-person meeting. My recovery peers clapped for the milestone. I was given a three-month green token reminding me that one day at a time, I was moving from shame to grace and modeling the Serenity Prayer.

I had told my partner in the days leading up to my ninety-day mark that I would like to go to an in-person meeting to celebrate this milestone because my experience with in-person meetings was different from what I get through telephone meetings.

When I got home, my partner asked, “Did they cheer for you?”

“Well, not cheer, but they celebrated with me and gave me this token.”

My partner froze. This event, which was something she and I acknowledged as important only three days prior, became triggering. “Forgive me for not cheering you on this. Let me see...thirty years...10,950 days. It should be a 10,950 day celebration

of faithfulness! But you didn't care about me. You lied this whole time and now you're celebrating ninety days of not acting out with other women? You shouldn't be proud your friends are sex addicts."

I shouldn't be proud that I'm in recovery and I shouldn't be proud that my friends are sex addicts... this struck me. I never said I was proud, for pride is an entryway to narcissism and selfishness, two of my character flaws. Those flaws in turn are gateways to acting out, something I've proven I can't resist on my own.

Two weeks prior her statement would have devastated me. As an addict, my compulsion thrives in isolation and secrecy and is fueled in part by self-defeatism. In my insecurities as an addict, I let negative talk and bad days drag me down. I tell myself that, "I deserve to act out because life around me just doesn't understand me."

In recovery I'm learning different perspectives. I'm recognizing that I cannot do it alone. The addiction is cunning and baffling; it wants me to wallow in pity and come back to its cold embrace. "They don't understand your addict.... come to me. I've got you. You deserve this."

I am powerless over this addiction and I need a Higher Power to carry me through times when life is hard and sad — a sadness I created for myself and others, but a life worth living. I also need a Higher Power to give me recognition that I need help and to support me in staying in my lane on my path in

Just 100 days into the program, I am happy to say that I am feeling better than I have in months.

recovery.

I can't do it alone. I have a Higher Power and more.. I have recovery peers who are walking their paths from the same cunning and baffling addiction. Their stories are similar to mine, some more bleak, some more hopeful, but all who choose to are welcome to walk the path.

My friends are sex addicts, that is true. They are doctors and mechanics and business owners and landscapers and teachers and husbands and fathers and wives and mothers. Brothers and sisters whom I never knew existed! People who understand the power of sex addiction and have experienced recovery in many ways, shapes, and forms.

My friends are sex addicts. I am not in this alone. I have support. I see the power of recovery. I understand how to put shame behind me and let grace fill my life.

My friends are sex addicts. I am a sex addict. We walk the road of recovery. We have turned our backs to shame and opened our hearts to our Higher Power, whom we seek support and guidance for another day of recovery. Day-by-day for the rest of our lives. We commit to this. I AM proud of this! ●

How Surrender Looks



The meaning evolved as the years passed by

BY KEVIN C.

Four years ago, surrender was going to my first meeting looking for that magic pill; perhaps I'd make a second (in case I needed another pill).

As time went on, surrender was admitting defeat. (Yes — I lost a battle I could never win.)

Surrender was going to meetings when I didn't want to. (I brought the body until Kevin showed up.)

Surrender was deleting website links I had for many years — my go-to's, depending on the situation (about fifty-plus links).

Surrender was deleting the rest of the links (another twenty-plus) — which was very traumatic.

Surrender then was being honest in my meetings (not holding back; saying what I didn't want to say).

Surrender then was allowing myself to travel down a path I did not know with someone I did not know (a sponsor).

Surrender was finally working Step One on the program's terms and being rigorously honest.

Surrender was deleting contacts out of my phone — some of which had to be blocked first.

Surrender was (this was the biggest) deleting pictures and videos I had as a go-to in a pinch. (I went back and forth four times, until I finally had none, and could not retrieve them from anywhere.)

Surrender is working all twelve steps regularly — regardless of how I feel or what's going on that week.

Surrender is not objectifying a woman to a body part (still working on this!).

Surrender is helping someone else in the program — even if just to talk regularly.

Surrender is allowing a constant space for my Higher Power daily — no matter how small that space is.

Surrender today is staying connected, knowing I can never again walk this path alone. ●

What it Took

By Laura T.

