

# THE OUTER CIRCLE

**A Different  
Way to Scale  
the Steps**  
Sponsorship vs.  
co-sponsorship?  
This Q&A offers  
some insights



## **PLUS**

**Gentleness and Recovery**

**Exploring the Traditions**

**Pandemic Program Reinvigoration**





## 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 access to the Internet.

Through *TOC*, SAA members contribute articles and poems that focus on working the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of SAA. *TOC* 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 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 p. 31.

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

January - February 2021

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# FROM THE EDITOR

## Diversity and Our Primary Purpose

BY GARY T.

**The distinction between outside issues and our primary purpose must guide our fellowship.**

For more than six years as editor of *The Outer Circle*, I've been motivated by our fellowship's primary purpose: to carry the message to the sex addict who still suffers.

So I was deeply saddened and hurt when several readers said an image I chose for the cover of the November-December issue had racist overtones and should not have been used. I chafed against that judgment. At first, I wanted to use Tradition Ten to shield myself against wrongdoing: "As a fellowship, we cannot afford to take a position on these questions, however relevant they may seem ... it's simply none of our business" (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, p. 93).

And while that's true, I was missing a deeper point. The cover of last month's issue evoked racial overtones, and, because of that, it obstructed our primary purpose. For that, I am sorry.

The distinction between outside issues and our primary purpose must guide our fellowship as we work toward greater diversity and inclusion. Sex addiction is a ubiquitous illness, crossing all cultural and social distinctions. Therefore, it's necessary for all of us within the SAA community to communicate our message of recovery to a diverse audience. To avoid the quagmire of outside issues, we need to consistently wrestle with the question, "How might this be getting in the way of our primary purpose?"

One big step in the direction of diversity is the new TOC editor, Christie K. — the first woman to lead the newsletter in more than 20 years. As I type my final address, I'm excited to pass the baton on to Christie, and I encourage all of you to help make her feel welcome. Thank you all for the opportunity to be of service in this profound way!

# FROM THE DIRECTOR

## New Year, New Hope

BY PAUL M.

**We need to reach the addict who has never heard of us and the professional who can help us connect with that addict.**

A new year, new year resolutions, and a new hope for the future. With 2020 behind us, let us hope for a better, brighter new year. With most of our face-to-face venues still locked down, we have added functionality to our meeting list database to list a meeting's electronic ways to meet until we can meet face-to-face again. This will also allow for hybrid meetings that want to continue to have an electronic portion in their face-to-face meetings to be listed. Just fill out a group registration form (<https://saa-recovery.org/group-registration-form/>) to update your listing.

Again, I want to thank everyone for continuing to donate to make up for our sale of literature losses. The Bay Area recently held a virtual Giving Thanks event that was well-attended and raised more money than expected. We used a virtual event thermometer to show how the donations were coming in and the ISO office can provide a text to donate option for those events. If you are planning a Giving Thanks event, or are thinking of starting one, contact the ISO office.

Work on SAA Connect is now slowly starting again, but it may take longer to launch because of financial delays. We are working on getting more information out on new web pages that should make it easier to access. We need to reach the addict who has never heard of us and the professional who can help us connect with that addict. We need volunteers and funds to accomplish all of this. Call or email the ISO to find out how you can help.

I am looking forward to 2021 and hope that we continue to grow our meetings both electronically and face-to-face as we reach more in need.

# DEAR GRACE

## How to Support Male-Dominated Meetings — and Yourself

BY WOMEN'S  
OUTREACH COMMITTEE

Many of us have found that we create strong bonds with our brothers in recovery even when we have little in common outside the program.

**Dear Grace,**

I have been a member of SAA for a few years, and I have a local home group that I attend regularly. I love that there is a meeting near my home and I want to support recovery in my community.

However, my meeting is pretty much all straight men (and I'm a straight woman), so there are not members of my home group whom I feel comfortable contacting between meetings.

Fortunately, I have a very busy life full of out-er-circle activities, so adding other meetings to my schedule doesn't always work. How can I continue to support my home group and also expand my network of sisters in recovery?

**Seeking**

**Dear Seeking,**

How wonderful that you have a local group where you can meet face-to-face (during non-pandemic times). Many of us have found that we create strong bonds with our brothers in recovery even when we have little in common outside the program. We also find that it's important to have women in our recovery circle whom we can call without the risk of one of us being triggered by a possible attraction.

It's worth noting that one of the ways we support our local meetings is by raising their awareness of the larger fellowship. We can bring news of the larger fellowship, including service opportunities, retreats, and conventions. We can share insights gained from attending other meetings and events: recovery tools, methods for working



the Steps, tips for reaching group conscience, etc. In this way, supporting our local meeting and expanding our networks is not an either/or, but rather a win/win.

With that framework in mind, I have a few suggestions for you:

First, you might want to approach some of the members of your home group individually and ask if they are open to program calls. Just because you are attracted to their gender doesn't mean that they are attracted to you, and you may find one or two who can become part of your support network.

Second, I would recommend attending a few phone meetings, either women-only or mixed, and collecting phone numbers of people who "have something you want" based on their shares. Then you can call them or text

them to find out if they are open to receiving support calls.

