

# THE OUTER CIRCLE

**Unmasking  
Addiction**  
How recovery  
reveals our  
true self

**PLUS**

**Writing Prisoners**

**Steps to Surrender**

**Getting Help**





## 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 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.

**November - December 2020**

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# FROM THE EDITOR

## Envisioning What's Next

BY GARY T.

I'm excited to  
see how the next  
editor puts his or  
her stamp on the  
TOC.

This final issue of 2020 will be among my last as editor of *The Outer Circle*. When I first took on the position about six years ago, I had a general idea that five years as editor would be enough. By the time a new editor takes over it may be closer to seven years. Which is to say, it's time to let someone else be of service in this profound and rewarding way.

When I started as editor, I was determined to make the newsletter's design as good as the content. With the help of the ISO office and a talented designer, I feel I accomplished that goal. Along with a new look, I brought in new content including columns that emphasized service and long-term sobriety. I'm proud of the publication it has become.

But to remain vibrant and healthy, publications need new blood. I'm excited to see how the next editor puts his or her stamp on the *TOC* — and I encourage all those interested to apply. While my time as editor is coming to a close, here are some ideas about where I'd like to see the *TOC* go in the future:

- » **Diversity:** It would be wonderful if the next editor brought some diversity to the *TOC*! Specifically, I'd love to see a person of color or woman take over.
- » **E-publication:** Currently the *TOC* is available electronically only as a pdf. I'd love to see a new editor bring the *TOC* into the world of true e-publication. Maybe a *TOC* e-newsletter?
- » **Subscriptions:** While the ISO sends out print editions of the *TOC* and an electronic link on its general email, there's no real way to subscribe. Perhaps it's time to create a subscriptions model for the *TOC* — and even ask for payment.

# FROM THE DIRECTOR

## Important Work Continues, Despite Challenges

BY PAUL M.

**We are still experiencing about a fifty percent reduction in sales.**

We just finished up our 2020 ISO International Conference by using Zoom for the first time. We had 88 participants at the highest point. This was the first annual meeting of the Conference with delegates elected from areas, rather than groups. The minutes of the ISO International Conference will be posted on the service website once approved by the Board of Trustees.

We are still experiencing about a fifty percent reduction in sales from literature, chips, and medallions. We are grateful for all the extra donations that have been coming in, making up for that loss. Our Annual Appeal letter went out in early October and I hope we will have a good response.

Our SAA Connect project is still on hold until our income stabilizes, but we hope to get it up and running soon. Hopefully professional conferences will resume face-to-face next year so we will be able to reach out to the professional community to get the message of recovery to their clients. The Public Information/Cooperation with the Professional Community is drafting some really needed pamphlets that target the woman newcomer, the professional referrer, how our groups can cooperate with professionals, and several more in the works.

I want to thank Gary T for all the great work he has done on *The Outer Circle* since he took over the editing back in 2014. Gary has transformed this publication into a newsletter that really stands out. Gary has decided to step down from the editor position and we want to thank him for all his great work.

I look forward to 2021 with optimism that communication will continue to improve under the area structure.

# DEAR GRACE

## How to Cope with Isolation

BY WOMEN'S  
OUTREACH COMMITTEE

During this  
strange time of  
social distancing,  
isolation can  
be more of a  
problem than  
ever.

Dear Grace,

Isolation is something I struggle with all the time. I use tools like phone calls and outer circle activities, but inevitably I end up in isolation before I even know I am there. For me, I can isolate when surrounded by others just by not sharing my truth. What do you do to stay out of emotional isolation? How do you keep connecting with others on an emotional level?

—Isolated

Dear Isolated,

During this strange time of social distancing, isolation can be more of a problem than ever. We felt this column from January 2018 would be useful as encouragement to reach out to others. Here are some more thoughts for today's reality:

many meetings are now on Zoom or another video platform, meaning you can visit meetings anywhere in the world! Check the list here: <https://saa-recovery.org/meetings>. It may feel overwhelming to see hundreds of meetings listed. As with the phone, choose one and try it; the next day choose another and try it. Soon you will find ones you like!

To prevent feeling emotionally isolated, some of us have found it useful to have a daily check-in with a fellow in recovery. We set up a regular time to talk on the phone, and each of us shares what we are feeling that day and asks for feedback if desired. Some days there will be a lot to share, and some days it will just be, "It's a great day!" We have found that having that regular scheduled time to talk allows us to access feelings that we might not recognize on our own. If we have a roommate or

partner, we can also practice this check-in with that person.

This is a strange time, but it can help to remember we are not alone, neither in recovery nor in the pandemic! One day at a time and with help of Higher Power, we will make it through. There are many tools you can use and some you have already listed. Most often we have to act our way into different thinking, not think our way into different acting.

For some of us this means daily sharing with at least three people, checking in on how we are feeling and what is going on. If we commit to doing this, eventually it becomes habit and second-nature NOT to isolate.

Step One on page 51 of the Green Book explains why regular contact is so important: “We also begin to learn how to ask for and receive help from other recovering sex addicts. Asking for help releases us from the toxic isolation that drives our addiction. As we receive help, we learn to let the walls down and to accept nurturing and care from others.”

