

Volume 14, Issue 2

March - April 2020

# THE OUTER CIRCLE

**Better than Sex**  
Discovering healthier  
sexuality required  
something unexpected

**PLUS**

**Setting Boundaries**

**Hidden Worth**

**Retaining Newcomers**



The Newsletter of SAA's International Service Organization



## 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.

**March - April 2020**



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# FROM THE EDITOR

## Remembering a Super Hero of Service

BY GARY T.

**Confined to a  
wheel chair, Brent  
M. was like the  
Professor Xavier  
of our local  
fellowship.**

Recently, I lost a sponsor and friend who was a living example of the call to be of service described in the Twelfth Step.

Confined to a wheel chair for much of his life, Brent M. was like the Professor Xavier of our local fellowship. When I came into the rooms more than twelve years ago, his deep baritone was one of the first messages of hope I heard. He spoke passionately about the power of the steps — and he doggedly encouraged service.

Though he wasn't my sponsor then, he took me aside not long after I started regularly attending meetings and suggested I fill the soon-to-open Friday secretary position. Like many newcomers, I immediately told him that no, I wasn't ready. Surely, someone else would be more qualified. He just fixed his intense blue eyes on me without judgment, smiled, and said, "Just consider it. I think it would be really good for your recovery."

More than his words though, I looked to his example. Here was a guy who was doing so much more service work than me — chairing meetings, sponsoring others, attending group conscience meetings and talking to newcomers like me — who had a wellspring of joy I longed for in my own life. So, I decided to follow his heroic lead, and I've never looked back.

From the moment I met Brent, to nearly the last moment of his life, he lived the Twelfth Step message of service, of keeping what you have by giving it away — and the joy that springs from that spiritual awakening. Though he's gone now, every time I do service, I think of that first time Brent invited me to experience the Twelfth Step joy with him, and I smile.

# FROM THE DIRECTOR

## Step up to Service

BY PAUL M.

**Service has strengthened my recovery, and I am always trying to relay that message to others.**

As I start my second year as your Executive Director, many things are on my mind. We are making progress on SAA Connect and hope to launch the first phase soon. The area assemblies are starting to meet and the fellowship is moving into the next phase of our structure: to hear the voice of the fellowship through the Group Service Representatives (GSR).

Speaking of service, my understanding is that SAA does not emphasize service work in our meetings. Pages 75 and 76 in the SAA Green Book describe many ways we can be of service. I understand some other Twelve Step organizations do a better job at emphasizing service than we do.

Service can be accomplished in many ways. Most meetings do not have a coffee maker or a need to empty ashtrays, but they do need people to set up and break down chairs, make sure literature is available for the newcomer, act as the treasurer, or even lead the meeting. Making newcomers feel welcome and reaching out to them after the meeting is another important act of service.

Service at the local level may include putting the word out to therapists, clergy, and law enforcement that we are here to help the suffering addict. The Public Information/Cooperation with the Professional Community (PI/CPC) committee can help you there.

Futhermore, any member of our fellowship can serve at the international level. Service has strengthened my recovery in many ways, and I am always trying to relay that message to other members. Find out more at [saa-iso.org](http://saa-iso.org).



# DEAR GRACE

## How to Set Boundaries in Recovery

BY WOMEN'S  
OUTREACH COMMITTEE

**In recovery, we  
learn what is our  
business and  
what is not our  
business.**

### Dear Grace:

I am friends with some of my sobriety “sisters” (those with whom I share the same sponsor), but there is now conflict between one of them and my sponsor. I feel uncomfortable because they are both people I care about. How do I handle this situation?

### Caught in the Middle

#### Dear Caught:

It's often a sign of great progress in recovery when we begin to care honestly about other people. In our addiction, we frequently didn't care much about others; our past is often littered with broken and discarded relationships, including friendships. Congratulations, then, on your progress and welcome to a new challenge of recovery: how to navigate personal relationships and set boundaries.

We learn what is our business and what is not our business. What's going on with your sponsor and her other sponsees is not-your-business. You can simply continue to care about and talk to both of them. Refrain from talking about either of them to the other; always a good rule and especially important now.

Too many women, especially early in recovery, get bogged down in gossip and drama, and forget that they are in the program to work the steps. Always remember the point of sponsorship: “most importantly, sponsors guide us through the Twelve Steps” (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 13). “Sobriety sisters” and support networks, outreach calls, etc., are all just tools we have added. (By the way, many of us define



“sobriety sisters” as all women in recovery. One reason is that defining the term as in your question implies a “mother” role for your sponsor, which is not always helpful, and can create “sibling” rivalry.)

These tools should be used when they are helpful and set aside when they are not. If we cling to them, they can hamper recovery as often as they support recovery.

So what does it mean to work the steps in this circumstance?

First, focus on yourself and your step work. Stay out of what is not your business. Second, the Twelve Steps “provide basic principles for living. Most of us find opportunities on a daily basis to apply one or more of the steps to some challenge in our life” (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 22). For example, in this situation, Step One could be adapted to remind

us that we are powerless over others and can’t manage their thinking, feeling, or actions. In this way, it is possible to use the principles in the Twelve Steps to recover from addictive sexual behavior, as well as to “guide us in the everyday challenges of life” (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 61).

