

THE OUTER CIRCLE



**Don't Break
the Bank**
Taking actions
keeps your
spiritual account
flush — and pays
dividends

PLUS

Intergroups vs. Area Assemblies

Outer Circle COVID Defense

Relationships and Addiction

The Newsletter of SAA's International Service Organization





International Service Organization of SAA, Inc.

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The Outer Circle Mission

The mission of *The Outer Circle* is to provide information from the ISO and to share the experience, strength, and hope members have obtained from working the SAA program of recovery. As the first iteration put it in 1988, *The Outer Circle* newsletter “carries the message of hope to the sex addict who still suffers” — especially prisoners and others who don’t have the Internet.

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

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

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

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

September - October 2020

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FROM THE EDITOR

Time to Embrace Hybrid Meetings

BY GARY T.

It's vital for all of us to consider our common welfare — and preserve our unity.

Tradition One stresses that our personal recovery depends on our unity. In these days of COVID-19, I'm seeing just how crucial that unity is — and how it is being threatened.

Specifically, I'm talking about the divide that's developed between in-person meetings and online meetings. In my Portland fellowship, that divide is stretching into a gulf simply because some group members are bucking against hybrid meetings that are simultaneously in-person and online.

Technologically, at least, hybrid meetings are easy to set up. Those meeting in person simply use their phones to join the online meeting either by phone or video. Other groups are already doing so.

Instead what has happened here is that two of the biggest meetings have splintered into one for those who meet outdoors in-person and another for those who meet online. In the case of the largest meeting, those two meetings don't even happen at the same time, which has created more disunity.

Hybrid meetings could bring groups back together and solve one of the most vexing issues of in-person meetings: the difficulty hearing others outdoors while social distancing. But those meeting in person seem to be the most adamantly opposed to hybrid meetings. Their reasons are based in fear about their anonymity somehow being compromised, and a general distaste for online meetings.

With traditional meeting spaces closed for the foreseeable future — and fall and winter fast approaching — it's vital for all of us to consider our common welfare and preserve our unity. I encourage all groups to embrace hybrid meetings.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

COVID-19 Challenges — and Opportunities

BY PAUL M.

**Display options
for new online
meetings, a
virtual conference,
and a matching
goal are a few
examples.**

Hello fellow members. Well the pandemic continues and so do our challenges. But as some say, challenges are really opportunities. We hope that you and your families are staying healthy and taking precautions. We have found that virtual meetings replacing the face-to-face meetings have allowed a greater number and a higher variety of members to attend our meetings. The office is working on a solution to display Zoom or other meeting login information alongside the face-to-face local meetings when a group wants to have a hybrid meeting or if a group wants a local-based virtual meeting. More to come on that.

We are now a little over a month from our newly-structured ISO Conference, and for the first time this will be an all-electronic meeting on Zoom and have delegates from areas instead of individual groups. I sent out the “Call to Conference” in August and, later in September, I will send out the “Essential Delegate Information” to all who register for the Conference. Delegates from area assemblies and interested parties who want to join the conversations can register. Just contact the ISO office to find out how.

I want to thank all the members that helped us reach our \$96,000 match. We reached that level in July, but our path is not complete. Our ultimate goal for LifeLines is \$50,000 per month. That will cover the basic costs of running the organization. If we can get that in monthly donations, we then can plan for more and exciting developments in helping the organization reach the addict still suffering. Those extra donations from individuals and groups will go directly to those programs we have not been able to accomplish. We thank you for each and every dollar received from our fellowship.

DEAR GRACE

Do Women Also Struggle with Porn?

BY WOMEN'S
OUTREACH COMMITTEE

If you think you have a problem, you have a problem.

Dear Grace,

Sometimes, I feel like I am the only woman who has trouble with porn! The people in my life, and even some of the people in my meetings, seem really surprised when I share about compulsive porn use. It feels like they think that is a “guy problem.” I know I have trouble. I’ve spent so much time online that I’ve never been in a relationship; I’ve never even dated. But can I truly be a sex addict if I have never had sex with another person?

Confused

Dear Confused:

Yes, women can have trouble with porn. It is not just a “guy problem.” In fact, there are types of porn specifically designed to hook women. Women who might get judgmental about online porn might themselves compulsively read sexually graphic romance novels without labeling it porn.

You state, “I know that I have trouble.” Each person gets to decide for themselves whether they are a sex addict. If you think you have a problem, you have a problem. What other people in the group may or may not think about your use of porn is not the question. It is up to you to decide if your use of porn is causing unmanageability in your life. It could be that you are isolating yourself to such a degree with your use of porn that you have not developed relationships with others. Many of us, women, and men, have compulsively used “masturbation, with fantasy and/or pornography, as a way to avoid intimacy with others...” “Intimacy Avoidance”.

Having sex with another person also is not a

criterion for being a sex addict. Compulsive masturbation, with or without the use of porn, can be addictive sexual behavior. Sex addiction is a “compulsion, which is an urge that is stronger than our will to resist, and [an] obsession, which is a mental preoccupation with sexual behavior and fantasies” *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, p.3.