Another way to break out of isolation is to use the tool of service — getting involved in the fellowship and being a part of it. However, some of us have found we can use service as a way of not talking about ourselves and our feelings.

Some of us have outer circle activities that get us involved in sharing with

others on a regular basis. These can be based around exercise, food, art, hobbies, and community. Having a home group, a meeting that we commit to attending every week, helps others get to know us who expect us to be there.

As the Green Book says on page 23, “As sex addicts, we are especially prone to isolating. Many of us acted out alone or in secret. Meetings are an important way of breaking this isolation. At meetings we discover that we are not unique. If we listen to the experiences and feelings we have in common, we will find that we are more alike than we are different. At meetings we learn that we can trust others to know who we really are, and still be accepted by them.”

When we become a part of the fellowship, it becomes easier to interact with others and that feeling of isolation and loneliness slips away.

## **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

## **Building a New Sexual Self Through Recovery**

**I had to recognize  
that this new  
way of seeing  
my sexuality  
was a choice, not  
something forced  
on me.**

Today I have six years of sobriety and I'm happier than I've ever been. But before I got into recovery, my sponsor once pointed out to me, I basically had everything I had ever wanted — and I was miserable.

My addiction had been building for at least fifteen years, with increasingly painful consequences that I just ignored, denied, or argued away. I had a very secure professional job that gave me incredible freedom to manage my own time, a marriage in which we had always agreed to be open sexually with others, and a husband who approached our relationship and me with love, care, and trust.

I was also convinced that being gay, and leaving behind the judgment and shame I had experienced in my religious upbringing, meant being sexually liberated — doing whatever I wanted with whomever I wanted, and doing it almost exclusively on drugs.

I was using my addiction to deal with intense amounts of job stress and unrealistic expectations I was placing on myself, not to mention pains from my past. My husband was developing codependent patterns to deal with my relentlessly progressing addictions. He was increasingly desperate and hopeless about our future, and my behavior was making it impossible for us to address these problems.

In the space of two years, I contracted HCV and HIV. I had spent fourteen months high on drugs and alcohol, without interruption except to sleep every three or four days. I had been showing up to work high, giving public presentations that others described as “incomprehensible.” I had

stopped eating anything but ice cream and Gatorade. My entire life revolved around my addiction.

My main hurdles in recovery were, first, admitting the devastation I had caused and accepting that my addiction was the problem. I had sought out therapy, where I mostly lied about my addiction by minimizing it. I was visiting a twelve-step meeting without making any commitment to being sober.

During my first year, I was confronted with my sex addiction in full force. I spent at least a year with endless obsessions about romantic feelings. I also had to accept that my old sexual identity — my way of being sexual, of being gay — was just something I had to let go of, because it was not serving me. I had to recognize that this new way of seeing my sexuality was a choice I was making, not something being forced on me by others trying to judge or control me.

Luckily, I was engaged in a program of recovery and had incredible resources in therapy. I was able to focus on working the steps and addressing the issues in my past that had fueled my addictions. Then I could build a new sexual me, step-by-step, by building relationships I could trust. Mostly, I learned that, for me, healthier sexuality is about connection, as well as play, joy, and pleasure.

My husband and I also built a new marriage through some very difficult work. It's stronger, deeper, more gentle, and more connected. My recovery has always been our recovery, too.

What does my life look like today? I did lose my career, or rather I decided to let it go after getting fired from my job, and I am very happy in a new one that fits my new life better.

I stay sober the same way I got sober — by working the program of Sex Addicts Anonymous. I have a sponsor and I sponsor others. I attend meetings. I try to stay humble by focusing on others, especially when I'm spinning out in self-absorption. I practice gratitude by treating what I've been given with care and respect.

My life isn't perfect. I lost my brother to addiction only a short time ago. His death reminded me that all of my sobriety has been about mourning, because that's how I heal and make peace with the pain of the past. What I know now is that I can't do this alone, and I don't do it just for me.

*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).*



## Prisoners express gratitude for the vital sponsorship letter writing program that needs more volunteers

BY TOM B., PRISONER OUTREACH SUBCOMMITTEE

**A**fter attending my first meeting and then reaching out to others to learn more about the program, I thought to myself that I had found the place I needed to be. Meetings for Sex Addicts Anonymous provided a place where I could understand what SAA is. Soon, I made it an integral part of my own life. I was a sex addict who wanted to hear this message: that recovery is possible through working the Twelve Steps of SAA.

Soon I learned there were others who wanted to hear the message but did not have the freedom to attend meetings. Inmates in correctional facilities where there are no SAA meetings seek this same message. Many write to the ISO for books, pamphlets, and information on SAA. In some cases, they request assistance to bring an SAA meeting to their facility, and new groups have been formed inside facilities. Often a dedicated core team of volunteers from a nearby SAA group or intergroup works with the ISO, the inmates, and the administration of the facility to meet all the

requirements specific to that facility to establish the group.