Just like everything in life, finding a circle of recovery friends who are trustworthy and reliable takes time. Many of us struggle with making outreach calls, but if we commit to including them in our regular recovery activities, the benefits are well worth the effort.

**Best of luck to you**

**Love, Grace.**

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

# LIVING IN SOBRIETY

## **The Softer, Gentler Approach to Recovery**

**BY GARY T.**

**As I worked the  
steps, gentleness  
became the voice  
of my Higher  
Power.**

Today I have more than twelve years of sobriety — and I'm amazed at how my ideas about how recovery have changed.

When I first came to the program I was racked with shame, guilt, fear, and denial. I had been acting out with anonymous sexual partners and telling myself an addict's favorite lie: that I was doing it to protect my husband. My rationalization was that since he couldn't meet my needs sexually, I needed to take care of myself.

Even in the midst of my addiction, that lie was unsustainable. Unlike many I meet in recovery, I didn't start recovery because I was caught. I got there on my own in a moment of grace when I realized the utter insanity of putting my life — and my husband's — at risk for a fleeting high.

But even then, I wasn't ready for SAA. Instead, I went to a therapist, convinced that I could handle this problem on my own. Several months into therapy, I continued acting out between sessions, even as my counselor kept urging me to attend SAA meetings. I refused. Then God did for me what I couldn't do for myself. A severe injury left me so humiliated/humbled that I finally threw up my hands and attended my first meeting.

What a relief! Instead of the sketchy, scary, surly underbelly of society I expected to find, I discovered a group of people who understood, loved, and held me. From that first day, meetings have been a central part of my recovery, and I still attend up to four meetings a week, though my reasons for doing so have changed.

I'm so grateful that I clearly heard the message of recovery in that first meeting — that abstinence



from addictive sexual behavior is possible through working the Twelve Steps of SAA — and that there were people modeling that same behavior.

One of them was my first sponsor, who I still think of as some kind of Jedi Master. He gave me the key to sobriety in four simple words that left me dumb-founded: “Be gentle with yourself.”

At first I didn’t understand what he meant, thought maybe he wasn’t the right sponsor for me after all. Gentleness was the last thing someone as shameful, horrible, and monstrous as me needed. I required punishment, or at the very least, discipline.

Thankfully, I had enough willingness to keep going back to him and to recovery. As I worked my first three steps, convinced that I was failing, he gently reminded me of the progress I was making. Whenever I complained about what a disaster I was, he smiled and pointed out where I wasn’t. The time he showed me that I was beating myself up for not being gentle with myself still makes me laugh.

Very slowly, I began to understand, to feel the power of gentleness. As I continued working the rest of the steps, and took my daily actions — reading, prayer, meditation, exercise, and daily outreach calls, still my recovery staples — gentleness became the voice of my

Higher Power. That gentle voice keeps urging me to be more gentle with each passing day.

Today, as I sponsor others and try to be of service, gentleness is my guiding light. Over the years in recovery and working the Steps both formally and daily, I’ve become convinced that what I’m really addicted to is shame. Shame always wants to punish me; Higher Power always wants to pardon me.

But I’m not always willing to accept that grace. Sometimes, I still want to use my sex addiction as a way to beat myself up. If I go into my middle circle, act on a character defect or even feel a sexual urge, I can tell myself it’s because I’m a bad recoverer, a miserable sex addict.

But with the gift of sobriety and the gentle grace of my Higher Power, I now more quickly remember that all of those “failings” are often just human. I don’t work a perfect program. I never will. And that’s okay. That understanding gives me a new and different kind of freedom than I ever expected — the gentle freedom to be human. Nothing more. Nothing less.

*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).*

# A Different Way to Scale the Steps



## Co-sponsorship vs. sponsorship? This Q&A offers some insights

BY TOM B. AND JOHN O.

I recently served as a trusted servant for an SAA meeting where the topic was the Green Book reading on pages 13 and 14, which mentions co-sponsorship. During and after the meeting, I shared a bit about how John and I have been helping each other. It was as if I was able to open a door to people who have been trying to understand what this concept is and how it can work for their program. Here are some answers to frequently asked questions about co-sponsorship.

### **Q: How does a co-sponsor differ from a recovery friend?**

**A:** For a co-sponsor relationship to be the most successful, both honesty and objectivity are critically important. When two people decide to define a co-sponsor relationship, it takes a commitment from each party to focus on a shared goal: achieving the highest level of success and sobriety in each other's program.

This relationship differs from a general friendship in the program in two specific ways. First, close friendships often make it difficult to achieve the level of honesty and complete objectivity that is a hallmark of a co-sponsor relationship. Feelings and camaraderie in a friendship often take precedence to the tougher discussions

that might be warranted.

Second, the goal of a friendship in the program is usually just that: friendship. Co-sponsors may develop a friendship over time, or may arise out of a friendship, but that is not the primary purpose of the co-sponsoring relationship.

**Q: How does it differ from a sponsor?**

A: First off, we know what a sponsor is: “A sponsor is a person in the fellowship who acts as a guide to working the program of SAA — a fellow addict we can rely upon for support. ... Most importantly, sponsors guide us through the Twelve Steps” (Sex Addicts Anonymous, p. 13).