Sex addiction can prevent the ability to form a mutually satisfying sexual relationship with another person. It can take up so much time that other responsibilities are not met. Masturbation does not require mutuality. It does not require the ability to communicate what you like or dislike to another person. It avoids a shared companionship. It can be difficult to find physical pleasure with another person when sexual desires seem to be met by porn.

In some respects, the highs that a person gets from porn use are different from sober self-pleasuring. A woman in the story “A New Journey” in *Sex Addicts Anonymous* (p.236) describes how she got high using sexual fantasy. In many ways, porn is a form of sexual fantasy. Using porn to get “high” takes us away from our daily responsibilities, away from ourselves, and into a realm that takes more and more hits to get the return we want.

You are not alone as a woman struggling with compulsive pornography use.

Nor are you the only one in SAA who has never had sex with another person.

“We can rest assured that as long as we seek to stop our addictive sexual behaviors, we belong in SAA, even if our acting-out patterns differ from everyone else’s in our meeting... we are reminded not to focus on how we are different from others, or to imagine that only those who have acted out in certain ways are truly sex addicts. If we can look inside and honestly say that we have a problem with any addictive sexual behavior, then the help SAA has to offer is meant for us too” *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, p. 81.

You can find freedom from the problem. SAA can help. There are others in our program who have been there and will understand. Keep reaching out. “When we finally reached out for help, we found recovery through the program of SAA” *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, p. 1.

Blessings,

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

With Surrender Came Hope

BY TOM B.

**When I stopped
fighting it and
opened my heart,
the love that was
all around me
flowed in, and I
was filled.**

Before I got sober 23 years ago, life kept getting worse. Healthy, exciting activities that used to give me great joy and made me feel fully alive became less frequent, less joyful, and gradually disappeared. Even the addictive behaviors that had once been exhilarating grew dull and boring. I stopped pursuing my dreams and resigned myself to futility, depression, and bitterness. Life seemed meaningless.

As my addiction progressed, I sought out more extreme, more bizarre, more risky behaviors, in an attempt to recapture the intense high I used to get from acting out.

I ended up crossing lines I thought I would never cross, going against my own values. It didn't seem to matter what it cost or who got hurt. I ruined my marriage, alienated my friends and family, destroyed my reputation, and got fired from my job.

What was even worse than these losses, though, was that I almost completely lost hope. I pretty much gave up on ever realizing any of my dreams. My life got narrower and narrower, until there was almost nothing left but the addiction, and even that no longer gave me any pleasure or peace.

Finally consequences caught up with me. Everyone in my life stopped putting up with my acting out. I was confronted about my behavior. I was forced to look at how I had hurt people I loved. I was faced with legal consequences for my acting out. At that point I finally admitted I could not control my addictive behavior. I had to stop. I had to get help.

It was only when I accepted that I cannot engage

in my addictive behavior in a controlled manner that I was ready to surrender it. When I admitted that I was powerless over it, I was able to stop.

Once I surrendered, I became open to the possibility of a spiritual solution. I had always considered myself an atheist, and I had to pry open my closed mind and consider the possibility that I didn't have it all figured out after all.

When I stopped fighting it and opened my heart, the love that was all around me flowed in, and I was filled. I knew everything was going to be okay. It was not long after that I realized the desire to act out had left me. I didn't have to fight the obsessive thoughts any more. I was freed.

There was still a lot of work to do through the rest of the Twelve Steps, but the impossible part had been done for me. I was then able to focus on rooting out the self-centeredness that had kept me from being fully alive and joyful. I discovered meaning in life by being of service.

What continues to keep me sober is a daily practice of gratitude, surrender of the things I can't control, asking for help, giving of myself, asking for God's will in my life, and being willing to accept it, whatever it might look like.

More than anything else, I have to carry the message to other sex addicts

that sobriety is possible through the Twelve Steps. As I understand it, I don't get to stay sober unless I carry the message.

When nothing else will keep me sober one more day, trying to help another addict will do it. Talking to another addict gets me out of myself and gets me into my program. When I'm trying to help another person, I feel there is a power greater than myself working through me, and when that Power is moving through me, my addiction has no power.

Living sober is so much better than living in addiction. My sex life today is way better than it ever was when I was active in my addiction, because I can have real connection and genuine intimacy with another human being. That's what great sex is all about for me today.

But even beyond sexuality, every aspect of my life that I am willing to turn over to God's care (whatever you understand "God" to mean) becomes satisfying, fulfilling, meaningful, and joyous. I am glad to be alive today.

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.

Square Peg

Round Hole

The difference between intergroups and area assemblies

Editor's Note: As local intergroups develop areas and area assemblies, many may be considering merging the two entities. The following is cautionary true story about why such merging may be unwise.

BY CAROL ANN R.

Recently, after months of debate, a local SAA intergroup voted to “merge or combine” its activities with the local area assembly. In its motion, the intergroup stated the two groups served overlapping functions. The intergroup compared its historic activities with a section of the area assembly’s bylaws that allowed for the creation of unspecified ad hoc committees. From that analysis, the intergroup determined that:

“Having two, separate organizations with the same geographic area both answerable to the same groups for various activities can have the effect of confusing members, duplicating efforts to reach out to the addict who still suffers...”