Even if a group is formed in a facility, these inmates will need a sponsor to work the Twelve Steps. This is where the inmate writing program comes in. SAA members who meet the minimum requirements can apply to become a sponsor for an inmate at <https://saa-recovery.org/POWriter/>.

Working with an inmate is just like working with someone from a meeting who might ask you to be their sponsor. You guide the inmate through defining their circles and working the Twelve Steps. An inmate's request for a sponsor is forwarded to the ISO, and the inmate writing program connects the inmate with a sponsor. All this work is done through writing, sometimes through texting, and sometimes with physical letters. The ISO can coordinate communications to help further ensure the anonymity called for in Tradition Twelve.

The work I do as a sponsor through the inmate writing program is some of the most rewarding service I have ever done. The sponsees I write to are in other states, and they are genuinely interested in working the Twelve Steps. Our focus is on the Green Book and other ISO published literature such as *Voices of Recovery*.

While I am the GSR for two inmate groups in Arizona, I am unable to serve as a sponsor to any of these same group members because I attend the meetings.

This separation follows the security rules set by the facility and protects the inmates' anonymity and mine as well. When I do attend a group meeting in a facility and I hear the inmates share about their search for a sponsor, I am reminded to announce this amazing service opportunity when I attend regular meetings in my local area. While I cannot serve as their sponsor, perhaps someone I know in a meeting might be willing, able, and interested to serve.

Below are testimonials from inmates who attend SAA meetings in prisons and jails. Their hopes for recovery are the same hopes that I have. I often find myself in their words as they seek sponsors and share their gratitude for SAA. You just might find yourself in their words as well.

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*My name is David R. When I first joined a twelve-step group, I really wasn't sure I was an addict...It wasn't until SAA that I learned that my sex addiction was fantasy. Like others with sexual addiction, my mind craved the endorphins and other chemicals that were created by sexual excitement, only my main outlet was fantasy...SAA helped me define this problem with the three circles and gave me the tools to live a sober and healthy life...Just recently my SAA group has been blessed by the presence of volunteers from the world outside of prison, and I have received an outside sponsor. With this increased wealth of wisdom, I hope to progress further in my sobriety and lead an even healthier*

life.

Thank you, David R.

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*My name is Kevin J. I never realized how I am a prisoner of my own addiction until I joined SAA. Writing to my sponsor, I am happy to say, makes me feel liberated and have high spirits as I continue to work my steps on a daily basis. The journey is not over but I can at least see the finish line from a distance. To my brothers and sisters in the SAA program, stay true to yourself and always remember that you are not alone in this journey. Thank you to SAA for all of your love and support.*

Best wishes, Kevin J.

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*Thank you for taking the time to read this testimonial. Let me tell you a little about myself. My name is Daniel M. I am an incarcerated 38-year-old gay man in the Arizona Department of Corrections...I am in prison due to my behaviors related to my addiction. I have been involved and employed in a sex offense treatment program since 2013 and have been dealing with my issues for some time now. Needless to say, I am a whole lot healthier than I ever was and have been sober since April 22nd, 2019.*

*I started practicing my addictive behaviors at the age of 14...Now my life—even though I am in prison—is much better and I am no longer acting out and don't have the desire to. For a long time, I didn't want to admit that I had an addiction or*

*combat my problems.*

*We are fortunate to have two meetings a week at Meadows unit, one with some volunteers and the other peer-led. My biggest struggles now are finding sponsors, letter writers through the mail and volunteers that can come to the prison to help addicts—especially sex addicts—go from shame to grace. Prison can be a lonely place, especially for the addict that wants to change their life.*

Thank you, Daniel M.

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Have you thought about service by participating in the inmate writing program? If yes, it is as easy as visiting the ISO's website to confirm you meet the suggested guidelines and apply at (<https://saa-recovery.org/POWriter/>). The need is great, with hundreds of inmates learning about the program and submitting requests for someone to correspond with and for sponsors.

Please consider service through this wonderful program that helps the inmates during their time of incarceration and as they prepare to return home to their families.

Your service has far-reaching positive impacts beyond the inmate to include their family, friends, and the place they will call home when their time is complete. Help make a difference in someone's life by guiding them along the Twelve Steps to sobriety through the inmate writing program! ●



# Reaching for Help

## Refusing the support of fellow addicts and Higher Power prevents healing

BY JIMMY K

I have been going to SAA meetings for about eleven years. Notice I did not say I have been sober for eleven years. Especially notice I did not say I have been in recovery for eleven years.

As I write this, I have five months of sobriety. It only took ten years to get here!!!

So why did it take so long?

For whatever reason, I thought this would be a fix-it-and-forget-it problem. I also thought the term “rigorous honesty” was more of a suggestion/motto than the cornerstone of recovery. In a nutshell, I wanted quick and easy sobriety. I especially wanted an autopilot setting.

What I know now is that I had already lived my entire life on autopilot, never thinking beyond the bare minimum and NEVER being present. If I was in pain, there was medication. If I was sad, there was medication. If I was happy, there was medication. This list could go on for quite a while. Suffice it to say, there was a lot of medicating. In hindsight, autopilot was clearly not the answer.