We also have some guidance on what not to expect from a sponsor: “Generally speaking, our experience has shown that it is best not to expect from our sponsor any services that are given by a professional counselor or therapist. Our sponsor is not responsible for our recovery. We, the sponsees, are responsible for it. We were cautioned not to think of our sponsor as being our Higher Power or best friend. A sponsor is only with us to share experiences from their Twelve Step journey” (“Getting a Sponsor” pamphlet).

For some in recovery who do not have access to meetings or a sponsor, a co-sponsoring relationship can help bridge the gap. Currently, I have a sponsor and ready access to meetings, while John does not. However, in this developing co-sponsoring relationship,

I often feel that I am the one who has benefited most. This dynamic speaks to the various strengths that each of us bring to our co-sponsoring relationship. John described sponsoring and co-sponsoring to me like this: “A sponsor might be like a travel guide on a river-rafting trip. A co-sponsor might be like someone paddling with you in the raft as you both navigate the river without a guide.”

Since we have a strong concept of what a sponsor is, we can determine that a co-sponsor differs from a sponsor in several ways. For example, a co-sponsor does not provide guidance for how to go through the Twelve Steps of SAA. My sponsor gives me direction for how I should go through the program, and I follow his direction and guidelines as I pursue my work through the Twelve Steps. However, I can share about my own progress with the program and confer on my step work with my co-sponsor.

Another difference between a sponsor and a co-sponsor is that it is my sponsor who lets me know how and when I should check in with him. My co-sponsor does not have any specific requirement for me to check in. However, we choose to check in often for support and encouragement. Overall, in my own experience, my relationship with my sponsor is more structured around going through the Twelve Steps, while my relationship with my co-sponsor covers various aspects of recovery, life, faith, and a strong supportive friend-

ship. (Interesting fact: my sponsor and my co-sponsor both are named “John.” I often think that is a sign from my Higher Power, within my faith.)

**Q: How does a co-sponsoring relationship work?**

A: In our experience, a co-sponsoring relationship works best with mutual respect and shared goals. This may become a venue for sharing things that may not be shared within a meeting. As such, it is important for each of us to be completely free to communicate things we want to discuss or pursue. Difficult points may be openly discussed, with the full support of the co-sponsor. Our shared goal is to reach an understanding that will be helpful and bring hope and peace to each co-sponsor.

**Q: What kinds of things do you share and talk about?**

A: John and I talk about many things. For example, ideas about pursuing a path to a Higher Power are discussed freely, with the ability to share specifics on faith topics and spiritual renewal programs. Sharing details about our journeys to discover healthier sexuality have been an important part of our relationship, as our sobriety paths led to changes for what that means. Comparing program tools that are helpful such as affirmations for review, input on step work, and guidance from our own experience provide great sources for heartfelt sharing and building the bonds of our co-sponsor relationship.

We also share many books that are related to recovery or our faith. Often one of us will see news or articles on a various topic and share our thoughts with the other, sometimes seriously, sometimes hilariously! We have shared our writings for review and editing. For example, I wrote an update to my First Step Story and John was kind enough to proof it and give guidance to help me improve it. Most importantly, we both pray for each other’s recovery, life, and faith journeys.

All of these and more open new avenues for discussions, sharing, and commonalities. Each of us as co-sponsors is on our own journey through the program, and time offers growth and learning opportunities. What works for one co-sponsor may provide new ideas for the other to try. A strong and supportive co-sponsoring relationship may grow into a deep bond of friendship and comradeship that will easily withstand the challenges of time, distance, and hardship.

I lost many friends when I reached the bottom of my addiction, and I believe that finding a co-sponsor who has become a close and trusted friend has been a gift from my Higher Power. I treasure this amazing gift, and I thank my Higher Power for all the blessings it brings to my life. I also share my gratitude with my co-sponsor, so John knows just how much I appreciate the work we do together, and how much our strong bond of friendship, brotherly love, and shared faith mean to me. ●



me retira el deseo compulsivo. Ahora tengo opción de un deseo que pensaba que nunca lo dejaría, atreves de los 12 pasos he encontrado la raíz del problema que yo tenía, escribiendo mi vida completa.

Hoy me agarro en principios espirituales aprendo a escuchar en las reuniones con una mente abierta, aprendiendo a hacer lo que sea necesario para lograr mi recuperación. El ser honesto es uno de los principios espirituales en lo que se basa el programa, aceptar la responsabilidad de mis acciones viviendo con fe de que el cuidado de Dios es suficiente para mí.

Mi experiencia me ha demostrado que he avanzado en mi recuperación. Cuando actué, comprendí mi adicción pero al final con solo de pensar no saldré del problema. Mi mejor pensamiento “me metí en problema” en lugar de esto, entrar en acción.

Ahora evito los lugares y situaciones que relacionaba con mi comportamiento, me conseguí un compañero su nombre es Jose Flores me dio confianza y hay nos ayudamos uno con otro. Una de las habilidades más importantes que adquirí es conectarme con mi comportamiento y con las consecuencias.

Cuando tenía deseo de actuar entraba en las fantasías, me concentraba en mi deseo perdía el contacto con el conocimiento que tenía a cerca de las consecuencias que sucederían.

Practico recordarme a mí mismo los

posibles resultados de los comportamientos que me lleva a actuar lo que hice que da-os podría ocasionar a los demás.