But what’s confusing is to say that intergroups and area assemblies are duplicating efforts — because it isn’t true. Superficially, intergroups and area assemblies both have representatives elected by local groups. In this particular local area, members may have confused things further by holding meetings for both groups

back-to-back on the same day, in the same room. This may have led some to believe the functions, therefore, are also the same.

The functional differences between intergroups and area assemblies are not technical or academic; they are quite real, as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic eventually demonstrated. First, intergroups provide a unique and essential role in the life of any recovery community.

“An intergroup is a group of SAA members representing autonomous SAA groups that have some commonality or desire for joint activity. The commonality may be a geographic area, a specific type of meeting (such as a group of telemeetings), or some other reason” (*SAA Intergroup Guide*, p. 6).

Intergroup functions include:

- » Funding and coordinating a jointly operated telephone response line, including coordinating volunteers to return phone calls to the line.
- » Funding and coordinating special in-reach and outreach projects.
- » Developing and maintaining an intergroup website.
- » Maintaining and publishing meeting lists (*Intergroup Guide*, p. 7).

Like the groups they represent, intergroups are completely autonomous, meaning they determine for themselves when to form, whom they will serve, and what activities they will perform — all within the limits of the Tradi-

tions.

Intergroups are important because they help local groups pool resources to carry the message of SAA further than any single group could on their own, and in ways that helps protect the anonymity of local members.

By contrast, area assemblies have a fixed area of service, often geographic, that is determined by the ISO. This is because area assemblies are part of the ISO service structure. Area assemblies have a measure of internal procedural freedom, but every function they perform is, by definition, connected to wider fellowship group conscience processes that culminate at the annual ISO Conference.

Area assembly functions include:

- » To review challenges brought to the assembly by local groups.
- » To refine and submit motions for consideration by the larger fellowship at the annual SAA Conference.
- » To develop an area group conscience on motions approved for a vote at the annual ISO of SAA Conference.
- » To provide a platform for the area delegate to report back to the area on issues and votes that occurred at the SAA Conference (*Area Assembly Handbook*, p. 1).

Area assemblies gather and return fellowship-wide wisdom to and from local groups. They discuss and clarify problems, propose solutions, and work with others throughout the ISO service

structure to improve ways to carry the SAA message. Area assembly work can be both painstakingly detailed, and glacially slow. It usually requires effort, persistence, and thoroughness. However, it is also very satisfying for members who can take the “long view.”

COVID-19 highlighted the importance of having both a healthy intergroup and a healthy area assembly, in an area as populous as this local area. In February 2020, with nearly 2,000 meetings across the world, the ISO office began to be inundated with meeting changes as the virus spread from Asia, to Europe, to Australia, to North and South America.

As face-to-face meetings moved rapidly to virtual platforms, principally Zoom, the ISO office and Board of Trustees struggled with how to cope with a precipitous drop in donations, and how to hold the annual convention in May safely.

By mid-March, the primary source for information on virtual SAA meetings across the world was not the ISO — it was the network of local autonomous SAA intergroup websites. The Intergroup Communication Committee (ICC) became a hub for intergroup volunteers to exchange emerging practices for preventing Zoom-bombing, enhancing meeting protocols, maintaining local websites, and more.

Amid so much inspiring cooperation by hundreds of trusted servants at local, area, and international levels, our cautionary intergroup made a series of

puzzling choices: it chose not to post any virtual meetings on its website, not to participate in any Intergroup Communication Committee teleconferences, and in June, it chose not to continue operating independently.

The area assembly volunteers, in communication with both the intergroup leadership and the ISO office, responded by collecting and publishing a list of virtual meetings in the local area on a newly created website.

Although publishing a local meeting list in the absence of the intergroup’s participation was necessary, it was also time-consuming and effortful — and not at all a normal part of the area assembly’s functions.

From that difficult experience, this area assembly member learned the following lesson: Asking an area assembly to take on even one activity of a viable local intergroup distracts that assembly from its own essential functions, and misuses assembly resources.

I believe that merging or combining additional functions will not only create ineffective service — it will lead to volunteer burn out.

For now, the area assembly has placed on hold the question of taking on any more of the intergroup’s activities until after the 2020 ISO Conference in October. This pause may open needed space for Higher Power to prompt growth and change, and to allow more to be revealed. ●

The Good Fight



Eight ways to use your outer circle defenses in the time of COVID-19

BY CHAD H.

In the midst of a global pandemic, how do people keep their sanity (much less their sobriety)?

I would argue that sanity and sobriety go hand-in-hand. The added pressure of a pandemic is only made worse by the long-term stress of acting out. While, short term, acting out may give us a feeling of control — long term, it erodes the sanity and clarity it takes to navigate challenging times.

The easiest way to achieve and maintain sobriety is to spend as much time in our outer circle as we can. Instead of working not to end up in our inner circles, changing the focus from what we can't have to what we can may make all the difference.

This challenge of staying in our outer circle seems to get more difficult when we realize that social distancing can often lead to isolation. Also, many meetings are no longer held in person which can feel like further isolation. Being sheltered in place alone or with family can be extremely triggering. Add that to canceled summer vacations, concerts, and family reunions and the challenge becomes very real.