Best wishes to you on this part of your recovery journey,

**Grace**

*Statement of Purpose for Dear Grace: to reach out to all women with a desire to stop addictive sexual behavior through this printed medium and share with the fellowship the types of questions the Grace e-mail (grace@saa-women.org) receives. \*Names have been changed to protect anonymity.*



# LIVING IN SOBRIETY

## Coming Back from the Depths of Hopelessness

BY FRANK B.

**I learned that my  
sobriety and my  
program had to  
be the number  
one priority in my  
life. I could not let  
anything else get  
in the way.**

My name is Frank and I am a sex addict. I'm also a gay man and I have almost 25 years of sexual sobriety from my inner-circle behaviors, which include having anonymous sex and entering sexual establishments.

On my last night of acting out, I stayed out until 5 a.m. prowling various places, but what was different that night is that I hit my bottom.

I still remember asking my Higher Power to help me. I was acting out in the same compulsive ways at thirty-seven years of age that I had engaged in since I was fifteen. I felt hopeless, but from that hopelessness an opening happened for me when I asked for help.

I threw myself into the program of SAA which had just expanded into San Francisco in 1995. I was an early member. I'm still grateful to the other members who put sobriety first in their lives and who were rigorously honest about their behavior. I learned that my sobriety and my program had to be the number one priority of my life. I could not let anything else get in the way of my sobriety.

I attended as many meetings as were available, and I quickly made friends with other sex addicts. I made a service commitment at a meeting and used the phone whenever I felt like I was going to act out.

Eventually, I got a sponsor. He had more than a year of sobriety and had worked the steps already. He took me through the steps. I started sponsoring other people, because I knew that if I didn't give my sobriety away I'd lose it. I am also doing prison outreach now.

I've received so many gifts as a result of SAA and my sobriety. I've been able to move in the





direction of my right livelihood in work and I've made so many friends both inside and outside the program. When I turned 50, I had more than 50 people at my party. When I first got into the program I barely had any friends.

I have been able to try many new hobbies that are now in my outer circle including hiking, camping, giving workshops, and travel. I'm also involved with several spiritual communities.

Finally, I have been in a primary relationship with a man for almost seven years, which for me is a miracle as I almost never dated before I got into SAA.

We have so much fun and connection. But I also get to find out that relationships are not easy, and that they require a lot of communication

and willingness to admit when I am wrong.

A lot of footwork and trial and error in dating had to happen before I met my partner. I made mistakes along the way in dating but remained open, stayed sober, and tried to listen to my Higher Power

and other's advice.

The program has changed my life in all areas. I have the tools today to deal with problems that come up. I don't go into my inner circle when I have problems the way I used to.

I could never have done this alone so I am grateful to everyone in SAA who is traveling on this path with me. I keep coming back because I don't want to miss what Higher Power has in store for me around the next corner.

*If you have five or more years of sobriety and would like to write a Living in Sobriety column, please contact [toc@saa-recovery.org](mailto:toc@saa-recovery.org).*

# Better than Sex



## Discovering healthier sexuality required something far different than expected

*If I ever go looking for my heart's desire again, I won't look any further than my own back yard. - Dorothy Gale*

BY ERIC F.

I n my local meeting, there's one reading topic that's guaranteed to cause groans of dread and discomfort. You guessed it: "healthier sexuality." It's not hard to understand. Most of us in the program have been grateful just to get some hard-earned sobriety in our lives. And many of our old bottom-line behaviors were downright toxic, to ourselves and others. What could we sex addicts possibly know about healthier sexuality?

That's what I thought, too. But then an incredible, crazy thing happened. Thanks to the gift of recovery — and a lot of just plain luck — I managed to hang onto my marriage. There were some very rough times along the way, and a lot of healing to be done. But somehow, eight years later, my partner and I are still together, and our relationship is stronger than ever.

I've had plenty of stumbles on the way to becoming a better partner, just as I've had slips in my recovery. But even so, wonderful things have come to pass. Like getting in touch with my emotions, maybe for the first time ever. Feeling more



self-esteem and empathy. And yes, even a chance to finally experience some healthier sexuality in my life. So what (if anything) have I learned?

Before recovery, my relationship was a mess. I was a self-centered workaholic. I barely spent any time with my partner, and when I did, I was distracted and grumpy. I couldn't communicate. I couldn't process my feelings. I was strung-out from porn and masturbation. And yet, for the life of me, I had no idea why my partner had so little interest in sex. In fact, I took her lack of interest as an excuse to retreat further into my crazy double life. I eventually began paying for sex, and soon reached a state of total unmanageability.

When, I finally hit bottom, and revealed the ugly facts of my addiction. It was like a bomb went off in our living room. Battered and burned, we began trying to piece our lives back together. There were many difficult things to discuss, and many painful feelings to face. I joined the fellowship and started working the steps. We both got into therapy. We got sponsors. We talked and talked some more. And somehow, through all that talking and crying and struggling, I got to a place of greater honesty and humility. It felt strange at first, not having anything to hide, and having feelings that I could actually feel. But it felt good, too. It was like discovering a strange new land, and realizing it was my home. Slowly but steadily, my priorities

started to shift. I began to put my relationship before other things, like my career. We started spending more time together. I walked away from a good-paying staff job, because I could see that the stress and travel would drive me to relapse. It took nearly a year to get fully employed again, but it was the right decision. I started to become somebody my partner could engage with, somebody she could relate to. Maybe even somebody worth getting close to.