En ocasiones todo lo que necesitaba era que alguien me preguntara Que es lo que te está pasando? Y que me escuche. Poco tiempo después sobre lo que me está molestando y una vez sabiéndolo encuentro impulso de actuar por ejemplo

- Puedo fijar límites al pasar por lugares en donde salía actuar
- Si tengo problemas haciendo comentarios inapropiados o intrigando sobre el sexo, puedo fijar límites no hacer bromas de contenido sexual o coquetear.
- Si me siento atraído sexualmente asía mujeres mayores de edad puedo evitar lugares de parques públicos, tiendas de marquetas, casas ajenas o manejar solo
- Fije límites para mantenerme a salvo y permanecer alejado de situaciones que podría llevarme a actuar

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**The Outer Circle looks interesting but there is a very big problem: they sent me the newsletter in English. I am learning to speak the basics, but I can't yet comprehend it.**

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### **English translation:**

*My name is Martin V. Thank you for writing to me.*

*The Outer Circle looks interesting, but there is a very big problem: they sent me the newsletter in English. I am learning to speak the basics of English, but I can't yet completely comprehend this publication.*

*By chance, will The Outer Circle be available in Spanish?*

*Here is my report on the Spanish language Green Book:*

*It offers a spiritual solution to the disease of sexual addiction. By following spiritual principles and working the Steps, I have discovered that the desire to act out is less intense and less frequent; the compulsive desire is being lifted.*

*Now I have an option to this addiction that I thought I would never have.*

*Working the Twelve Steps has shown me the root of the problem I've been fighting my entire life.*

*Today, I listen in meetings with an open mind, learning to do whatever it takes to achieve my recovery. Being honest is one of the spiritual principles on which the program is based. I accept responsibility for my actions, living in faith that God's care is enough for me.*

*My experience has shown me that I have made progress in my recovery. Still, I understand that just thinking will not get me out of the problem. My best thinking is what got me into trouble.*

*Instead I take action.*

*That means I avoid the places and situations related to my acting-out behavior. Another action is that I got a recovery friend, who gave me confidence and support. One of the most important skills I acquired is connecting my behavior with consequences.*

*When I had a desire to act, I went into fantasies. I concentrated on my desire, and I lost awareness with the consequences that would follow acting out.*

*Now, when I get the urge to act out, I play the tape all the way through. That means I practice reminding myself of the consequences of that action and how it could cause harm to myself and others.*

*Sometimes all I need is someone to ask me how I'm doing and to listen to me. When that happens, it doesn't take long until I realize what is bothering me.*

*Finally, I can then take the following actions to keep me sober:*

- » *I can set boundaries for myself against going near places where I used to act out.*
- » *If I have trouble making inappropriate comments or sexualizing myself or others, I can set limits on making sexual jokes or flirting.*
- » *I can avoid places such as public parks and stores as well as behaviors such as driving alone where I become triggered.*
- » *I can set limits to stay safe and stay out of situations that could lead me to act out. ●*



# Back to Our Roots

## Exploring the foundations of the Twelve Traditions

*Editor's Note: This is the start of the series "Our Traditions and Their Roots," which will look to the Green Book's exposition of each Tradition, along with the history of the problem each Tradition sought to address from AA source material.*

T

BY ANONYMOUS

he service structure of SAA is an upside-down pyramid. Groups are the foundation of SAA at the pyramid's base. "Our local meeting is...the foundation of the SAA service structure" (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, p. 76). Our ISO Board of Directors resides not at the top, as in most organizations, but at the bottom, "responsible to those they serve" above them (*Sex Addicts Anonymous* p. 90).

What keeps this unwieldy but vital service structure from tipping over and breaking apart as other service organizations have done? Answer: The SAA Twelve Traditions. "At every level of our service structure we are guided by the Twelve Traditions of SAA, as adapted from the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, p. 76). The Twelve Traditions are vital to SAA's usefulness and to its survival. We need to understand the Twelve Traditions.



To do so, let's understand more about where the Twelve Traditions of SAA came from. The Traditions are virtually identical to the "short form" of the Twelve Traditions of AA that were published in 1950. The AA short form got its name because it was condensed or shortened from the original version that were first published in 1946.

That 1946 version is now called the "long form" of the Twelve Traditions of AA. But, the real question is, why were the original Twelve Traditions published in the first place? What was the need for them?

If we understand why AA needed them — why AA might not have survived without them — then we can understand why it was so important to the founders of SAA to adopt these traditions at SAA's very first National Convention in 1989. And...why we need them today in SAA as much as ever.

By 1941, two years after the AA Big Book was published, AA had grown from just 100 members meeting in basically two groups in Akron and New York to over 8,000 members in an untold number of groups scattered all across North America.

Forget for a minute they were alcoholics; see them as recovered and recovering addicts like us—almost all with less than two years and the vast majority of them with less than one year of sobriety. These were formerly very ill people (just like us, right?) whose

lives for decades had revolved around their addiction. Like many of us, they were selfish, self-centered, fearful, and prideful experts on everything, each one wanting "to run the whole show."