What can we do to reopen our healthy outer circle options? Here are eight suggestions:

1. Take a walk several times a day (having a pet can help with this). Taking small trips to open outdoor spaces can feel like a full-blown vacation after being cooped up at home for too long. If hiking trails and parks are open, a long hike can be just the trick to be socially distant yet connected with nature and our own thoughts.

2. Meditation is essential at times like this – if our bodies can't be free, at least our minds can find some space to re-center and focus.

3. Making calls is more important than ever. By reaching out, we can connect. By talking with other people in the same situation, we can realize that the emotions we have are not unique. We can pick up valuable coping skills. We can discuss outer circle options. We can get personal support we may be lacking.

4. Reading is always a great escape. Our literature and online resources are a great way to refresh our understanding of the program. But, reading doesn't have to be program focused. Reading is a great way to learn new skills and hobbies. Reading about

far-away places and planning future vacations may be just what we need to feel less stuck in one place. Reading books about healthy living can give us a jump-start on our mental and physical well-being.

5. Phone and online meetings can give us a semblance of normalcy by connecting us with familiar fellows and maintaining our sobriety routines.

6. While some steps may be more triggering than others, the shut down may be the perfect time to get caught up on step work. What could be better than coming out of a pandemic with more steps completed? Not to mention, the emotional sobriety that comes with the completion of each step may be just the tool to help us through tough times during the pandemic.

7. New skills and hobbies are not only outer circle but they give us a sense of accomplishment. With online courses, how-to books and, even, calling skilled friends to learn tricks of the trade relating to projects we may want to undertake.

8. Finally, there have been shut-downs like this before in history. While Newton was able to unravel gravity during his time at home, the least we can do is organize our closets, finish

household projects and or make our gardens and landscaping that much more attractive. Getting caught up on projects not only makes us feel more accomplished but can add to the enjoyment of our surroundings — and, while stuck at home, everything we can do to make our homes more hospitable and peaceful, the better. (An added bonus is that by clearing out junk, we can also feel good about donating our unused items to charities).

While this pandemic, and the added time at home, may add to the challenges of staying sober, it also offers opportunities for growth — and finding a new level of peace. We don't have to dwell on the negative (especially if we spend less time watching the news and more time working on ourselves and our homes).

One of the most worthwhile tasks any of us takes on is to build on our recovery. Getting sober is just the first reward of SAA. The real gift of the program is the added peace and happiness mixed with self-awareness many refer to as emotional sobriety.

Taking advantage of the time this pandemic has given us to change ourselves and our surroundings allows us to grow (instead of shrink) our outer circles. While it is impossible to ignore added stress brought on by the pandemic, we don't need to internalize that stress or allow it to force us to act out.

Acknowledging the changes this pandemic brings is healthy. Choosing

While this pandemic, and the added time at home, may add to the challenges of staying sober, it also offers opportunities for growth — and finding a new level of peace.

to find healthy alternatives to our lost outer circle options and to adapt is essential.

If we can all add a few items to our outer circle while we are dealing with the 'new normal,' then when the pandemic is gone, we can continue those behaviors while old favorites return. A robust outer circle of activities we look forward to will keep us out of our other circles and help us not only achieve sobriety, but maintain it for the rest of our lives. ●

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Don't Break the Bank



Taking actions keeps your spiritual bank account flush — and pays dividends

BY PAUL P.

I have been in the SAA program since 2005 and I have used a lot of metaphors that have helped me stay sober and have helped carry the message to others.

Recently, I was on a meeting discussing tools of recovery and I compared using my tools to having a spiritual bank account.

I have a bank account and I deposit money and strive to maintain a certain balance. The longer I leave money in the account and the greater the balance, the larger my dividends. I strive to maintain a certain balance ensuring my overall financial health and having enough to cover my bills.

In recovery, I can add to my spiritual account by taking actionable steps. Examples include attending more meetings, sharing, making more phone calls. These actions equate to deposits to my spiritual account. The more that I add to the account then the more I earn dividends. It's that simple. My goal is to have a robust account that has far more deposits than withdraws and it is worth the results that I

will see in my life. Examples of these dividends are more freedom, more joy, and a live worth living.

On the contrary, if I withdraw from a bank account, my balance decreases and I start to panic and wonder if I can pay my bills. In recovery there is a fallout that occurs when I stop depositing into my spiritual account. If I stop attending meetings, decrease the amount of calls I make, stop working the steps then I am decreasing my spiritual balance.

As a result, I find I may more easily succumb to acting out and put my sobriety at risk. Just as with a bank account when I withdraw money and don't deposit to stabilize the account, I am essentially sabotaging my spiritual fitness. This happens when I decrease my tools and positive daily actions of my program.

I recall a recent conversation with another fellow that he was surprised that I have not acted out this past year despite not having a job and dealing with some major issues. I told my friend that I use more tools when my account is low so I can ensure that I can maintain the best spiritual fitness even during the difficult times.

This means sponsoring others, working the steps, and increasing my daily meetings so I can keep adding to my spiritual account. Even during challenging times, it seems the simpler option would be allowing my vulnerability to make me more susceptible to

It has worked wonders for me — and the main payout is that I have learned healthier ways to cope with life's problems.

acting out behaviors; however, being in recovery for fifteen years has taught me many valuable things including using program tools when things get tough.