It also turns out that rigorous honesty is not just a suggestion or a slogan. It absolutely is the cornerstone of recovery. Growing up in an extremely strict environment (both home and school) I learned early to tell people what they wanted to hear and to always put forth a good image. When I struggled, I acted like everything was good. I was made to believe at a pretty young age that asking for help was a sign of weakness. This ultimately resulted in lying to brothers and sisters in the program, my sponsor, my family, my therapist, and myself.

Living a lie is hard work! It is the ultimate energy vampire. Ironically, deep down I feared real sobriety would be too hard and require too much work. I was oblivious to the stress the addiction was causing me. While I do believe that I wanted to be free of my addiction, I also know I did not want to put forth the effort it would take. These days I find myself constantly wondering what I was thinking during all the insanity. And that is the real point of this writing... I wasn't thinking.

After years of going to meetings (again, not sober and not in recovery) I became embarrassed at how poorly I was doing in the program. Still putting on a positive "mask" and living in constant fear of more discoveries, I remained unwilling to be honest enough to be vulnerable and ask for help.

During my years in the program, very broken people have walked into the

rooms for the first time and admitted they were addicts...admitted they needed help. Some would leave to go find their true bottom, but others would stay. Some truly grasped recovery and to this day are working strong programs and are a huge source of strength to those who still struggle.

In what can only be called a great understatement, I was not in that last group, despite attending SAA meetings for years.

In fact, at one time I had a fair bit of resentment for that group. It wasn't that they weren't good-hearted, nice people, because they certainly were. No, my resentment for this group was that they inadvertently made me see myself for the fraud I was. Observing them work their programs with rigorous honesty, I was forced to see my own dishonesty and my inability to have any real measure of sobriety.

I finally reached what was to be my bottom. It was not so much a single event, but a complete exhaustion/disgust with myself for the pain my actions were causing. Perhaps turning sixty had a bit to do with it as well. No matter what caused the change, a seed of change finally took root.

I started being honest. I started doing the things that were not easy or comfortable. Key to this change was fully opening myself up to the people I already had in my life — among them, brothers and sisters in the program that loved me no matter what I brought to the table. I now have a group of people

that I can be real with, who at the same time hold me accountable. I know they have my back, and they know I have theirs. They were always there for me, I just didn't see them.

Truthfully, I do not know what took so long. Fear of change? Image management? An unwillingness to be vulnerable? Feeling that I was beyond help? All were true, and all certainly played their part in blocking my way. What I do know is when true change finally took root, my life finally took an upward track.

If you are new to the program, please give yourself the opportunity to heal. You are not perfect, none of us are. There is no need for disguise here. Be exactly who you are and ask for help when you need it. Remember this: nobody comes to his/her first SAA meeting because his/her life is so great that he/she must share it with a room full of strangers. We know the pain you are in. Let us help!

If you are a person that "got it" early on and are now working a good program of personal recovery and helping others do the same, let me say thank you for your continued service and guidance...and patience. As a group, you have been a blessing!

To everyone else, for most of the last fifty years, I have been an active sex addict. Since I was ten years old, I have been controlled by a beast that lived in my head. I looked in the mirror and saw a broken, seedy, unredeemable guy. In my mind's eye, I was defective and

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**If you are new to the program, please give yourself the opportunity to heal. You are not perfect, none of us are. Be exactly who you are and ask for help.**

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could not be helped. At thirty, because I was divorced, I thought my life was ruined for any service to God. In my fifties, I knew I was an addict, but was unwilling to do what it would take to get sober.

At sixty, it finally clicked — when I asked for help, let it in and sincerely put forth effort! I must say that I am more optimistic about my future at sixty than I ever was at thirty or forty. Sure I wish I had started sooner; but that's ok, I'm here now.

I wasn't too broken, too defective, or too old. Neither are you!!! ●

### **HELP WANTED!**

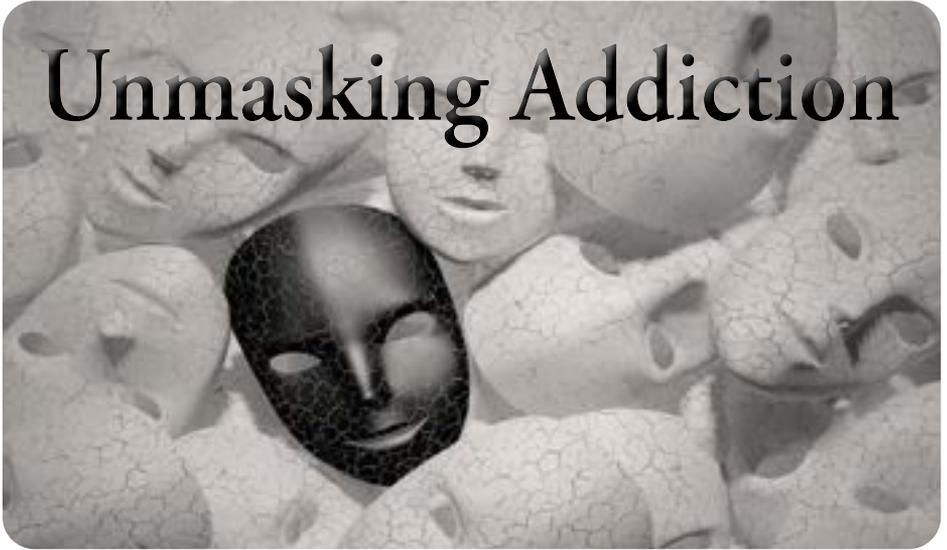
*Letter writers/sponsors needed!*

*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*

# Unmasking Addiction



## How recovery reveals our true self

BY VINCE V.