Reflecting on these chaotic days, one AA co-founder wrote:

*Our Society then entered a fearsome and exciting adolescent period. The test that it faced was this: Could these large numbers of erstwhile erratic alcoholics successfully meet and work together? Would there be quarrels over membership, leadership, and money? Would there be strivings for power and prestige? Would there be schisms which would split A.A. apart? (author's emphasis) Soon A.A. was beset by these very problems on every side and in every group. But out of this frightening and at first disrupting experience the conviction grew that A.A.s had to hang together or die separately. We had to unify our Fellowship or pass off the scene. (Alcoholics Anonymous, "Forward to 2nd Edition," pg. xviii, 1955).*

Early A.A.s discovered the principles by which the individual addict could recover; we know these principles as the Twelve Steps of SAA.

But these pioneers also discovered the principles by which our groups and SAA as a whole could survive and function effectively—we know these as the Twelve Traditions of SAA.

Next time: Tradition One. ●

# The Power of the Pen

**Writing to prisoners is a transformative service opportunity**

BY TOM L.

There have been unexpected blessings for me every step of my four-year recovery journey. The latest of these have come in the form of two recovering addicts that I have never met and am likely never to meet. They are men in their 70s, doing lengthy prison sentences for sex-related offenses, who came into my life through SAA's prisoner letter writing program. What started as a new and strange service opportunity has turned into one of the highlights of my recovery.

Can you imagine working your program in an environment where sex addiction is entirely unrecognized and unsupported? Where there is no access to meetings, fellowship, and daily encouragement? Where the label of sex offender sticks on you, 24/7? Where relief from incarceration may be 5-10 years away?

And yet, to exchange letters with these men, witness their changes, is to have direct access to the spiritual power this program offers. Their profound gratefulness to be sober and work the steps with a sponsor has inspired deep gratefulness in me. And this gratefulness is keeping me sober!

These brothers teach me gratitude for life's circumstances no matter what they are. At the same time, I wish not to deny dark moments or the thoughts and feelings they produce. They also teach me to stay aware of the bars that hold me fast, however illusory. These bars have real consequences to my life and relationships, yet I must be grateful for the choices I can make to step out from behind those bars.

For these reasons and more, I want everyone in this program to be in relationship to a man or woman in prison, in recovery.

The ISO staff has made it easy. Just fill out a form on the SAA website ([saa-recovery.org](http://saa-recovery.org)) and push send. From there, resources and templates are available to assist you working the steps by correspondence.

Admittedly, this opportunity calls for patience and grace. It can take weeks to exchange letters and, just like working the steps in a non-prison environment, sponsees may drop off entirely.

When this happened to me recently, I re-mailed a copy of my last letter. Three weeks later, my sponsee wrote me, apologizing. He had gotten overwhelmed putting his Fourth Step on paper. Sound familiar? That same addict is now working his Ninth Step.

Is 'lack of time' and a busy schedule good enough reasons to deny yourself this blessing? Well, you be the judge. I spend an average of 45 minutes per month, per sponsee.

When I started working this program, my sponsor promised me that my life would get better and better if I worked a daily program of recovery. This promise has been fulfilled, thanks in part to the letter-writing program that connects me with addicts in prison.

So, expect the unexpected! Say yes to the opportunities that come your way. Is this one of those opportunities? ●

## *Mirror*

*By Laura T.*

*Humanity I love you with light that  
knows no bounds*

*I feel it in my heart when I meditate  
upon you*

*and your fragrant songs blossom upon the  
boughs*

*Yet I forget to love me when I find myself  
alone*

*I count on beads my actions and pick  
apart my thoughts*

*with weapons of retrospect that kill the  
joyous girl*

*It's an antique voice that's clanging and  
that I recreate*

*How can I be humbly whole without the  
recompense*

*of itinerant obstructions that say I'm not  
enough*

*I love myself, I love myself, I tell the  
mirror of my soul*

*I love you, I love you, says the mirror to  
the girl*

# DEAR WILL

## 8 Questions to Help Reinvigorate Recovery Amid the Pandemic

BY WILL

**We all share  
gratitude for  
having SAA  
meetings during  
this time, yet we  
have lost some of  
the power of our  
recovery.**

### Dear Will:

Like many other SAA members, the global pandemic has had an impact on the meetings in my home area. When our community went into “lock down” in the early spring, all of our meetings switched to a virtual format: some on Zoom and others by telephone. I thought these were great solutions to provide an opportunity to continue attending meetings while maintaining our safety.

While some of our groups have gone back to face-to-face meetings, I am not yet comfortable attending in-person. Lately, I have noticed that my recovery is feeling a little stale. Maybe it is just a COVID thing. I haven’t acted out during this time, but it just seems like my recovery is missing something and I cannot put my finger on it. Any suggestions?

### Stale Mate

#### Dear Stale Mate:

This very topic that you present came up recently with some of my recovery friends. We all share your gratitude for having SAA meetings during this uncharted time, yet we agreed that we too were missing something, that we had lost some of the power of our recovery.

We found that the issue was not with the adaptations to our regular meetings, but in adaptations or lack of maintenance of our spiritual programs of recovery.

The recovery that we enjoyed prior to COVID-19 had been impacted by the pandemic, like so many other aspects of daily life, and required extra effort to go back to what had worked so well for so many of us. By answering

some simple questions, we identified ways to re-engage in what had worked so well for so many in recovery. I hope they do the same for you.