Gradually, this newfound closeness made its way into all corners of our lives. And ultimately it was carried over into a new and more intimate sexual relationship. I came to realize that my partner actually did have an interest in sex — but only if there was a good, close, emotional connection to start from. This really wasn't something we tried to make happen. Instead, we focused on the basics: honesty, trust, intimacy, and quality time. And, eventually, a new physical intimacy grew out of that, quite unexpectedly.

In my addiction, sex was something I pursued by myself, for myself. Acting out meant getting what I wanted, on my own terms, whenever I felt like it. I didn't want to consider anyone else's needs or feelings. I didn't even want to consider my own feelings. It didn't matter if I was exhausted, stressed-out or sick. I'd act out anyway. I tried to avoid emotional intimacy of any kind. I didn't understand what intimacy was, really. But it made me feel vulnerable,

and I hated vulnerability. In childhood I'd been shamed for showing vulnerable feelings like fear or pain, as if they were ugly and unnatural. So I fled from intimacy, into the numbed-out safety of my addiction.

In recovery, sex is something my partner and I do together. It's not just a "couple of clicks away." It's a relationship. I can't think only of myself. We both have needs and feelings, and it's important for me to respect them.

For example, it means waiting until the time is right for both of us. I'm a control freak, so this can sometimes be a challenge. It also means being mindful of what's going on in our lives, and how it affects us. If one of us hasn't gotten enough sleep, or just got some upsetting news, I can't ignore that and pretend it's an okay time to be sexual. It means taking life on life's terms, plain and simple.

In my addiction, sex was basically empty stimulation, wrapped up in an endless search for a bigger high. And I always felt like that high was in danger of fading out. I felt a constant craving for something more intense and dramatic. The "soft-core" images I viewed in my youth soon failed to deliver the high I craved. Acting out became a desperate quest for more objectification, more extreme scenarios, more cruelty, more degradation.

In recovery, sex is rooted in the connection I feel with my partner. Getting to this place of connection wasn't easy. I had to basically re-learn

everything I'd learned about sex. It was scary at first and felt unfamiliar. It took patience, and I had to practice being gentle with myself when I fell into frustration or shame. But now I feel a sense of satisfaction I never thought was possible. A healthier sexual encounter leaves me happy and feeling nourished, whereas acting out used to leave me worn-out and dejected. What's more, with healthier sexuality, I don't feel a need to keep ratcheting up the intensity. Connection is a well that never runs dry.

As someone who's spent most of his life obsessed with sex, you might think I'd have an easy time talking about it. But I could barely talk about sex with anyone, least of all my partner. Growing up, I got the message that sex was dirty, something to keep hidden. My friends and I would make sexual jokes sometimes, for cheap camaraderie.

But talking seriously about sex, as a normal part of everyday life, seemed impossible and terrifying. I thought my partner should somehow be able to read my mind, and then magically meet my needs with zero discussion. When this didn't happen, I told myself she didn't like sex, and therefore my acting out was justified.

Healthier sexuality means there needs to be an open and honest dialogue between us. This was pretty daunting at first, much like getting comfortable with intimacy. Both my partner and I have had fears to overcome in talking about our sex life. (For best results,



it's important to pick the right time to have a conversation, so both of us will be relaxed and receptive.) I have to try hard not to make assumptions. I have to work on being a better listener. And sometimes I have to accept some constructive criticism. This can be tough, since even a minor suggestion can send me into a "shame hole" for days. But the effort we both make is well worth it. After more than thirty years together, we're learning important things about each other that we never knew before. This understanding helps us be more relaxed and confident in our sexual relationship.

Any relationship takes work, and in my experience, that goes for healthier sexuality. It calls for patience. It calls for compromise. There are fears to be faced. It doesn't always turn out the way I want it to. Some encounters don't go as well as others. The bottom line is, healthier sexuality requires all of the things I was desperately trying to avoid in my addiction. In order to move forward, I had to make peace with all of that, and get to work.

Sometimes the work seems too daunting, and I feel the temptation to flee. How easy it would be, I think, to escape to the false safety of my addiction. I wouldn't have any messy emotions to face, no vulnerability to deal with. I wouldn't have to think about my partner's needs. I wouldn't have to think about my own qualities as a partner. I wouldn't have to worry about performance issues. I could just have an easy,

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**The bottom line is,  
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trouble-free good time. Right?

Wrong. Acting out may have offered some pleasure for a little while. But it never made me happy. It never left me with any self-esteem. It never left me feeling good about my partner or our relationship. It only left me feeling miserable and tired and disgusted with myself.

But after a healthier sexual encounter, I feel good. The experience gives me so much more than pleasure. It gives me joy and connection and comfort. It supports and strengthens my relationship, instead of tearing it down. Healthier sexuality makes me feel like a whole person.

I can see now that this is what I've always truly needed and wanted, deep down, in my heart of hearts. I just couldn't see it. What it took was the courage to embrace things I've been running from my whole life.

I used to think I didn't belong here, that I'd always be an outsider. But now I can see that I'm in the place I was always meant to be. I'm just recognizing it for the first time. I'm where I belong. I'm home. ●

# Fill 'Er Up!



**Higher Power gives us the fuel we never knew we needed**

**BY ANONYMOUS**

I attended meetings for years and achieved some varying degrees of recovery, and made progress, but never was able to achieve sobriety just by going to the meetings. Yes, the meetings gave me all the guidelines for changing my outward behavior so that I could stop acting out, but they were not touching upon the emotional, psychological, and spiritual issues that were tormenting me on the inside. In short, I needed the kind of outside help our Green Book describes.