*What it took
was a flag at half-mast
What it took
was a houseful of clues
What it took
was the courage to listen
What it took
was bottomless blues*

*The door to my attic
has come unlatched
Its trunks are filled
with outgrown clothes
The glass figurine
smashes to the floor
Its fragments glisten
like precious jewels*

*All that I am
I have been
And what I've seen
made movies
I watch the parting shots
and give credit
where credit is due:
Some to me, some to you*

*I celebrate my life again
remember friends and innocents
and wash the demons
from my eyes
and raise the flag
to its full height
and fly, my dear ones,
overhead*

DEAR WILL

Grasping the Full Meaning of the First Step

BY WILL

Powerlessness has to do with the behavior. Unmanageability has to do with the effects on your life.

Dear Will:

I'm fairly new to the program, and I still don't know if I am a sex addict. I can't identify with what others have said about their addictions. How can I tell if I am a sex addict?

Don't Know

Dear DK:

I can identify with your question, as I didn't know for certain either. When I came into the program, I read the recommended literature since there was no Green Book back then, and couldn't find behaviors to identify with. Still, knowing my life was messed up, I hung in there.

I was confused by the First Step because I thought that "powerless" and "unmanageable" were interchangeable. This is because I had never read the words in context. "We were powerless" and "our lives had become unmanageable" actually mean two very different things.

"Will was powerless." This word has to do with the behavior itself: I could not resist that urge to act out. When it got to be 11:00 p.m., I could not stay home. My legs carried me to the car, and the car had a mind of its own as I began that trek to my favorite acting out spot.

Once there, I would try to set boundaries, such as not staying past two a.m. I almost never actually observed these boundaries, and found myself driving back home at 6:00 a.m., just barely in time to make it to work at eight.

I sometimes tried to white-knuckle it and make myself go to bed at a reasonable hour, but I would find myself waking up and looking at the clock to decide whether it was still worth it to get out there and try to act out, usually deciding



that it was.

“Will’s life had become unmanageable.” This phrase is about the effects the behavior was having on my life. It was unmanageable because I was falling asleep at work, having been out the entire night before without sleep.

The primary financial issue surrounding my addiction were the money I was spending for gas. However, I could easily have had major financial issues from my two confrontations with the cops.

So, to summarize: Powerlessness has to do with the behavior itself. Unmanageability has to do with the effects on our lives.

I suggest that your determination as to whether these terms apply to you carry more weight than whether what you hear in meetings or read in books

parallel your behavior. Always the nonconformist, I never heard much about my specific behaviors in meetings. However, I did figure out that I was powerless over my addiction and that my life was unmanageable.

So I suggest, DK, that you take a close look at these two words and see if they apply to you. In the meantime, keep going to meetings and see if the underlying feelings you experience match up with the feelings others express. You should then be able to answer your own question.

Will

*If you have a question for Will,
please send an email to
Men4SAA@saa-recovery.org.*

STORIES OF SERVICE

Doing Service is for Everyone

BY JEFF W.

I feel that service is the best way to give back to a program that saved my life.

I had been in recovery for about a year when our meeting secretary announced that his job would be moving to another city. When he asked for a volunteer to take over as secretary, my hand was raised before I was even aware of it. I know now that it was my Higher Power at work.

I was raised by parents who were devoted to service. My mother volunteered with a number of charitable organizations, and my father served on various boards, including the local hospital and our church.

Even before I found SAA, I had volunteered with numerous organizations, and am still active in my community and church.

I feel that service is the best way to give back to the program that has saved my life. I encourage everyone in SAA to get involved in service in some way.

- » Become a temporary (or permanent) sponsor.
- » Become a trusted servant for your meeting in some way.
- » Volunteer to help with a workshop or retreat.
- » Become a GSR for your group's area.

SAA's primary purpose is to take our message to the addict who still suffers. Service by individual members is the only way we can accomplish this goal. Please find some way to serve—locally or globally—so that we can all grow in our recovery!

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

FROM THE BOARD

SAA Focused on Outreach But Needs More Help

**BY RICH N, BOARD
MEMBER**

**We could be
carrying the
message to still
suffering sex
addicts, but we
cannot due to
a shortage of
money.**

Eighteen million is an important number.

Why?

This is the estimated number of adults struggling with sex addiction. However, if you look at SAA, we have about nineteen hundred meetings. A rough estimate is that we are reaching 20,000 sex addicts. That is 0.1% of the adults that exhibit characteristics of sex addiction!