Just as there were unlimited ways for me to act out and harm my spiritual condition, there are so many positive actions I can take to add to my program by using a proven tool of recovery. It has worked wonders for me — and the main payout is that I have learned healthier ways to cope with life's problems.

I am going to continue to view my sobriety as a spiritual account. I have so many choices of tools that I can use, and each one adds value to my account. Tools such as prayer, meditation, meetings, sponsorship, moderating meetings, journaling, and reading spiritual literature have all contributed to a robust spiritual account.

I am so grateful that I have learned such valuable lessons from being a member of the SAA fellowship and treasure my time as a member. ●



Four truths about addiction and relationships

BY BRIAN H.

It seems like fifty percent of meetings are spent sharing about difficulties with our spouses or significant others. This relationship focus makes sense since the meetings are all about breaking out of isolation and being able to really communicate what is honestly going on in our lives. Thank God for meetings!

Truth is at the core of our recovery, but really finding and understanding truth comes (at least for me) over time. Here are four truths I've discovered about relationships and addiction:

Truth 1. Our addiction deeply wounded those we love, and they are absolutely right to feel deeply hurt, angry, and betrayed. Their trust in us has rightly been shattered by years of lying and deceit. This will not go away quickly and in some cases, it may never fully go away.

Truth 2. None of us became sex addicts by choice. I don't want to give us an easy out for what we have done. Whether we were powerless or not, what we did was wrong — we hurt people, we lied, we cheated. But also think about this: Once an addiction takes hold we are powerless to stop it, right? We remain powerless even in recovery. Our only hope and strength comes from God and working our program

daily.

Truth 3. Our wives or significant others were not the causes of our addiction nor are they the solution. Partners often believe they should have been enough and feel that they were inadequate. The truth is nothing would have been enough. I did not even know what intimacy was! For over forty years, I substituted fantasy for the real thing. It was all I knew! I was making love with a fantasy instead of my wife. I know the difference now, but for years I did not. Intimacy is the real thing and so, so much better than the substitute!

Truth 4. Our addiction has nothing whatsoever to do with sex — it has everything to do with medication. We act out to escape pain. When we first come to the program we are unaware of this truth. We think we act out because we just need to act out. Not true — our desire to act out, our fantasies, our euphoric recall are all connected to medication needs. I used masturbation as a boy because it felt so darn good! I wanted that feeling again and then again and then again. What started out as pleasure soon took on a life of its own, and I began using it to make my pain go away.

So, at the end of the day, while we can never prove to partners that we are not doing wrong we can show them every day that we are doing right. We can't go back and re-write the past — I would if I could, and I'm sure you would as well. Instead we can become all that Steps promise. And keep coming back! ●

No Mere Chance

By Matthew L.

If you knew the dead ends

And blank spaces

I have savagely scoured

Seeking a single way out

From this shadow

Then you would know

The infinitesimally small probability

Of our reaching up

From the same darkness

At the same time

In the same place

To find the same dawn

No coincidence explains

No mere chance unravels

The eminent power

That brought us together

Strengthening still

A shining connection

Born from the darkest

Place in our hells

Raised to the brightest

Light in our hearts

DEAR WILL

How Intimacy and Sexual Avoidance Fit into SAA

BY TOM J.

We emphasize our work as a journey not away from 'sexual anorexia' but rather toward 'discovering intimacy.'

Editor's Note: The following is a letter to Dear Will in response to the May-June 2020 column, "Clearing up Confusion Around Sexual Avoidance."

Dear Will,

I'd like to clear up any lingering confusion about sexual avoidance and its place in the SAA fellowship.

Some six years ago, when Intimacy and Sexual Avoidance (ISA) telemeetings were "resurrected," those of us creating the scripts for these meetings were careful to use quotations from approved literature dealing with sexual anorexia in the introductions to these meeting.

We were mindful that most sex addicts were confused by the terms a) "anorexia" (a word historically reserved for food disorders) and b) "avoidance" (most newcomers thought that using "avoidance" in the same breathe with "sex" did not describe their problem).

Telemeetings are by far and away the most effective place to do ISA work in SAA for two reasons:

a) Newcomer anorexics find a "safe home" in the ISA telemeetings, because a newcomer can choose to "disappear" in his/her anorexia while still attending an SAA meeting. They can also find limited exposure simply not possible in "face-to-face" meetings.

b) These ISA telemeetings are often "mixed gender" — rarely can a person find sustainable mixed gender "face-to-face" SAA meetings. We have found that addicts of both genders who come to SAA specifically to do the ISA work soon discover a refreshing, sustaining fellow-

ship with those of the opposite gender.

In our quest to be faithful to the tradition of using of approved literature in the ISA meetings while at the same time seeking to expand the meaning of “addiction,” we realized that “defining intimacy” was necessary — hence, the (adapted) quote from “The First Step Guide” is found in many scripts: “sex and intimacy are not interchangeable words!”

We intentionally tried to shift the focus of recovery onto “healthier sexuality” (a refreshingly unique aspect of the SAA program). Hence, we emphasize our work as a journey not away from “sexual anorexia” but rather towards “discovering intimacy” (with ourselves, others, and our Higher Power).