Before recovery, I was a walking wounded person, a slave to an addiction that I tried to use to medicate my life, to escape reality and flee to a fantasy world, to avoid reality and responsibilities. I was not happy — I was a miserable person, but I did not know how to fix what ailed me. I had no hope. I had lived that way for years and years.

The addiction was destroying my life, marriage, and soul, as well as my relationship with God and fellow humans. I was an avoidant person, fearful and mistrustful of people. I never let people get close. I believed in God, but felt that he was a cold, distant, judgmental figure, with whom I had no real personal intimacy of any kind.

I needed a way to break the power of the addiction over my life, give up the addiction, and find my way back to God so I could have a personal relationship with him and with my fellow human beings. I was starved for intimacy with God and with people.



Childhood emotional and physical abuse were the forces actually behind the scenes that were driving the addiction — and the fear of intimacy. Daily emotional pain and torment from childhood experiences were what was driving me to want to escape reality, to want to escape from painful memories, to want to act out and forget life and its harsh realities for a while. My experience is that if the addict doesn't address the issues that are actually driving the addiction, then he or she will have limited success in achieving sobriety and a healthy way of living.

In my case, I needed a private therapist — along with a sponsor, the steps, and meetings — in order to discover and identify the underlying forces and dynamics that have been driving the addiction. Why did I feel compelled to act out? What was so painful in my mind that I urgently felt the need to escape reality for a while and act out? For me, these types of questions had to be explored and resolved to remove the desire to want to escape reality and act out.

Once again, sex addiction is not a sexual problem, but a spiritual problem. There is a saying that there is a God-shaped void in every person that needs to be filled up. I learned what Steps Two and Three make clear: nothing but God can fit into the God-shaped void in our hearts, and when we try to fill and satisfy that void with something other than God, we are headed for trouble, misery, unhappiness, and sorrow.

Sex addiction represents a person crying out spiritually for the love of God. Sex addicts are people hurting for God and not knowing that God is what they are hurting for. They think acting out will fill the void, but it will not.

But once they let God fill the God-shaped void in their heart, they will be changed into someone who can be reunited in loving, healthy relationships with loved ones who have been shut out for so long.

Of course, the addict has to have the desire and motivation to want to change if recovery is to take place. The pain of staying the same has to become greater than the pain to want to change. In other words, the addict has to hit bottom before he will take action.

Thank God I did!

Now my life is very different. After much recovery and healing, I have a close and personal relationship with God, and I have allowed that relationship to heal me. I now regard God as my true father. Now I live a life of “already but not yet” — that is, I live a life committed to the personal renewing of my mind, using prayer and meditation to improve that conscious contact with God.

Each day I praise, thank, and love my Higher Power and ask that he be with me throughout the day, renewing me, showing me his will and what he would have me do in my life of service to him. I now have joy in my life and a peace and serenity that I would never have known! ●

# Hidden Treasure



## Recovery reveals the inherent worth addiction covered up

BY JON C.

I have been a member of SAA since 2004. The first time I attended a meeting, I felt that I belonged. At that moment, I realized for the first time that there is a name for my problem; it is called sex addiction. Even so, I still believed that I could control my addiction with will power and that the consequences of my addiction weren't so bad. It actually took me years to acknowledge my powerlessness over my sex addiction and that my life had become unmanageable. I couldn't even see that sex addiction is an illness that ruined my life, filling me with so much guilt and shame.

By the second year in the program, I came to realize that I had had enough of being sick and tired. So I began to listen to others who had some sobriety and had what I wanted. I began to listen to whatever was working for them and whatever they had to do to recover from this dreadful disease. I knew that I was ready to do whatever it takes for me to recover as well.

I began to focus on the solution of the program of SAA recovery as others have shared in meetings and developing personal relationships with other sex addicts. Many of these people have since become my friends. One thing I learned from



them is that being honest about my struggles is the key to opening a whole new dimension of recovery. I remember when the SAA Green Book first came out, and I tried to absorb as much as I could.

I began to work the first step with my sponsor who became my mentor. I finally trusted another person to help me recover from a place of hopelessness and despair. I had begun to practice honesty and accountability about my unhealthy actions, and thoughts.

The First Step required surrendering to my sexual addiction, but that was easier said than done! I can't count the number of times I tried to use my own willpower to defeat my addiction — and I lost.

Acting out for me involved going to the bathhouse, the park, and online to find sexual encounters. I had acted out by having anonymous sex. I also started using drugs and alcohol to intensify the sexual experience. After acquiring an STD, I hit bottom. But that became the impetus to my recovery.

I finally realized I had to let go of my willfulness to rationalize my acting out. I had to truly be willing to put an end to my suffering

The only thing I hadn't tried was to surrender and come clean to my sponsor. When I finally stopped lying about my acting out, there were no more excuses for my behaviors. I had

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## **Instead of seeing myself as a broken sex addict, I began to see myself as a person with worth.**

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to be honest that I could not stop acting out on my own. It was so painful to admit my defeat.

But out of that defeat, something amazing happened. As I began to work with a sponsor, work the steps and focus on my recovery, I began to look at myself differently.