**D**enial is a “mask” worn by addicts of all kinds. I have worn many masks of denial throughout my life. During my sex addiction, I wore a mask almost constantly. The masks of my addiction were so strong that they seemed glued to my face. Over time, it became more difficult and awkward to remove them. As I wore the masks more and more, my face morphed and changed underneath to match the shape and appearance of the overlying masks.

I wore many different masks over the years. The masks changed over time, becoming uglier, more sinister, and much harder to remove. Eventually, after putting on a mask it became almost impossible to remove it. The masks became ever present, and I could not recognize my own face under each mask. I gave up trying to remove them, and they became even more powerful over me. Gradually, they exerted more and more power over me and all aspects of my life.

My very first mask was the one my father taught me to wear as a child: the mask of protection. I was shy and introverted as a child. I had few friends growing up. My father was aggressive, authoritative, loud, and always seemed angry. He would always put me down and make me feel “less than.” I was obedient yet could never please him. I came to fear and hate him, as well as all other men, and anyone who expressed

anger towards me or others. I needed to wear this mask to protect myself from my father and other men. Though I generally felt safer around women, I would still use this mask when in their presence, just in case.

My favorite mask was the one I learned to wear professionally at work: the mask of success. This mask gave me strength and power. Wearing it made me feel productive and successful. As a physician, I had earned that mask through many grueling years of education, training, and practice. I was especially proud of this mask and did not want to give it up! It made me feel good about myself. It allowed me to feel valuable, like I had a place in society and in this world. It gave me strength and allowed me to put aside my fears and exist without shaming myself.

The last mask I ever wore was the most sinister and evil of them all: the mask of a liar, a cheater, and a sex addict. That was the strongest and most adherent mask. When my wife finally discovered that mask, she ripped it off my face very suddenly in one swift movement, and the pain was excruciating. I was totally unprepared for it. It was so shocking and unbearable, that my entire body was paralyzed.

This was my rock bottom as an addict. I could not recognize my own face when it was exposed that day. It had taken on the shape of that ugly mask, which had covered it for so many years. My face was ugly, scarred with blisters, and marred beyond recognition. My wife

didn't know who I was anymore, and neither did I. With my face exposed for the first time in years, I cried and felt the pain throughout my entire body. I confessed to my wife and two daughters, and admitted to all the sins of my masks. I came clean and took responsibility for my actions.

The day of my unveiling was the single most painful moment of my entire life. That was two and a half years ago. I found a therapist and joined SAA that same month. Since then, I have been in recovery in SAA, and meeting with my therapist regularly. It's a miracle that I have remained sober since that day.

In recovery, I have learned to shed my many masks. I wish I could say that they are buried deeply within my past. But I know they still linger and have not completely disappeared. Though I have no use for them and no desire to hide behind them, every once in a while, one of my old masks will appear very unexpectedly and try to jump onto my face. When I feel it and recognize it, I just tell the mask, "I no longer need you, please leave." This is how I have discarded my masks over and over again. With time, they have all become weaker and weaker, and they no longer adhere to my face.

Remarkably, my face has healed, and none of the masks seem to fit over my face well at all. That is what my recovery in SAA has done for me, it has healed and reshaped my face. I recognize myself again, and for that I am extremely grateful. ●



# Waving the White Flag

## Outlining the progressive steps of surrender

BY KEVIN C.

F

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

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

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

Surrender was deleting website links I had for many years — my go-to's, depending on the situation (about 50-plus links).

Surrender was deleting the rest of the links (another 20-plus) — which, at the time, was very traumatic.

Surrender then was being honest in my meetings (not holding back; saying

what I didn't want to say).

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

Surrender was finally working Step One on the program's terms — not my own — and being rigorously honest.

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

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

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

Surrender is not objectifying a woman down to a body part. (I'm still working on this one!) Surrender is helping other fellows in the program — even if it's just to talk regularly.

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

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

## *The Journey*

*By Thomas E.*

*Sometimes I act the fool seemingly  
without given lines.*

*A theatre I never asked for where the sun  
rarely shines.*

*When Light comes into darkness  
revealing my wounded heart;*

*Sometimes I'd rather run and hide and  
never play my part.*

*Dragons, demons and beasts without a  
name;*

*seem to be the loudest actors in this game.*

*I wonder why the Director wrote them in  
this play;*

*maybe it's to show me the extent of my  
shame.*

*Or is it so I can win and show myself the  
winner?*

*Or perhaps so I can overcome and never  
be the sinner?*

*Nay, to show His goodness and mercy in  
this show. That through my brokenness  
it's Him I come to know.*

# DEAR WILL

## Can We Sponsor Someone We Find Attractive?

BY WILL

The sponsor-  
sponsee  
relationship  
relies on trust,  
vulnerability, and  
real intimacy,  
leaving little room  
for the risk of  
sexual attraction.