How do we bridge this gap?

The ISO is developing tools to raise awareness of sex addiction as a disease and SAA and the Twelve Steps as a solution. This adheres strictly to our Eleventh Tradition. It is sharing our experience, strength, and hope with the world to make them aware of the possibility for living a different life through the gifts of SAA.

Many volunteers in the fellowship are working on this. A new committee is focused on Public Information and Cooperation with the Professional Community (PI/CPC). They are developing new literature to specifically help professionals understand sex addiction and to refer addicts to SAA.

The committee has also identified national meetings and conventions for professional groups where we can meet people in careers like psychology, social work, nursing, medicine, law, and more.

At these forums we provide information about SAA and if possible, gather contact information so that we can provide updates and additional literature for them to forward to addicts that are suffering.

In addition to the PI/CPC work, we want to carry the messages to a more diverse community. We want to ensure our message of hope is reaching every struggling addict.

Targeted outreach to the LGBT community, communities of color, and people that do not speak English are all priorities to help spread our message to every corner.

Sadly, sex addiction knows no boundaries, so it is critical that we let nothing stand in the way of our message reaching everyone that could be helped.

All of this is important work. The reality is that it also costs money. Right now, there are programs that are on hold. That is right. We could be carrying the message to still suffering sex addicts, but we cannot due to a shortage of money. Specific programs that need funding are:

- » Increased informational mailings to professions: \$25,000
- » Increased attendance at professional conferences: \$65,000
- » Increase our reach to diverse communities by translating literature into one new language: \$30,000
- » Increase awareness in diverse communities with targeted PI/CPC: \$20,000
- » Leverage our local groups with

more and better PI/CPC training:
\$20,000

Each of these initiatives will help bring more people to SAA — more people to your meeting. This is what will make it possible for your meeting to be there tomorrow, next week, next year when a suffering addict needs a meeting. You can help in so many ways:

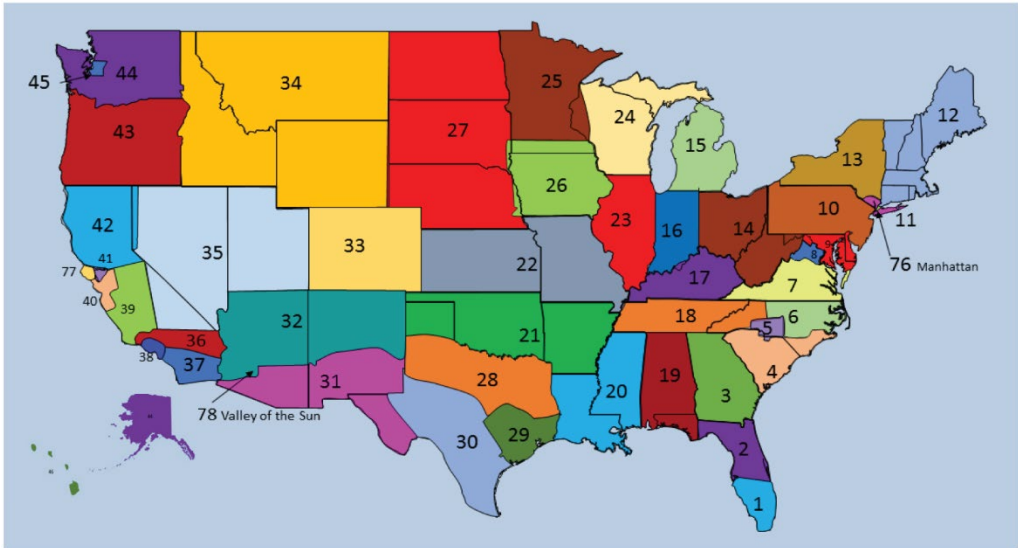
- » Make a one-time donation before the end of the year
- » Encourage your group to donate to the ISO
- » Become a Lifeline partner during this important matching campaign
- » Join a committee and develop and carry the message
- » Talk to people at your meetings about Lifeline partnership
- » Encourage those you sponsor to do service work and to donate.

Please contact the ISO office or go to the web page www.saa-recovery.org. There you can learn about opportunities to serve and ways to donate. Please remember we must give it away to keep it.