Gradually, rather than seeing myself as a broken sex addict, I began to see myself as a person with worth. Slowly, as I grew in recovery, I realized that I am worth recovery. I realized that my humanity and my spirituality are worth saving

Out of this new belief, I began a quest for a new and meaningful life. Now I have a reason to live just for today. Temptations to act out still arise again and again. But over the last nearly four years, I have remained sober, thanks to the hope of recovery — and the newfound worth — that I have found in the SAA program.

My journey of recovery began by working the First Step, and it continues today. God willing, I will remain sober one day at a time — because I am worth it. ●

# Welcome Back

## Here are some best practices that have proven effective at retaining newcomers

BY MIKE C.

**R**etention of newcomers to SAA meetings seems to be a fellowship-wide problem. The recent circulation of the draft pamphlet, “Suggestions for Making Phone Calls to Newcomers,” has sparked local discussion of best practices for retaining newcomers. Some groups have found that having members reach out by telephone to newcomers may be a more effective way of ensuring that they feel welcome and return, rather than expecting the newcomer to contact a member of the group.

The Indianan Intergruop asked other meetings to share their best practices for retaining newcomers. Here are some of the measures groups take to “keep ‘em coming back”:

- » Anytime that a newcomer enters the room, an old-timer greets the person, asks his or her name and then introduces the person to the other members.
- » During the meeting, one or more old-timers take the newcomer aside for a one-on-one explanation of the Twelve Steps. The role of sponsorship is discussed and the newcomer is free to ask any questions he/she may have.
- » Provide each newcomer with a complimentary copy of the pocket-sized *Sex Addicts Anonymous*.



- » If parking is not free, pay for the newcomers to park.
- » During check-in have the regular attendees go first to allow the newcomer to observe how the process works. Then, offer the newcomer the opportunity to check-in or to pass.
- » Provide each newcomer with a copy of the group's phone list. Mark on the list which members are present at the meeting.
- » Give each newcomer a Newcomers Packet. Have the newcomer write his/her name and phone number on the envelope. Pass the envelope around the room and have anyone who is willing to receive a call list his/her contact information. Those who prefer can write down the newcomer's contact information and call the person later in the week.
- » Create a volunteer list of those members who are willing to call the newcomer. When a newcomer is present, the meeting chair or secretary informs the next person on the list that it is his/her turn to place a follow-up call to the newcomer.
- » If members of the group normally go to a restaurant or coffee shop for a "meeting after the meeting," invite the newcomer to tag along.
- » If the group presents sobriety tokens, be sure to offer a "Newcomers Token" (or "desire chip") to any first time attendee. ●

*Reprinted from the 2020 Winter Check-In, the newsletter of the Indianan Intergroup*

## ***The Knot***

*By Paul P.*

*When one reaches the point  
Calamity and confusion a big part  
A life turned upside down  
Can healing ever start?*

*A life unraveling  
Events leading up to dismay  
Reaching the proverbial knot  
I've arrived at a decision today.*

*To continue down this path  
Seems like only option there  
Could there be another way out? More  
pain I must bear?*

*I've come to the noose  
A point of no return  
An endless cycle of misfortune  
Must be a big lesson to learn*

*Recovery was the last straw  
Promising a new life  
One filled with hope and renewal No  
longer such chaos and strife*

*Unraveling the knot  
Crying for this aid  
Others in the program  
Such changes they all made*

*New way of living  
I've seen progress each day  
All I did was become willing Believing  
in this new way*

*Practicing the principles  
In every action  
Ive untied the knot  
A gift of utter satisfaction.*

# DEAR WILL

## How Can I Achieve Healthier Sexuality?

BY WILL

**Our sexuality can  
be an expression  
of our recovery,  
of being returned  
to sanity, of  
having a spiritual  
awakening.**

**Dear Will,**

I am very grateful for the recovery I found through SAA. My life is much better as a result of working our program. My sponsor and others in my group have shown me how to live free from addiction.

One area that I am still struggling with, however, is healthier sexuality. How do I get there from here?

This subject rarely comes up at meetings. When it does, it usually winds up being a standoff between the haves and the have-nots, with very little of it sounding healthy. I am most definitely a have-not and no one seems to be able to tell me how to change that. Do you have any advice?

**Sober or Sexually frustrated**

**Dear S.O.S.,**

Congratulations on your recovery. What a blessing to get to the point where we can start asking about this foreign concept called healthier sexuality. The SAA program of recovery offers a spiritual solution: freedom from addictive sexual behavior through working the Twelve Steps of Sex Addicts Anonymous.

How people choose to live in that life of recovery is as personal as are our three circles. Some in the rooms continue to struggle to find sexual sobriety, others may choose a period or a life of complete abstinence, while some have found ways to make our sexuality an appropriate part of life in recovery, because of our recovery.

While our program does not pretend to teach about any particular type of healthier sexuality, I have found, through working the steps and living by the spiritual principles, that “healthier”



is a description that can be applied to many areas of life.

Our sexuality can be an expression of our recovery, of being returned to sanity, and of having a spiritual awakening as the result of not acting out, one day at a time, while learning to live according to spiritual principles.

Through working the Twelve Steps of Sex Addicts Anonymous with guidance from our sponsor, our groups, and our Higher Power, sex and relationships can take their rightful place in our lives. I have observed recovering addicts begin to trust in others, themselves, and a Higher Power.