**Dear Will:**

I have been working with my sponsor for a good deal of time. He is a straight man and I identify as gay. I mention this because recently another gay man began attending our SAA meetings who I find attractive. At times, I have found it difficult to focus during meetings and have been triggered by his shares. That has slowly passed and I am now more comfortable around him.

He recently asked me to sponsor him. I would like to help him through the Steps, yet my sponsor says that gay men do not sponsor other gay men in SAA, just like men do not sponsor women, women do not sponsor men, etc. Is that true?

My sponsor has many years of sobriety in both SAA and another twelve-step recovery program and he says that is how sponsorship is done in his other program. What do you think?

**Wanting to Carry the Message**

**Dear Wanting:**

I have heard others in the fellowship wrestle with this question. It sure would be nice to have an overabundance of sponsors of every walk-of-life and identity who have the sobriety, recovery, spiritual awakening, and willingness to sponsor all in need.

The reality for many groups is that there is a great need for healthy sponsorship. Some of us in Sex Addicts Anonymous may have to deal with the question of finding someone attractive or triggering in the rooms at one point and then at another being asked or wanting to support them through sponsorship.

A few years back I had an experience like the one you describe. Someone I found attractive asked if I would take them through the steps. I had found ways of dealing with my attraction to this individual when I found myself distracted by them or triggered at meetings. This individual also approached me at one point with a request to take them through the steps.

After consultation with my sponsor and others in my group, the reality that sponsoring someone I was attracted to, even merely distracted by in the past, was not best for my recovery or theirs.

Sex Addicts Anonymous (page 13) tells us, “it is recommended that we do not enter into a sponsorship relationship with anyone we are attracted to sexually, since that might compromise the trust and safety we all need.”

The sponsor-sponsee relationship relies on trust, vulnerability, and real intimacy, leaving little room for the risk that might accompany such sexual attraction. Those words allowed me to acknowledge that sexual attraction and sponsorship was not a good mix. While carrying the message is a critical part of recovery for many, this may be one of those times where another brother or sister in recovery will have to step in.

While I am inclined to defer to your sponsor in matters that pertain to you

specifically, there were some generalities or principles identified in your letter which I think would be well served if addressed. No one in SAA can set rules for who can and cannot be a sponsor. I have witnessed healthy sponsor-sponsees relationships that would go against what your sponsor has suggested as “the way it’s done.”

I have found, through our literature and in my own recovery, that what makes someone qualified to be a sponsor is not their gender, but rather their own recovery: their sobriety, their step work, their spiritual awakening, and the work they continue to do to maintain that spiritual condition. This seems to be more in line with our tradition of putting principles before personalities.

Going back to your initial concern: my experience has been that the attraction and triggers you described could interfere with our, and your, primary purpose and, as such, may not be worth the risk. We all, you included, deserve to sponsor without the distraction of that attraction.

I hope this helps.

**Will**

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

# STORIES OF SERVICE

## Giving Back Saved His Life

BY TONY M

**Being of service transformed my self-esteem and has been the primary factor in me coming to believe that I am a lovable person.**

When I came in to the fellowship I was desperate. I had extremely low self-esteem and didn't believe that I was a worthwhile person. After defining my three circles with my sponsor, he told me that doing service work was going to be one of the most important parts of my recovery.

He told me to find a small way to contribute in each meeting that I was attending so that it would help me stay accountable. He encouraged me to attend an intergroup meeting so that I could learn more about the fellowship and how the larger group helps the addict who still suffers.

After my first meeting, I knew the people in that room had what I wanted, and I was committed to keep coming back. I found that the members of that meeting were like the Jedi Council of recovery, and I have been so fortunate to be able to lean on them.

Being of service transformed my self-esteem and has been the primary factor in me coming to believe that I am a worthy and lovable person. I know service work has kept me coming back and has got me to take a deeper dive into our program literature so that I can understand how it works.

Service work saved my life. I would encourage anyone to find their service calling and take action to help the still suffering sex addict. By doing so, you'll help yourself more than you can imagine.

*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

## Major Board Activities Reviewed for 2020

BY BOB L, BOARD CHAIR

What began as a typical year turned into a challenging one.

What began as a typical year turned into a challenging one as COVID-19 spread across the globe. A huge impact of the virus was the suspension of many meetings, resulting in the Board's concern about a precipitous decline in contributions. The Board acted swiftly to ensure the financial viability of the ISO. A special COVID-19 work group was formed and met weekly to monitor the finances of ISO. The work group recommended, and the Board approved, the suspension of many projects to preserve capital, including work on SAA Connect, non-critical upgrades to software and infrastructure and most ISO-sponsored outreach expenditures.

Efforts also were made to bolster contributions during these trying times. For example, the text-to-donate application was brought online and to mobile platforms. It was instrumental in helping fellowship members and groups make contributions to the ISO. Another special work group created communications to the fellowship to keep everyone informed of our status, and special emphasis was made to reach the Giving Hope a Voice goal.