ISO NEWS

Conference Approves Area Alignment Map

Here's a look at the area alignment map conference delegates approved in 2019. More details can be found at saa-iso.org. Email info@saa-recovery.org for login.



New Fellowship Forums Focus on Service Work

Members of the General Outreach Committee of SAA have been discussing best practices within our service work and how we can support the fellowship by encouraging service and presenting forums on topics of interest within the program. These forums will be monthly conference calls using Zoom format.

Our hope is to present experience (and perhaps strength and hope) to members throughout the fellowship, discussing what we've learned and sharing suggestions to help avoid problem issues in future service work. Calls will be the second Wednesday each month from 7:00 to 8:00 p.m. Central time. To receive call in information, contact info@saa-recovery.org

Past forums were:

- » November 13th 2019: How areas are forming and format for an Area Assembly (Paul B., Intermountain CSC Rep and Chair of Area Handbook workgroup)
- » December 11th 2019: Sponsorship (Peg F, Darren F. and others on a panel)

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Future forums include:

- » January 8th 2020: Cooperation with Professionals including therapists, legal, religious, etc. (Phillip, ISO Staff)
- » February 12th 2020: Attracting members to service (General Outreach members discuss what brought us to service)
- » March 11th 2020: Women in SAA—how to support women who attend your meetings (Elizabeth S. and members of the Womens Outreach)

Look in *The Outer Circle* or email blasts for future schedule, or contact info@saa-recovery.org

Future topics for discussion include:

- » Local outreach—attraction rather than promotion
- » Letter writing to prisoners and how to support incarcerated members
- » Halfway houses—how to reach and support sex addicts in transition
- » Intergroup Communications—how to form and sustain a local Intergroup
- » The Group Guide—a handbook of suggestions to keep your meetings healthy
- » Sexual and Intimacy Avoidance—how to support members with these issues
- » LGBT Issues in recovery
- » How to encourage the Twelve Traditions in meetings

Our hope is to provide these forums as an interactive format where any member can share experience, ask questions, solve recovery problems, and avoid pitfalls some of us have survived. General Outreach will convene and facilitate forums. Participation, feedback, questions, additional ideas all are welcome.

Join us!

ISO Survey Results Reveal Fellowship Demographics

The ISO sent out a request for every member to fill out our baseline survey in July 2019. Thanks to those of you who have already responded to our survey!

As of late September, we have had 1,201 responses from the over 10,000 on this email distribution list. Your answers are very important to our efforts to carry the SAA message of recovery to the still-suffering sex addict.

Some of the preliminary results are:

- » Gender – 90% male, 9% female 1% transgender or non-conforming
- » Sexual Orientation – 76% straight, 23% LGBT

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- » Average age is 55
- » 65% are married or have a life partner, 20% are single
- » Majority have a Bachelor's degree
- » 47% have less than a year's sobriety

The ISO wants to understand the demographics of our fellowship and where we need to reach out to other communities. The Board of Trustees has just created the Diversity Committee and we need data for them about our fellowship.

Much like AA and other Twelve Step organizations have done in the past, SAA is now reaching out to all members to help us understand the demographics of our members. This will help us determine the best way to reach out to other suffering sex addicts and help us get our message to the professional community and public at large.

Board Seeks Pamphlet Graphic Designers

The new Board PI/CPC Committee needs your help! We are designing literature for outreach to professionals (therapists, clergy, etc.) as well as to other members of the public.

While we have some writers and editors, we don't have anyone helping this effort who has skills in pamphlet design or graphics design. These skills will be critical to the success of this effort.

If you have skills in either of these areas and/or InDesign software and are willing to put some time into the effort to carry the message to the sex addict who still suffers, please contact the office at info@saa-recovery.org.

This is a great way to work your Twelfth Step! If you are not there yet, there is an old saying that "we can work any Step with a "1" in it at any time"! This would certainly include Step Twelve. "Service keeps us sober!"

ISO Seeks External Outreach Materials from the Fellowship

A new SAA Board committee is working to create resources to educate our external communities about the SAA fellowship. Think of it like developing a Public Information/Cooperation With the Professional Community (PI/CPC) toolkit.

Before we begin, we want to see what local groups and Intergroups have already put together so we don't do any double work. If you have any locally-made

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pamphlets, letters, templates, press kits, scripts or any other resources that could be used to reach out to professionals and the public, please send them to *info@saa-recovery.org*.