Through working our program, we can experience a change in our emotional presence and connections with others as a result of our sobriety and recovery, which makes many things possible.

Fortunately, we do not have to go far to discover a toolkit of recovery developed just for healthier sexuality. The same tools and supports that helped us get sober (such as the Three Circles, asking for help, connection, sponsorship, phone calls, and meetings) can help us learn what healthier means for us.

Through recovery we learn that healthier sexuality begins long before any actual sex acts. It begins with learning how to connect with ourselves, our Higher Power, and others.

If we remain abstinent and practice the spiritual principles of the program in our lives, we may find our attitudes towards our sexuality and our ways of experiencing sex changing as well. We may find ourselves listening more attentively to others as part of our recovery, as part of our healthier sexuality.

We learn that we can be sexual with love, gratitude, and generosity and that sex can be an expression of our highest spiritual ideals. We also learn that without the steps, the program, sobriety, and reliance on our Higher Power, healthier sexuality, for us sex addicts, can be yet another unfulfilled fantasy.

I cannot tell you how to have healthier sexuality. I can, however, share that working our Twelve Steps can lead not only to a life free from addiction, but to a life built on spiritual principles.

These spiritual principles can also give us the tools to have healthier communication, healthier boundaries, healthier connection, healthier intimacy, and even healthier sexuality. I hope they do the same for you.

**Will**

*If you have a question for Will,  
please send an email to  
[Men4SAA@saa-recovery.org](mailto:Men4SAA@saa-recovery.org).*

# STORIES OF SERVICE

## Getting More Humble and Accountable

BY CHAD H.

Being a humble  
servant helped  
me to find a  
closer stand to  
my God.

When I entered SAA, I was a broken man. I was under investigation by police. I thought I was the worst possible person. I was suicidal.

Then came recovery.

I found a sponsor who understood me. Another wise fellow (who is no longer with us) took me under his wing. I made calls to fellows and built friendships. I became a regular at two different meetings. And...I began my service within SAA.

Before too long, a fellow in a wheelchair leaned over and said he thought I should chair a meeting — my sponsor agreed. It wasn't as easy as I had expected — lots of feedback from fellows and difficulty fitting into my work schedule made it a challenge. Eventually, I was voted in as intergroup rep and my program was off to a great start.

Then came some wonderful sponsees. My sponsees each had a slightly different facet of addiction — and a different amazing lesson to teach me. Seeing the sneaky ways addiction can creep in helped to keep me more vigilant in my own recovery. Showing kindness and understanding helped me to find gentle kindness towards myself. Making regular calls helped me see that I was not alone — and helped me build close friendships with fellows.

Being a humble servant helped me to find a closer stance to my God. Less promotion, and more quiet attraction were important while doing my part to help make the program more successful, my fellows more supported, and myself more humble and accountable.

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



# FROM THE BOARD

## How Should an SAA Group Be Defined?

BY BOB L., BOARD  
CHAIR

**Some group  
inform members  
that AA and the  
Big Book are  
the only means  
of successful  
recovery.**

The board has become aware that there is a small number of groups within the fellowship who may not be carrying the SAA message. Some groups, we have learned, apply Tradition Five to the message of AA rather than our message. A few of these groups also use the AA steps and the AA traditions rather than the SAA steps and traditions.

Moreover, some groups specifically inform members that the SAA steps, traditions, literature, etc. should never be used, because AA and the Big Book are the only means of successful recovery. Some of these groups actively discourage their members from using any means of recovery than the Big Book and their meetings.

This information presented the board with a dilemma. If a group is not carrying the SAA message, but instead AA or some other message, what can and should be done about it, if anything? Since each group is autonomous, how can the board tell groups what literature they may use at their meetings?

On the other hand, permitting such groups and their websites to be listed on our outreach website sends people to groups who specifically disavow the SAA message. Also, we are sending addicts to groups who tell sex addicts seeking recovery not to seek therapy, religious support, or other means to assist their efforts.

The board believes this matter should be addressed and referred the issue to the Policy Committee. They requested this committee to suggest a means to ensure the carrying of the SAA message without violating Tradition Four.

The Policy Committee spent several of its monthly

meetings considering all aspects of this subject. As with many issues within in our fellowship, there were widely disparate views on the topic. Some members felt that the definition of a group in the bylaws was clear, such that nothing further need be done. The committee noted the definition of an SAA “group” in the bylaws: “An SAA member group is an SAA group that has registered itself with the International Service Organization of SAA and follows the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of SAA.”

Others argued that doing nothing would not allow the ISO to delist groups that reject our message and our program. In the end, the Policy Committee determined that it would be of value to issue some interpretive guidance on the meaning of an SAA group. As a result, the committee presented a motion to the Board regarding the meaning of an SAA group within our fellowship.

After receiving input from the Policy Committee, the board unanimously passed a motion at its October meeting to interpret the meaning of a “group” to be a registered group that:

- » Is affiliated only with SAA,
- » Uses the SAA Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions in meetings,
- » Carries the SAA message of recovery,
- » Provides access to the SAA Green

Book and other SAA literature in meetings,

- » Does not support, endorse, or oppose outside causes or issues.

The implementation of the motion will rest with the ISO office. If the office receives notice that a particular group is not abiding by the substance or spirit of these characteristics, the group will be sent information about how we interpret the meaning of an SAA group within our fellowship and be asked to respond with information about how they implement these principles.