In every SAA meeting, there is a danger inherent in SAA’s tradition of allowing addicts to “define their own sobriety.” It is the same danger Bill W. faced in the early days of AA. He had to deal with his “alcoholic grandiosity” — he had to learn humility, discovering that not every recovering alcoholic works the program just like him. In the process, he learned that probably every addict new to recovery had to go through the same process!

As a sex addict in SAA who no longer focuses his recovery on “stopping his



acting out” to a focus on embracing healthy intimacy, I appreciate your efforts to remind readers of the TOC that the ISA recovery work is a legitimate aspect of the SAA program. I also take to heart my own Twelfth Step responsibility to carry the message of this recovery work to the fellowship by finding ways to help addicts “become aware” of the ISA recovery work.

To that end, I invite everyone to attend the September 9th Sexual and Intimacy Avoidance Zoom forum — how to support members with these issues. The forum is from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. Central Time. Contact *info@saa-recovery.org* for call in info .

Respectfully yours in service,

Tom J

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

STORIES OF SERVICE

Say 'Yes' to Service!

BY C.B.

Is your Higher Power calling?

I was called to ISO service early. That call came from my Higher Power through my sponsor, who instructed me to go to the convention and Conference and to meet people who were doing service. I still remember walking into a room which turned out to be the caucus meeting for my region. I met people whom I still know well today. Little did I know how close (in a healthy, sober way) I would become to some of those people in that room!

I served as a Conference delegate and also on the ISO Literature Committee for seven years. While with LitCom, I had the privilege of working on many pieces of literature and with a wide variety of fellows. We didn't always agree. I felt stretched to and past my limit sometimes (HP never really stretches me past my limit; it just seems that way).

Someone told me: "It's not so much what service you do, it's how you do it." That stuck with me. I have a lot of character defects that came up during my time of service. People forgave me. Others' defects grated against me. I prayed for those people. I found that through praying for others, I changed.

In the meantime, we developed literature. Meetings I attend now read literature that I helped develop. That is only through the Grace of God. The people I served with on the ISO Literature Committee will always be dear to my heart. I also served a short time on the Board before I had to leave for health reasons. One thing I know: everyone who I did service work with really cares about this fellowship.

Is your Higher Power calling? Consider answering: "Yes!"

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

FROM THE BOARD

Board Consolidates Outreach Committees

BY WAYNE K.,
FELLOWSHIP CHAIR

Before the Board consolidated all the committees under the Fellowship ISC, communication was not optimal.

How do you define fellowship? We all get fellowship from meetings whether they are in person or virtual meetings. The dictionary says it can be a noun or a verb. The noun definition I like the best is: “in the company of equals.” It also says that it is a community of interest.

The Board decided that the structure of all the outreach committees could fit under the umbrella of the Fellowship Internal Standing Committee. With the election of the new Board, I was asked to serve as Chairman of the Fellowship ISC. The committees that are on the Fellowship ISC. are:

- » Women’s Outreach
- » Prisoner Outreach
- » Intimacy Avoidance
- » CPC/PI or contact with the professional community
- » Diversity
- » LGBTQ

There are some old committees that ceased to exist because of lack of manpower and/or interest. Those include international and men’s outreach.

Not only am I a recovering sex addict, I am also a recovering corporate manager, aka workaholic. I confess that I have taken some things that work in the business sector and have tried to apply them to the recovery world. Not everything worked that I tried.

One thing I noticed is that before the Board consolidated all the committees under the Fellowship ISC, communication between committees was not optimal. Communication is key to our recovery. If you have made it this far in my article, congratulations!

FROM THE BOARD

Communication can be written, verbal, or nonverbal. Board reports can be mind numbing because of the quantity of reports that a board member must read to be current. While Zoom meetings are better than the old telephonic meetings we used to have, much like the virtual meeting that you have been attending lately, it's not the same as being in the same room at the same time.

Committees like to keep things within their committees. It is human nature to be protective of our content and sharing. In a structural context, it is called the silo effect.

We have taken down the walls of the silo. Silos can store grain above ground or house nuclear missiles in underground concrete silos. They both work as containment structures.

It is usually counterproductive for several committees to be working on the same thing at the same time. Our new "deep dive" meetings have allowed committees to see what is working, what is needed, and to share information. The CPC/PI outreach of SAA has been a shining light for what the SAA ISO and a committee can get done. Phillip B. and Evan E., ISO employees, have done a fantastic job of attending, organizing, and developing content for meetings that we attend. These meetings are professional in nature and give SAA exposure to professional using attraction not promotion.

The CPC committee of SAA volunteers has started writing new pamphlets, currently being sent to the literature committee, for our members to use. You should see these soon. I can not applaud this committee enough for the hours that they are putting in on multiple projects. Because of the deep dive approach there will be literature generated for the LGBTQ community, law enforcement, prison staff, and others. Yes, we need help.

One of our board discussions is what does the fellowship want or need? How does the Board listen to the fellowship? We have done surveys. Members of committees are also members of local meetings and intergroups. Although the 2020 convention was canceled, board members do usually attend or present at the conventions. Every October is the annual business Conference of the fellowship. Most of the business of SAA is conducted, affirmed, or ratified at the annual Conference. We, as Board members, listen to the fellowship in meetings, lunches, and coffee breaks.