Once we gather existing resources, our committee will work to fill in any holes and enhance our ability to reach out to potential referral sources.

We are thrilled to be getting this together so that our fellowship can more effectively conduct this work. When you start reaching out to your community, you'll have all the training and resources you'll need to spread the word about the solution we have found in SAA.

Convention Pre-Registration, Call for Presenters Open

Pre-registration is now open for the 2020 Convention and we are accepting workshop and speaker applications. Online registration is available on our convention website: <https://saa-convention.org/>. Contact *info@saa-recovery.org* for login. Please pass along this message to your group members. We thank you for your service and look forward to seeing you!

Share your experience, strength, and hope with fellow members in recovery from around the world at the 2020 ISO of SAA Convention. Past presenters and new presenters are welcome. Please remember to limit your topics and content to those DIRECTLY related to SAA. This may include the steps, traditions, concepts, circles, principles, or service, but should NOT include outside issues such as therapy, religion, non-SAA literature, or medicine.

Applicants are reminded that each session should include at least one hour and not more than ninety minutes of content. A variety of media, handouts, and attendee participation is encouraged. Applicants should have sufficient program participation and sobriety so as to be able to speak to their own experience with abstinence and recovery.

All interested applicants should forward the attached application to *info@saa-recovery.org* by no later than February 15th, 2020. You may also apply online, on our Convention website.

Applicants will be contacted in March for a brief interview with a planning committee member and selected presenters will be asked to attend a short orientation on Friday evening of the convention weekend. Please email *info@saa-recovery.org* with questions about the process or the convention. See you at the convention!

Lower Donations Trend Continues, Not Keeping Pace with Growth

In the month of October, we had a net income deficit of \$41,354.84. We had budgeted for a deficit of \$38,045.00 due to the timing of the Conference. Our total income was \$2,495.99 lower than our budgeted income of \$66,762.01.

- » Our gross profit (total income minus cost of goods) was \$3,914.26 lower than our budgeted amount of \$61,588.00. Our expenses were \$605.42 lower than our estimated expenses of \$99,634.00.
- » Our total SAA Green Book sales were below our estimate by \$151.21 in October. For the year we are at 98.04 percent of our estimated sales. Our Green Books sales from HCI are below the budgeted amount by \$148.35. Findaway audio sales were \$7.02 above our budget of \$200.
- » Our book “Voices in Recovery” sales for October were \$2,167.25. For the year we continue to be over way our estimated sales.
- » Our pamphlet and booklet sales were above our estimate by \$712.37 in October. For the year we are at 112.86 percent of our estimated sales.
- » Our plastic chips sales were above our estimate by \$462.00 in October. For the year we are at 125.67 percent of our estimated sales.
- » Our bronze medallion sales were below our estimate by \$420.00 in October. For the year we are at 85.0 percent of our estimated sales.
- » Our total sales for October exceeded our estimate by \$1,837.40 in October. For the year we are at 109.56 percent of our estimated sales. This was mainly from Voices of Recovery.
- » Our product inventory is valued at \$102,652.24.
- » Our operational reserve is fully funded at \$200,021.00.

Individual donations were below our estimate of \$26,563.00 by \$1,511.84 in October. For the year we are at 94.31 percent of our estimated individual donations. This is from both Lifeline Partners and General Donations being lower than expected. This trend of donations being lower than expected continues.

Group donations were below our estimate \$12,200.00 by \$166.56 in October. For the year we are at 98.64 percent of our estimated group donations.

As our fellowship grows, the donations have not kept up with the growth. We are currently at 1888 registered meetings and have grown about 10%/year for many years. Our donations have not kept up with that growth. Many projects we have planned are being scaled back at this time.

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
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

Board

Bob L (Chair); Carl D (Vice Chair)
Bob H (Treasurer); Les J (Secretary)
Andy M; David H; Eddie N; Melissa W
Mike L; Mike S; Richard N; Richard S
Wayne B; Wayne K

Board: board@saa-recovery.org
CSC: csc@saa-recovery.org
LitCom: litcom@saa-recovery.org

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.

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Jim L (Secretary); Bruce M
Byard B; Carole D; Carol R; Charlie K
Deb W; Don R; Doug S; Gary T (TOC Editor)
Mike B; Neil W; Steven P

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.

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.

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

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.