As a result, the shortfall in donations and a huge budget deficit that was worrisome at the start of the shutdown was not fully realized. Instead, with the reduction in expenses, the ISO has managed to retain most of the essential services to the fellowship that we have come to expect. While more than likely there will be a budget shortfall this year, we are hopeful that we can avoid dipping into reserves if the current trends continue. This result is solely due to the generosity and understanding of the fellowship in these challenging times.

Other major Board activities over the past service

# FROM THE BOARD

year include:

- » The new Board Public Information and Cooperation with the Professional Community Committee (PI/CPC) has been extraordinarily active in creating communications to the professional community. The energy and dedication of committee members has been remarkable. Any interested member of the fellowship is welcome to add support to the committee.
- » The new Inclusion and Diversity Committee is working on increasing inclusion of under-served groups into the fellowship. Interested members of the fellowship are encouraged to join monthly meetings of the IDC.
- » The Finance & Operations Committee, newly combined with the former Office Oversight Committee, has resulted in greater detailed review of financial matters. The committee, working with the COVID-19 work group, has scaled ISO operations to parallel the decreased flow of contributions. Fellowship members, especially those with a financial background, are welcome to join F & O and attend their monthly meetings.
- » Late last service year, the Board adopted a policy allowing non-Board members to serve as full voting members of Internal Standing Committees. Some non-Board members have pitched in to support these committees' efforts, and more volunteers are sought for each of these committees.
- » Pursuant to the Bylaws of SAA, the Board adopted a description of "member groups" as a group that:
  - » Is affiliated only with SAA.
  - » Uses the Twelve Steps of SAA and the Twelve Traditions of SAA 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.
- » Reviewed and approved the 2020 budget, which at the time included funding for the program manager of PI/CPC to attend several professional conferences. Due to COVID-19, the Board suspended these activities, almost all of which were canceled by their respective organizations.
- » Increased the spending authority of the Executive Director and the F & O ISC in keeping with the budget increases over the past decade.
- » Worked on a new set of long-term Board strategic goals which may be ready for adoption by the end of 2020.
- » Oversaw the operation and performance of approximately twenty-one Board committees.

# ISO NEWS

## Director Provides Review of 2020 Online Conference

The following is a summary of the 2020 International ISO Conference from ISO Director Paul M: We had 49 area delegates registered, and 23 delegates from the ISO Board of Trustees, the ISO Literature Committee, and the ISO office staff. We also had 15 delegate alternates and some non-voting members in attendance. The highest point of attendance on Zoom was 88 participants.

We had 54 to 63 delegates casting votes during the ISO International Conference, abstentions are not counted. Below are the results of the votes. The full minutes will come out next month after the Board of Trustees approves them.

I want to remind you that being a delegate for the 2020-2021 service year is not a one and done annual meeting of the Conference. There are things delegates can do all year long. Keep your area informed of what the ISO is doing and keep the ISO informed of what your area and groups are doing.

If you want to find out more of the what the ISO Committees are doing during the year, please attend some of the meetings. You can find more information about these at <https://saa-iso.org>. Contact the office for username and password.

To attend a meeting, email [info@saa-recovery.org](mailto:info@saa-recovery.org) or call the ISO office at 713-869-4902. Delegate participation is welcome.

Below is a summary of votes from 2020 delegate conference:

Motion	For	Against	Total	For %	Against %		
Call the Question	54	3	57	95%	5%		
2020-D0003 – Approve a Virtual Format for the 2020 Conference	58	2	60	97%	3%		
2020-D004A – Ratify 2019-2020 Alignment Changes (Los Angeles)	51	3	54	94%	6%		
2020-D004B – Ratify 2019-2020 Alignment Changes (3 Countries)	52	2	54	96%	4%		
2020-D0005 – Guidelines for Changes to the ISO Area Alignment	56	6	62	90%	10%		
2020-D002 – Reactivation of the CCC	26	34	60	43%	57%		Delphi
						D0001	D0002
Delphi of 2020-D0001 and 2020-D0006						32	29
2020-D0001 – Reconfiguration of the CSC	29	34	34	46%	54%		
2020-D0006 – Election of members to the Conference Steering Committee	54	7	7	89%	11%		
Election of Board members	Bob L						
	Karen S						
Election of Literature Committee members	Doug S						
	Jackie J						
	Maud D						
	Mike K						
	Rachel R						
	Cara A						
Election of Area Coordinating Committee	Alberto R						
	Michelle P						
	Robert H						
Election of Nominating Committee	Lauren C						

# ISO NEWS

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## ISO Seeks Volunteers for New PSA Video

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The ISO is producing a new Public Service Announcement to be shown on YouTube and elsewhere. The PSA is a hand drawing on whiteboard style video illustrating some of the consequences of sex addiction.

The video will be narrated by a variety of volunteers from the fellowship. This video is designed to help reach the suffering sex addict who has not yet heard of sex addiction or SAA.

The ISO plans to develop several more of these types of videos and to make them available through multiple media channels. It will be creating videos designed to help carry our message both inside and outside the rooms of SAA.