**1.** How have you maintained your Twelfth-Step work during this time?

**2.** How are your phone calls/text/emails going? Have you gotten any new phone numbers at meetings lately?

**3.** Where are you in your own step work with your sponsor? Have you made any changes to your circles in light of the current situation?

**4.** When was the last time you worked with a newcomer and helped them get started in the program?

**5.** How is your service work going? Do you have a service commitment? Have you contacted your intergroup, area, or the ISO to serve?

**6.** Have you increased, maintained, or decreased your meeting attendance? Why?

**7.** If you are attending a virtual or telemeting, are you focused during the meeting, or are you turning your camera and microphone off so you can pay attention to other matters?



**8.** Is sobriety, recovery, and working with others your primary purpose? If not, what changes can you make today?

Answering these questions allowed each of us to take responsibility for our recovery during this time. The current health crisis may have required many changes to our daily lives, but what has not changed is the spiritual power of the Twelve Steps, the SAA program of recovery, and working with other recovering sex addicts. If you find your recovery stale, your meetings lacking, or your program wanting, I invite you to lean in to what has worked so well...SAA.

**Will**

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

# STORIES OF SERVICE

## The Best Recovery Teacher

BY CHARLIE K.

**All the service work I have done has taught me so much more about our fellowship and myself than I could have learned from literature or meetings.**

I came into recovery after decades of addiction, not understanding the depth and breadth of my problem. After a couple of months I found the courage to ask someone to sponsor me and was quickly directed to do service. So I helped set out and put away chairs and literature. During a business meeting I asked whom I should inform that we were getting low on certain pamphlets. Then I became the literature person.

When I expressed interest in attending the Conference, I became the group delegate. At the Conference's regional caucus, I learned our region needed an alternate for the Literature Committee. Then I was on the Literature Committee.

All of the service work I have done has taught me so much more about our fellowship, group conscience, and myself than I ever could have learned by reading our literature and attending meetings. I have seen the incredible effort expended by countless dedicated trusted servants to help bring our message of recovery to suffering sex addicts. It has built an enormous sense of gratitude in my heart that I can never fully repay.

Several months ago life went virtual due to our global pandemic. We adapted our local meetings to an online format, and added an extra on the night we had no local meeting. We registered this new meeting with the ISO, and voila!, what an amazing experience it has been. We have members join from all parts of the US, Canada, Mexico, and even from the UK and India.

My journey has been very interesting and enlightening. I have made some really amazing friends in recovery. This fellowship and our program of recovery saved my life, and I'm pleased to have an opportunity to serve in some small way.

# FROM THE BOARD

## Board Looks Toward New Year

BY BOB L., BOARD  
CHAIR

**We move into  
2021 with the  
hope of sobriety,  
vaccines, and  
economic  
recovery.**

As tumultuous as 2020 has been, we move into 2021 with the hope of sobriety, vaccines, and economic recovery. Yet, we face continuing ambiguity about how this year will unfold for the world at-large as well as for our fellowship.

For example, the Finance & Operations Committee of the Board of Trustees is working on the 2021 budget as this article is being written.

Among the many unknowns is to what extent face-to-face meetings may be able to resume. The issue has a significant impact on all of us – not only our ability to meet with our fellows in person, but also on fellowship finances.

Events in 2020 revealed that with the prevalence of Zoom meetings, group contributions declined, while individual donations increased.

As generous as fellowship members have been in supporting the ISO, the latter sadly did not fully offset the former, requiring the ISO to curtail some important activities of the fellowship. Outreach to the meetings of professional communities has been brought to a halt; work on SAA Connect was shelved; upgrades to office infrastructure were set back significantly. Other activities were affected as well.

The last year's annual convention was postponed until 2021. However, if we do not hold a face-to-face convention this year, the ISO will incur a substantial five-figure cancellation fee, unless COVID-19 conditions make such a meeting unsafe in the judgment of the host hotel.

Further, feedback received from the 2020

# FROM THE BOARD

virtual Conference indicates that although we were able to reasonably conduct business over Zoom, delegates missed the personal interaction that accompanies face-to-face Conferences.

On the other hand, the Zoom format made it possible for delegates to attend who might otherwise not have had the means or ability to attend a Conference in Houston.

It is potentially possible to have a hybrid Conference, combining an in-person meeting with simultaneous Zoom attendance, provided cost and logistical issues can be resolved. These issues make budgeting even further complicated.

In an ideal world, the vaccines will result in a significant subsidence of the COVID-19 virus, and regular group meetings will resume.

Yet, it is the early days for that process to take hold. By the time of the next convention, travel and meeting issues may well remain. Only the passage of time will shed light on our ability to have a face-to-face convention.

However, by the fall, the effect of the vaccines is substantial, we may be able to go forward with a face-to-face Conference, with or without Zoom, as our resources and technical challenges dictate. Again, only time

will inform us of these prospects.

In the meantime, while remaining hopeful that the virus situation will subside substantially, the Board is planning only a gradual resumption of normal outreach activities and other expenditures, being mindful of prudent budgetary restrictions flowing from limitations necessitated for public health. We expect to make mid-stream budget alterations as these unique and unfolding circumstances indicate.

Hopefully, we all will be able to gradually return to some semblance of the lives we lived until early last year, and continue our recovery for ourselves and our fellow addicts. Please be assured that the Board is grateful to all of you for your past and continuing support.