If the group at issue determines, in its autonomy, that it does not wish to accept our interpretation of an SAA group, the ISO will not provide the group’s website address on our outreach website and the group’s meeting will no longer be included in our meeting list. In this manner, we use our best efforts to ensure that sex addicts seeking the assistance of our recovery program will be able to receive our message rather than a message that rejects our program.

## HELP WANTED!

*Letter writers/sponsors needed!*

*Confidential program.*

*Great way to serve & carry the  
SAA message of recovery to prisoners.*

*Email: [HarveyA@saa-iso.net](mailto:HarveyA@saa-iso.net)  
or call ISO at 713-869-4902*



# ISO NEWS

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## CSC Working to Help Areas Prepare for Conference

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A big part of the work of the CSC this service year is to help areas prepare for participation in the upcoming 2020 ISO Conference. To this end, we have several projects completed or underway.

1. A draft “Area Assembly Handbook,” loaded with suggestions and ideas for your first area assembly and participation at the conference has been created and is available on the ISO service website.
2. The CSC is hosting a monthly “Lets Talk” Zoom meeting where up and running areas will present some aspect of how they got started, followed by a sharing of ideas and best practices conversation open to all on the call. Dates planned so far include Saturday, March 28 at 12 p.m. CT, Saturday, April 25th at 12 p.m. CT, and Thursday, May 28th at 8 p.m. CT.
3. We have established a CSC feedback email address at [csc.feedback@saa-iso.org](mailto:csc.feedback@saa-iso.org). Please send any questions you may have regarding forming an area and participating in the October ISO Conference. We check the email weekly and will get back to you promptly.
4. Finally, we are currently working on holding a Zoom delegate communication meeting later this year, but prior to the conference, where lots of information pertinent to participating in the conference will be discussed and shared.

## Convention Workshop, Speaker Application Deadline Extended

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The deadline for workshop & speaker applications has been extended to March 15th.

We still have a plenty of openings for convention workshop presenters and event speakers. Please come share your recovery experience, strength, and hope with us by putting on a workshop at the convention!

The workshop and speaker applications can be found online at the service website. Contact the office for login and username. Please fill out and return applications to us by March 15th if you would like to host a workshop or be an event speaker.

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

# ISO NEWS

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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.

Convention Registration Reminder:

Pre-registration for the ISO convention is still open. Please pre-register soon (by May 1st) in order to get the best prices.

Also, please note that meals must be purchased by May 1st and cannot be purchased onsite.

The convention brochure on the convention website: <https://saa-convention.org/>. For login information, contact the ISO office.

We look forward to seeing you at the convention!

## Outreach Committee Offers Forums on Fellowship Best Practices

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Members of the Fellowship (formerly 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. Our hope is to present experience, 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 2nd Wed. each month

7-8pm central time. To obtain call-in information, contact [info@saa-recovery.org](mailto:info@saa-recovery.org)

Forums will include:

- » March 11th 2020: Women in SAA—how to support women who attend your meetings (members of the Womens Outreach Committee):
- » April 8th, 2020: Service Resumes and the Nominating Committee—requirements for international service and how you can participate



# ISO NEWS

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» May 13th, 2020: Prisoner outreach and how members can be involved

Look in *The Outer Circle* or email blasts for future schedule, or contact [info@saa-recovery.org](mailto:info@saa-recovery.org).

Future topics for discussion include:

- » 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

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 that some of us have survived. Each forum would be convened and facilitated by members of the Fellowship Committee, and the presentation will begin once introductions are finished. All are welcome for participation, feedback, questions, and additional ideas. Join us!

## **Pamphlets, Booklets, Italian Green Book Available in E-Format**

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Our pamphlets and booklets are now available in e-book format, starting at only fifty cents each. Titles are available in English, Spanish, Italian, and French.

Available formats are mobi (for Kindle readers) and epub (for non-Kindle). Pamphlets and booklets are available only through the SAA store and not Amazon or any third-party seller.

We are happy to announce that an Italian version of the Green Book (Sex Addicts Anonymous) is now available! This translation is available only as an e-book through the SAA store.

Available formats are mobi (for Amazon Kindle readers) and epub (for non-Kindle). All can be purchased online at [saa-store.org](http://saa-store.org).

## **Twelve Concepts Subcommittee Holding April Teleconference**

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The Concepts Subcommittee of the SAA Conference Steering Committee will be holding a fellowship-wide teleconference on Saturday, April 18, at noon US central time.

The purpose of the teleconference will be for the subcommittee to discuss and

gather feedback on the Twelve Concepts for SAA Service. You can find the current draft of the Concepts at the SAA Service website, <http://saa-iso.org/>.

Click on “Twelve Concepts” near the bottom of the left sidebar. Contact the office for login information.

You can also contact the office at [info@saa-recovery.org](mailto:info@saa-recovery.org) or 713/869-4902 to get a copy of the Concepts.

The meeting will be held using Zoom. You can contact the office for information on dialing into the call.

## Board Eliminates Outreach Committee, Approves 2020 Budget

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Here’s a look at the ISO Board of Trustees actions from the previous months:

### **November**

- » Approved 2020 convention bid.

### **December**

- » Approved policy establishing the Executive Director Performance Review.