The ISO and the board also get monthly reports from the website committee (ISOPCOM). We know that over 90% of our web traffic comes from the U.S. and Canada. That percentage is getting lower as SAA gains a larger and more diverse fellowship. It is the face of the SAA fellowship for almost 2,000 worldwide meetings.

ISO NEWS

Call to Conference Given for First Area Assembly and Online Conference

As this is the first year of the Conference consisting only of area delegates, we encourage your area assembly to elect a delegate to attend the annual Conference. Because of the pandemic, this meeting is to be held by Zoom on October 9-10.

In order to facilitate conducting the meeting electronically, only delegates on a computer, tablet, or smart phone with an internet connection will be able to participate fully. Participants who call in by telephone will only be able to listen, not speak.

Registering as an area delegate and registering for the Conference meeting are two different processes. Delegate registration must be done online at saa-recovery.org/delegateform or by calling the ISO office. Conference registration must also be completed and the registration fee of \$50.00 paid by September 18, 2020. The Conference web page is saa-conference.org.

Additional delegate information (including the motions for the Conference) can be found at www.saa-iso.org under ISO Conference and Delegate info in the left-hand menu.

Also, I would like to call to your attention the fact that the Conference Nominating Committee is still accepting service resumes from members of the fellowship who are interested in possibly serving on the Board of Trustees, the Literature Committee, the Area Coordinating Committee, or the Nominating Committee.

The service resume form may be found on the service website by clicking on International Service in the left-hand menu or by going to saa-recovery.org/saa-service-resume to complete the form online.

The recommended guidelines for international service are contained in the Call to Conference. Service within the ISO is a high calling and should be undertaken only by sober members who can bring their experience, strength, and hope to the position and who are willing to commit the time and energy necessary to serve effectively.

If you have questions or need additional information, please email or call the ISO office. We look forward to seeing you online in October!

ISO NEWS

Beware of Sexually-Based Scam Emails

Beware of sexually-based scam emails! Some members of SAA have recently contacted the ISO office with concerns regarding so-called blackmail emails that claim to have hacked their computer's camera and recorded them engaging in masturbation or other sexual activities. Other emails claim to have records of pornographic websites the recipients have visited. These emails then threaten to send these records to their family and friends if they do not sent payment, typically in the form of Bitcoin.

Unfortunately, these scammers prey on sex addicts using our fear and shame. They hope that we will send them money rather than risk being exposed. These emails are scams and are safe to delete and ignore. If you receive an email like this, let it be an opportunity to grow by working the Steps with your sponsor and sharing your experience, strength, and hope at your meetings. Remember, recovery by working the Twelve Steps of SAA brings serenity, including from email scammers.

Public Information Committee Seeks Content-Creation Volunteers

The Public Information and Cooperation with Professional Community Committee (PI/CPC) is looking for members of the fellowship interested in creating useful resources for our fellowship. We are looking for people who like to write, edit, design, or simply brainstorm and participate by sharing ideas. A few of us are busy creating pamphlets to inform professionals, pamphlets to help sex addicts who have not yet found SAA, and creating various resources to help our current members better conduct this important work.

Current projects include "Introducing SAA to the Professional Community", "Are Your Sexual Behaviors Causing You Problems?", "How SAA members Cooperate", "Is SAA for women?" and a CPC Guide. Future projects could include "What to expect at your first SAA meeting", "Introducing SAA to the HR professional", "SAA and the legal community", and "SAA and the religious community".

We meet monthly as a committee on the 4th Thursday of the month but the real work happens in smaller working groups committed to individual projects throughout the month at various times. These work groups could use your help.

If you are willing to put some time into the effort described above, please contact the office at info@saa-recovery.org. Service helps keep us sober!

ISO NEWS

NomCom Seeks Service Resumes from Fellowship

Service opportunities abound within the ISO, ranging from participation within one of the new ISO areas to joining an ISO focus committee to serving on the ISO Board of Trustees, ISO Literature Committee, or one of the ISO Conference committees — Conference Steering Committee, Area Coordinating Committee, or Conference Nominating Committee.

And there is an ongoing need for more trusted servants within the ISO. Toward this end, the Conference Nominating Committee is encouraging members throughout the fellowship to consider what opportunities exist and to submit service resumes.

Submitting a service resume does not obligate anyone to a service position, it simply indicates an interest. If a person's interest fits an ISO need, then a member of the Nominating Committee can explain what is involved and share the benefits of service.

If this short article has piqued your interest, go now to the ISO service website at www.saa-iso.org, and click on “International Service” near the top of the left-hand menu. Then click on the image of the service resume. You can download the form or fill it out online. Also, on that page are links to descriptions of the responsibilities and expectations of trusted servants on the Board, Literature Committee, and Area Coordinating Committee.

ISA Offers Online Workshop Featuring Personal Stories

The Intimacy and Sexual Avoidance Awareness Committee will present an online workshop on September 9 at 7 p.m. Central. In this workshop, several people will share their stories of recovery from intimacy and sexual avoidance (ISA).