The ISO needs volunteers to do the voice overs and artists to draw custom “doodles” to add to future videos. If you are interested in helping with this exciting effort, please contact the ISO office by email at [info@saa-recovery.org](mailto:info@saa-recovery.org) or call 713-869-4902.

## Public Information Committee Seeks Content-Creation Volunteers

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The Public Information and Cooperation with the 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 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](mailto:info@saa-recovery.org). Service helps keep us sober!

# ISO NEWS

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## CSC Seeks Participation in Creation of Upcoming Service Manual

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The Conference Steering Committee (CSC) has been working on a new Service Manual which contains loads of information to assist members in understanding how our organization works and how to participate in service. This Service Manual should be ready soon, and will be available to all on the service website.

We need your participation to complete this work, so please consider joining the Service Manual Sub-committee which meets the first Wednesday of each month at 5 p.m. Central time. Call the ISO office now to join and for entry to the call: 713-869-4902.

## SAA History Project Underway, Needs Your Help

---

The SAA History Project has been on-going since at least 2011 – sometimes more actively than others. Right now, we are working hard to move this vital project forward. We are getting older as a fellowship and memories are fading or being lost entirely, increasing the urgency of this mission.

Several volunteers have given audio interviews recording their memories of SAA's beginnings locally, nationally, and globally. We need to get more of these interviews recorded while we can. If you are an early member of SAA – either as a whole or in your local area, and have not yet been interviewed, please contact the ISO office to set one up. If you are in contact with any early members, please pass this request on to them. Our volunteers' anonymity is especially important to us.

Additionally, we need volunteers to transcribe these audios as well as a writer to compile the actual history text. If you have transcription skills, we need your help. If you are a writer, we need your help. To volunteer, please contact the ISO office by email at [info@saa-recovery.org](mailto:info@saa-recovery.org) or call 713-869-4902. Let's work together to tell our story, the history of SAA.

## LitCom Asks for Feedback on Two Pamphlets

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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](mailto:litcom@saa-recovery.org). Thank you!

## Board Recommends Areas Not Merge With Intergroups

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Here's a look at actions the ISO Board of Trustees took in August and October:

August

- » Approved selection of 2022 Convention Hotel

October

- » Approved motion that the ISO Board of Trustees recommend that areas not merge with intergroups.
- » Approve motion that ISO Board of Trustees recommends that areas develop internal operating procedures, as needed, in lieu of bylaws.
- »

## ISO Offers Multiple Ways to Donate

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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.

## Pandemic Causes Continued Sales Drop in September

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Our total SAA Green Book sales were below our estimate of \$8,325 by \$1,313 in September. Our HCI sales (August's numbers, a month behind) were \$1,449 higher than budgeted. Findaway audio sales were \$11 below our budget of \$225.

Our book “Voices in Recovery” sales for September were \$945 below our budget of \$2,900 for September mainly due to the HCI sales.

Our pamphlet and booklet sales were below our estimate of \$5,900 by \$4,955 in

# ISO NEWS

September. For the year we are at 44.56% of our estimated sales.

Our plastic chips sales were below our estimate of \$1,775 by \$1,379 in September. For the year we are at 47.38% of our estimated sales.

Our bronze medallion sales were below our estimate of \$2,700 by \$2,337 in September. For the year we are at 48.53% of our estimated sales.

Our total sales for September were below our estimate of \$21,952 by \$11,132 in September. For the year we are at 62.53% of our estimated sales. As the result of physical distancing in response to COVID-19, many face-to-face meetings have been held electronically; this continued to cause our sales to drop in September.

Individual donations were above our estimate of \$38,100 by \$21,335 in September. For the year we are at 109.29% of our estimated individual donations. The General Donations were higher than budgeted by \$20,371 and the shortfall of the LifeLine Partners was \$4,941. Our current LifeLines budget is \$30,000 and our goal is \$50,000 per month.

Group donations were below our estimate of \$11,250 by \$2,447 in September. For the year we are at 122.54% of our estimated group donations. Group LifeLine Partners are \$826 above our budget of \$1,750 and general donations for groups was \$3,273 below our budgeted estimate. Our total donations were \$18,888 above the budgeted amount of \$49,350.

Our product inventory is valued at \$83,235.

Our operational reserve is funded at \$200,021. Our estimated 4-month reserve is \$237,350.

Our total expenses were \$8,938 lower than our budget by \$67,088. Our Net Income was \$19,427 above our budget of \$1,879.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

In Your Service,

Paul M.

Executive Director

# CONTACT THE ISO

## Office

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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; Bob H (Treasurer); Les J (Secretary); Andy M; Richard S; Eddie N; Melissa W (Vice Secretary); Tim A; Wayne B; Wayne K (Vice Chair); Karen S

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

Jim L (Chair); Doug S (Vice Chair)  
Maud D (Secretary); Byard B; Bruce M  
Carole D; Carol R; Charlie K  
Deb W; Don R; Gary T (TOC Editor)  
Mike K; Cara A.; Jackie J; Rachel R

## 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.

### 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](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.