## 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 the ISO at 713-869-4902*



# ISO NEWS

## ISO Seeks to Continue Outreach with Support from Annual Appeal

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Please help support the ISO in carrying the SAA message of recovery to suffering sex addicts. We ask that you give generously as your financial support is more important than ever during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The ISO's mission is to help SAA groups carry the message of recovery. One of the most powerful ways the ISO does this is by supporting local groups to attend professional conferences for therapists, counselors, social workers, etc. In 2019 SAA members and ISO staff were able to attend nineteen conferences where they educated thousands of professionals about the SAA program of recovery. I would like to share a true story that illustrates how this work led to powerful recovery for a suffering sex addict.

Through our work with the professional community, an ISO staff member attended a conference where he met a professor of psychology from a college in a large southern city. He explained the SAA program of recovery to the professor and told her that it might be possible to have SAA members talk to her students. The professor was very interested in this and asked if it would be possible to arrange a presentation during the upcoming semester. This request was referred to SAA members in the professor's home city and before long, a date and time for the presentation was set. The presentation went very well and one of the presenters, Sue (not her real name), spent time afterwards talking individually to students. The professor sent an e-mail a few weeks later to say that the presentation had deeply affected her students – especially one woman:

“...a student came by after class today and wanted to let me know that Sue literally saved her life!! This student said that after her talk last semester, Sue was kind enough to offer some encouragement and give her some information. The student said this meeting marked a profound turning point in her life! She wanted Sue to know that not only did she save her, but her marriage, and the lives of her 4 children!! The student and I just cried.....Please pass along to Sue. Thanks for all the hard work you guys do in raising awareness about this condition!! Making a difference one student at a time!!”

This story illustrates the powerful, lifesaving effect our message of recovery can have on the lives of suffering sex addicts. It would not have happened, however, without the contributions of many SAA members like you that allowed SAA to attend this conference and others.

# ISO NEWS

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Unfortunately, all conferences were canceled in 2020 due to COVID as well as funding to attend them. In addition, funding for eighteen mailings and four Google Ad Words projects were also canceled due to a drop in ISO revenue because of COVID-19. These vital projects would have carried the message of recovery to thousands of people. Your annual appeal donation can help restore funding for projects such as these in 2021 and beyond, as well as support the other many critical services the ISO provides our fellowship. I've listed information about these services in a separate document attached to this message.

Donate here: <https://saa-recovery.org/contribute/2020-annual-appeal>

## SAA Twelve Concepts Group Invites Participation

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The Twelve Concepts Subcommittee invites you to join a discussion of the Twelve Concepts for SAA Service. The first meeting will take place via Zoom, on Jan. 30 at 12:00 p.m. CST.

We read through the explanation of the first concept, followed by open discussion concerning our experience, strength and hope around the concept and the spiritual principles it encourages.

After each person shares, we'll move on to the next concept. We'll probably meet for 90 minutes and it will take several meetings to discuss them all. Projected dates for future meetings are May 29, July 31, and October 30, 2021.

If you have feedback on the Twelve Concepts, please email it to [TwelveConcepts@saa-iso.org](mailto:TwelveConcepts@saa-iso.org). If you want to join the Twelve Concepts Subcommittee, and be a part of considering the feedback from the fellowship, contact the ISO and they will help you get connected.

## CSC Offers a Variety of Service Opportunities for New Year

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The first-ever area-based Conference is behind us, and the Conference Steering Committee (CSC) is working to engage delegates in year-round service with the International Service Organization to help the sex addict who still suffers.

We would be honored to have you participate in the work of the fellowship within the CSC. In addition to a monthly Zoom phone meeting (dates and Central times in parentheses), you will be asked to work a few hours a month to help the goals of the subcommittee. Please contact the subcommittee chair listed below or me, Rich B, at 607-361-3280 or [csc@saa-recovery.org](mailto:csc@saa-recovery.org).

» Service Manual (1st Friday 4 PM) – This subcommittee has been working on a

# ISO NEWS

new service manual which provides members with a comprehensive understanding how the SAA organization works and how to participate in service. In addition to attending a one-hour monthly call, you can help with writing, reviewing and editing content.

- » Charter and Bylaws (TBD) – This subcommittee will review the Conference Charter and draft updates that are consistent with the ISO bylaws and the new area structure. Please join if you have been part of this or other charter creations, or if you would like to be part of a team that updates this important document.
- » Area Mentoring (1st Saturday 12 PM) – This subcommittee will continue efforts to encourage and support ALL ISO areas, including registering areas, assisting with providing delegates, and fostering the area assemblies. You will be in phone contact with various areas to guide them and offer support. We will also work hard in this subcommittee to register and nurture international areas.
- » Communications (1st Thursday 7 PM) – This subcommittee will be working to enhance the flow of communication between GSRs, delegates, the ISO, and the Conference. Projects include developing a training program for new GSRs and delegates, monthly “Let’s Talk” meetings on Zoom for delegates and GSRs, and creating a user-friendly timeline document of important dates and events. You may contact the Communications Chair, Paul B, directly at (928) 308-6647 or [bruinpaul85@gmail.com](mailto:bruinpaul85@gmail.com).