LitCom Asks for Feedback on Two Pamphlets

The Literature Committee needs your help! We are looking for feedback on the “Recommitting to Recovery,” and the revised “First Step to Recovery” pamphlets.

We would like to present them for Conference approval, but we want to make certain the fellowship supports them in their current form. You can send your feedback to litcom@saa-recovery.org. Thank you!

Board Encourages Groups to Use SAA Literature in Meetings

Here's a look at actions the ISO Board of Trustees took in July:

ISO NEWS

- » Approved the following statement: “ISO encourages groups to use SAA literature in their meetings. Recognizing that groups are autonomous, and some groups may use material other than SAA literature, ISO recommends in such instances attribution be given to the author(s) of such literature.”
- » Granted Permission to print SAA logo on a poster for Ohio Valley/Columbus SAA).

ISO Offers Multiple Ways to Donate

Since many SAA groups are meeting online, there is no way to physically “pass the basket.” A new Text-to-Donate option allows people to make their weekly 7th Tradition contribution using their mobile phone.

Donating to SAA through the ISO is easy. Here’s how:

- » For Individual Donations (US only) Text SAA to 91999
- » For Group Donations (US only) Text SAAG to 91999
- » You may also make donations at <https://saa-store.org/7thTradition/>

Please donate now. And spread the news to your fellow members during meetings. Let’s make it the new normal for passing the basket during these times.

Thank you for being a member. We can’t remain sober—and solvent—without you.

CSC Offers a Variety of Assistance in Forming Areas

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, a variety of ways for SAA members to connect with others for support in getting their area up and running have been established. Here is a list of them and how to connect:

1. Check out the “Draft Area Assembly Handbook,” loaded with suggestions and ideas for your first area assembly and participation at the Conference. It can be accessed at our service website: www.saa-iso.org.
2. Join our 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. For the Zoom info and future dates contact us at csc.feedback@saa-iso.org.
3. A group of SAA members, each with experience in starting an area, have formed the Area Mentoring Workgroup. Each member of the workgroup is willing to work one-on-one with anyone willing to advocate for organizing their area and preparing for the conference. Contact the workgroup for assistance at our email.

ISO NEWS

4. Finally, we are currently working on holding a Zoom delegate communication meeting in August and September focused on preparing delegates for the ISO Conference. Contact us at our email and check the service website for dates and times.

Individual Donations Beat Expectations, But Group Donations Fall

Our total SAA Green Book sales were below our estimate of \$8,100 by \$2,632 in July. Our HCI sales (May's numbers, a month behind) were \$311 higher than budgeted. Findaway audio sales were \$4 above our budget of \$225.

Our book "Voices in Recovery" sales for July were \$566 above our budget of \$2,900 for July mainly due the HCI sales.

Our pamphlet and booklet sales were below our estimate of \$5,900 by \$4,840 in July. For the year we are at 52.04% of our estimated sales.

Our plastic chips sales were below our estimate of \$1,775 by \$1,411 in July. For the year we are at 52.36% of our estimated sales.

Our bronze medallion sales were below our estimate of \$2,700 by \$1,840 in July. For the year we are at 56.59% of our estimated sales.

Our total sales for July were below our estimate of \$21,952 by \$10,356 in July. For the year we are at 66.6% of our estimated sales. As the results of physical distancing in response to COVID-19, most face-to-face meetings being held electronically, continue to cause our sales to drop in July.

Individual donations were above our estimate of \$57,100 by \$6,745 in July. For the year we are at 103.63% of our estimated individual donations. The General Donations were higher than budgeted by \$11,323 and the shortfall of the Lifeline Partners was \$3,893. Our current Lifelines goal is \$50,000 per month.

Group donations were below our estimate of \$11,250 by \$327 in July. For the year we are at 118.69% of our estimated group donations. Group Lifeline partners have increased by general donations for groups has dropped. Our total donations were \$6,418 above the budgeted amount of \$68,350.

Our product inventory is valued at \$87,770. Our operational reserve is funded at \$200,021. Our estimated four month reserve is \$237,350. Our total expenses were \$8,269 lower than our budget by \$71,349. Our net Income was \$7,465 above our budget of \$12,860.

CONTACT THE ISO

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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; Richard S
Wayne B; Wayne K

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

LitCom: litcom@saa-recovery.org

Literature Committee

Jim L (Chair); Doug S (2nd Chair)
Byard B (Secretary); Bruce M
Carole D; Carol R; Charlie K
Deb W; Don R; Gary T (TOC Editor)
Mike B; 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.

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.

Second Thursday of the month

Seventh Tradition: 6:00 p.m.

Third Wednesday of the month

Area Coordinating Committee: 6:00 p.m.

Third Saturday of the month

CSC: Twelve Concepts Work Group: 12:00 p.m.
CSC: Charters and Bylaws: 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 Thursday of the month

PI/CPC: 7:00 p.m.

Fourth Sunday of the month

Conference Steering Committee: 2:00 p.m.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Get Your Story Published in *The Outer Circle*

The Outer Circle newsletter relies on submissions from the SAA fellowship. It's a great way to carry the message to other sex addicts in the spirit of Step Twelve — and be of service! Articles may be submitted to toc@saa-recovery.org 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.