### **January**

- » Approved the 2020 budget.
- » Approved motion that the General Outreach Committee will be eliminated. All subcommittees reporting to General Outreach will now report directly to the Fellowship ISC.
- » Approved motion that the Executive Director provide quarterly written updates to the ISO Board of Trustees regarding the current strategic goals.

## Matching Fund Donations Help Yield Year’s First Positive Net

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The month of December was the first time this year since January 2019 where we had a positive net income.

We had a net income surplus of \$75,615.13. We had budgeted for a deficit of \$7,831; this increase was mainly from a \$24k donation toward the Giving Hope a Voice Matching Fund and a nearly \$34.5K profit in the Endowment Fund (the \$34.5K is still invested in the Endowment Fund). These items were not budgeted for in 2019.

Individual and group donations were also higher than expected in December.



# ISO NEWS

Our total income was \$64,132.60 higher than our budgeted income of \$7,193. Our gross profit (total income minus cost of goods) was \$63,235.65 higher than our budgeted amount of \$70,523. Our expenses were \$20,211.08 lower than our estimated expenses of \$78,354.

Our total SAA Green Book sales were below our estimate of \$7,700 by \$1,024.84 in December. For the year we are at 87 percent of our estimated sales. Our Green Books sales from HCI are below the budgeted amount of \$2,200 by \$256.85. Findaway audio sales were \$76.24 above our budget of \$200.

- » December sales for our book *Voices in Recovery* were \$2,577.48. For the year we were above our original estimated sales of \$12,000 by \$43,696.03. We expect this rate to slow down in 2020.
- » Our pamphlet and booklet sales were below our estimate of \$5,541 by \$634.73 in December. For the year we are at 88 percent of our estimated sales.
- » Our plastic chips sales were below our estimate of \$1,800 by \$127.50 in December. For the year we are at 93 percent of our estimated sales.
- » Our bronze medallion sales were above our estimate of \$2,800 by \$258.74 in December. For the year we are at 97 percent of our estimated sales.
- » Our total sales for December were below our estimate of \$19,221 by \$52.92 in December. For the year we are at 100 percent of our estimated sales. This was mainly from *Voices of Recovery*.
- » Our product inventory is valued at \$97,253.19.
- » Our operational reserve is fully funded at \$200,021.

Individual donations were above our estimate of \$40,053 by \$22,178.49 in December. For the year we are at 155 percent of our estimated individual donations. This is from General Donations and Giving Hope a Chance Matching Funds being higher than expected. This trend of Lifeline Partners donations being lower than expected continues.

Group donations were above our estimate of \$16,100 by \$5,109.66 in December. For the year we are at 131 percent of our estimated group donations.

Our cash flow has been tight for many months recently and many projects have been slowed down. Many individuals and groups have donated at a higher rate in December and we are very thankful for that support. We hope this trend continues.

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

## The Outer Circle

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

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

## Board of Trustees and Literature Committee

### 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](mailto:board@saa-recovery.org)  
CSC: [csc@saa-recovery.org](mailto:csc@saa-recovery.org)  
LitCom: [litcom@saa-recovery.org](mailto:litcom@saa-recovery.org)

## Office Staff

Executive Director: Paul M.: [director@saa-iso.net](mailto: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.

### Literature Committee

Robbie H (Chair); Valerie G (2nd Chair)  
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](mailto:info@saa-recovery.org) or call the ISO

### First Sunday of the month

CSC: Policy & Procedure: 2:00 p.m.  
Intergroup Communications: 3:00 p.m.

### 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

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.  
CSC: Communications: 2 p.m.  
LGBT Outreach: 3:00 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](mailto:toc@saa-recovery.org) or to the ISO office. Please submit articles via email in Microsoft Word format with the **RELEASE FORM** at the bottom of this page.

### Deadlines for Submission and Topics

Jan/Feb:	"Taking Action"	Nov 5
Mar/Apr:	"Healthier Sexuality"	Jan 5
May/June:	"First Three Steps"	Mar 5
July/Aug:	"Prayer, Meditation"	May 5
Sept/Oct:	"Steps Six and Seven"	July 5
Nov/Dec:	"Giving Back"	Sept 5

Here are some general writing guidelines:

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

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

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

### General Release Form

In consideration of being reviewed for possible publication, I hereby transfer and release to the ISO of SAA, Inc (assignee) all legal rights to the publication of my submission(s) or any edited version thereof in any official ISO publication, including Sex Addicts Anonymous, The Outer Circle, the SAA meditation book, the SAA websites, or any other SAA program material, such as pamphlets, booklets and audio recordings.

With this submission, I transfer to the assignee without limitation the legal title and all literary rights, including copyright and/or trademark and the full right and license to reproduce, copy, edit for content, modify, distribute, and create derivatives from the submitted work. I understand that every effort will be made to safeguard my personal anonymity in the publication and distribution of this material. I also understand that I may or may not receive further communication regarding my submission prior to its publication.

I hereby further attest that I possess full legal capacity to exercise this authorization, and I hereby Release the assignee from any claim whatsoever by me or my successors.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed name: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed name: \_\_\_\_\_

# SAA TWELVE STEPS

- 1.** We admitted we were powerless over addictive sexual behavior - that our lives had become unmanageable.
- 2.** Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
- 3.** Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.
- 4.** Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
- 5.** Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
- 6.** Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
- 7.** Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.
- 8.** Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
- 9.** Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
- 10.** Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
- 11.** Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood God, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.
- 12.** Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other sex addicts and to practice these principles in our lives.