## **Prisoner Outreach Group Salutes the Incarcerated Working a Program**

The Prisoner Outreach Committee gives three cheers to all prisoners who are working the Twelve Steps of Sex Addicts Anonymous! It takes courage, fortitude, and the grace of a Higher Power to put forth this effort for your recovery—especially under the circumstances of incarceration. Sobriety is well worth the effort.

As you grow in recovery, you become a powerful example for others. They may come to want what you have: sobriety from addictive sexual behaviors and acceptance of life on life’s terms.

We support you on your journey because we are grateful for the gift of recovery and sobriety we have received from working this program. Your work on the Twelve Steps will help you offer encouragement and support for many others. It will also help you transition to life in the outside world with friends and loved ones.

Living in recovery from sex addiction offers us the chance to live a wonderful and beautiful life of gratitude, contentment, and sobriety. As we walk our own path of recovery, we are prepared to meet life’s challenges when relying upon our Higher Power’s strength. This is a gift we hope to share with you, and that you

# ISO NEWS

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will share with others in and out of prison.

## Authors Group Seeks New Members

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Have you ever wanted to write something recovery-related but didn't know where to share it? Do you enjoy writing poetry, meditations, or other pieces of literature? If so, the Author's Group encourages you to join in our meetings and participate. We are looking for literature to discuss and collaborate on. One project that has recently been mentioned is a book of poetry and other literature items.

The Author's Group meets once a month for two hours on the first Saturday of the month. It is a Zoom meeting. We have lots of fun collaborating on different projects. If any of this sounds of interest to you or you want to know more, please email [info@saa-recovery.org](mailto:info@saa-recovery.org) and ask to be put on the Author's Group email listserv.

## Board Adopts 'Core Documents,' Urges CSC, LitCom to Do Same

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

Approved motion to adopt "Core Documents of the ISO of SAA" and recommended that the CSC and the Literature Committee join the Board in this statement and encourage the terminology to be used throughout the fellowship.

## New Editor of *The Outer Circle* Newsletter Chosen

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Please welcome Christie K., of Washington state, as the new editor of *The Outer Circle*, starting with the March/April 2021 issue.

We are very thankful for Gary T.'s service of these last six years and how he has updated the look and feel of *The Outer Circle*.

We look forward to Christie's fresh view of the newsletter and look forward to her ideas on how to make *The Outer Circle* better in the months to come.

## Sales Down More than 40 Percent But Group Donations Up

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Our total SAA Green Book sales were below our estimate of \$8,325 by \$4,962 in November. Our HCI sales (September's numbers, a month behind) were \$1,585 lower than budgeted. Findaway audio sales were \$63 below our budget of \$225.

# ISO NEWS

Our book *Voices of Recovery* sales for November were \$902 below our budget of \$2,900 for November.

Our pamphlet and booklet sales were below our estimate of \$5,900 by \$5,108 in November. For the year we are at 39.14% of our estimated sales.

Our plastic chips sales were below our estimate of \$1,775 by \$1,365 in November. For the year we are at 42.26% of our estimated sales.

Our bronze medallion sales were below our estimate of \$2,700 by \$1,550 in November. For the year we are at 45.69% of our estimated sales. We have replenished our supply of medallions.

Our total sales for November were below our estimate of \$21,952 by \$14,175 in November. For the year we are at 58.42% of our estimated sales. As the results of physical distancing in response to COVID-19 and most face-to-face meetings being held electronically, our sales continued to drop in November.

Individual donations were above our estimate of \$49,600 by \$10,054 in November. For the year we are at 112.04% of our estimated individual donations. The General Donations were higher than budgeted by \$13,165 and the shortfall of the Lifeline Partners was \$4,765. Our current Lifelines budget is \$30,000 and our goal is \$50,000 per month.

Group donations were above our estimate of \$11,750 by \$17,703 in November. For the year we are at 118.5% of our estimated group donations. Group Lifeline partners are \$668 above our budget of \$1,750 and general donations for groups was \$1,451 above our budgeted estimate. Our total donations were \$27,757 above the budgeted amount of \$61,350.

Our product inventory is valued at \$83,817.

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

Our total expenses were \$19,556 lower than our budget of \$68,683. Our Net Income was \$37,361 above our budget of \$8,526.

For the year we are \$142,974 above our budget of -\$67,039, with a net income of \$75,935.

# CONTACT THE ISO

## Office

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PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270

Phone: 713-869-4902  
Fax: 713-692-0105

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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)

## 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.

LitCom: [litcom@saa-recovery.org](mailto:litcom@saa-recovery.org)

### 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

CSC: Service Manual: 4:00 p.m.

### First Saturday of the month

Intimacy and Sexual Avoidance: 9 a.m.  
CSC: Area Mentoring: 12:00 p.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

Non-Religious Committee: 11:00 a.m.  
ISOP Committee: 2:00 p.m.  
CSC: Communications: 2:00 p.m.  
LGBT Outreach: 3:00 p.m.

### Fourth Thursday of the month

Public Information/Cooperation with the Professional Community: 7:00 p.m.

### Fourth Saturday of the month

Inclusion and Diversity: 10:00 a.m.

### Fourth Sunday of the month

Fellowship ISC: 1:00 p.m.  
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.