

THE OUTER CIRCLE

Revisiting Steps Six and Seven

PLUS

- * Working the steps without “god”
- * What matters today
- * Recovery and healthier sexuality
- * Group Autonomy
- * The sinking boat





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 page 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.

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FROM THE EDITOR

Who, What, Why, and How of Contributing to *The Outer Circle*

BY CODY S.
ISO PUBLICATIONS
MANAGER

If you have
experience,
strength, and hope
to share regarding
your recovery
from sex addiction
through the Twelve
Steps of SAA, I
encourage you to
submit an article.

A member recently sent a question to the office's generic email address, info@saa-recovery.org. She wanted to know what guidelines there are for submitting an article to *The Outer Circle*. This is an excellent question.

If you have experience, strength, and hope to share regarding your recovery from sex addiction through the Twelve Steps of SAA, I encourage you to submit an article.

Except for the "Living in Sobriety" column, which has a sobriety minimum of five years, there are no minimum requirements for sobriety or time in the program.

It is more important that the article focuses on the solution rather than the problem; is about the author's experience, strength, and hope while working the Twelve Steps of SAA; and adheres to the Twelve Traditions of SAA.

In addition to submitting articles, you can also ask a question of Grace or Will.

If you identify as a woman, email your question to grace@saa-women.org.

If you identify as a man, email Will at men4saa@saa-recovery.org.

While there is not presently a column for non-binary members, if you identify as non-binary, I encourage you to email the LGBT committee at lgbt@saa-recovery.org as well as the general TOC email at toc@saa-recovery.org.

All other submission guidelines can be found in the back on page 31. We look forward to reading what you submit!

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Conference will be virtual again in 2021

BY PAUL M.

The annual meeting of the ISO Conference is the chance for the ISO committees to hear the voice of the fellowship.

Here we are, a year and half later since the pandemic started and still wondering when it may end. Only our Higher Power knows for sure.

We must make the best of the situation. As such, the Board has decided to hold the 2021 annual meeting of the ISO Conference virtually again.

The annual meeting of the ISO Conference is the chance for the ISO committees to hear the voice of the fellowship. With the restructuring from regions to areas, we hope that voice will be more easily heard now and in the future.

If every group would have a General Service Representative (GSR), (we have 470 GSRs out of 2089 registered meetings at the time of this writing), those GSRs should bring the group conscience to their area assembly. We currently have fifty-four area assemblies registered out of the eighty-four current areas. There are potentially eighty-seven areas if three new country-level areas are approved. So, we are still growing in this structure.

The plan is to have a delegate from every area assembly attend the conference.

We hope to see your area delegate at the 2021 annual meeting of the ISO Conference.

DEAR GRACE

Is the Women's Outreach Committee going away?

**BY WOMEN'S
OUTREACH
COMMITTEE**

No, the WOC will
be continuing
its service work
in support of
the woman sex
addict who is still
suffering.

Dear Grace,

I recently heard that the SAA Women's Intergroup (WIG) needs new members to help with the next women-only retreat. Does this mean that the Women's Outreach Committee (WOC) is going away? I don't understand why we would need both.

Signed,

What about the WOC?

Dear What About the WOC,

Thank you for your concern. No, the WOC is not going away. We are and will be continuing our service work in support of the woman sex addict who is still suffering. There is plenty of need in the fellowship for both the WIG and the WOC, and we hope, plenty of energy as well. In fact, your question gives us the chance to make a plug for the excellent service work being done by the WOC and an appeal for new members.

The "Dear Grace" column is just one of the many on-going activities of the WOC that are unaffected by the new SAA Women's Intergroup. Here are some others:

- » The Women's Outreach List (also known as the "Grace list")
- » The Women's Outreach room and welcome table at each ISO convention
- » The women's pages on the ISO website (WOC serves as "content expert")
- » Membership in the Board's Fellowship Internal Standing Committee

Then, in addition to those, the WOC is always looking for ways for the fellowship to hear



women's voices. For the past six years, we've facilitated a women's panel at the ISO convention. The effort to find ways to present women's experience, strength, and hope will continue to be a priority for the WOC. Please join us if you have ideas about how to do that.

The WOC will also continue to be involved in literature. For example, the WOC drafted the pamphlets "Welcome to the Woman Newcomer" and "Safe and Sober Meetings." They worked with the Literature Committee to have them approved and available for sale. We know that there are more topics that could be covered in new literature. We need new members who have the energy and commitment to make that happen.

Of course, the WOC also sponsored five women-only retreats in the years 2011 – 2017. In fact, this is the only function that the WOC transferred to the new women's intergroup. The reason why is the answer to your ques-

tion about why the fellowship needs both the WOC and the new women's intergroup.

The essential difference between them is that the WOC is an ISO Board committee, formed by the ISO Board of Trustees, and is supported by ISO resources. It is also part of the ISO of SAA corporation, and it is bound by the financial and tax implications of that. In contrast, the Women's Intergroup is an autonomous intergroup. Being autonomous, it can engage in fundraising, and can hold and distribute those funds in accordance with its own group conscience. It can be more flexible and immediate in its response.

In other words, both of these service bodies have plenty of work to do! Both need members to make it happen. You can join either or both, and at any time. You can find out more by emailing the WOC at womensoutreach@saa-recovery.org or by calling the ISO office.

We hope to hear from you soon,

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.*



A word, an idea, and a struggle

BY ANONYMOUS

From the beginning of my recovery journey in SAA, the concept of “god” has been a struggle for me. I am not a believer in God in any form or fashion. The concept is simply unfathomable to me. Yet, the program works. How?

First, the essential part of the program for me is “to stop [my] addictive sexual behavior and help others recover from sexual addiction” (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, p. 1). That is all I have wanted since the first day I walked into a room of sex addicts. Thus, the concept of a god is not paramount to me; this isn’t church.

It was a bit daunting, however, to see all the references to God in the heart of the program, the Twelve Steps. How, I wondered, would I be able to follow such guidelines if they were primarily based on a belief in God? Turns out, I didn’t have to; the program was “wide enough for everyone who wishes to walk it” (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, p. 21).

Still, I had to find a way to identify a “Higher Power” and integrate myself into the unquestionable spirituality of the program. As I looked around, I saw that most of my fellows were already religious; they found it easy to default to the god in whom they already believed. Others were more subdued as to their own beliefs. I began to realize that not everyone was a believer, but they still found

a way to work the program. I gained confidence that I could as well, trying to accept the duty to see “God as I understood God” (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, p. 20), even when I did not believe there was a God.

So I concentrated and worked on the parts of the Steps that I could understand. I complied where I could and left the rest for a later time. Once I became totally committed to the program, I was able to reconsider the idea of a Higher Power and

find ways to incorporate it into my work. Although much of literature’s discussion of the Higher Power sounds a lot like the references to God I used to hear in church, at least there has been an attempt to be inclusive. Non-believers such as myself appreciate that. But praying to a Higher Power is tantamount to praying to God, I reasoned. So now what?

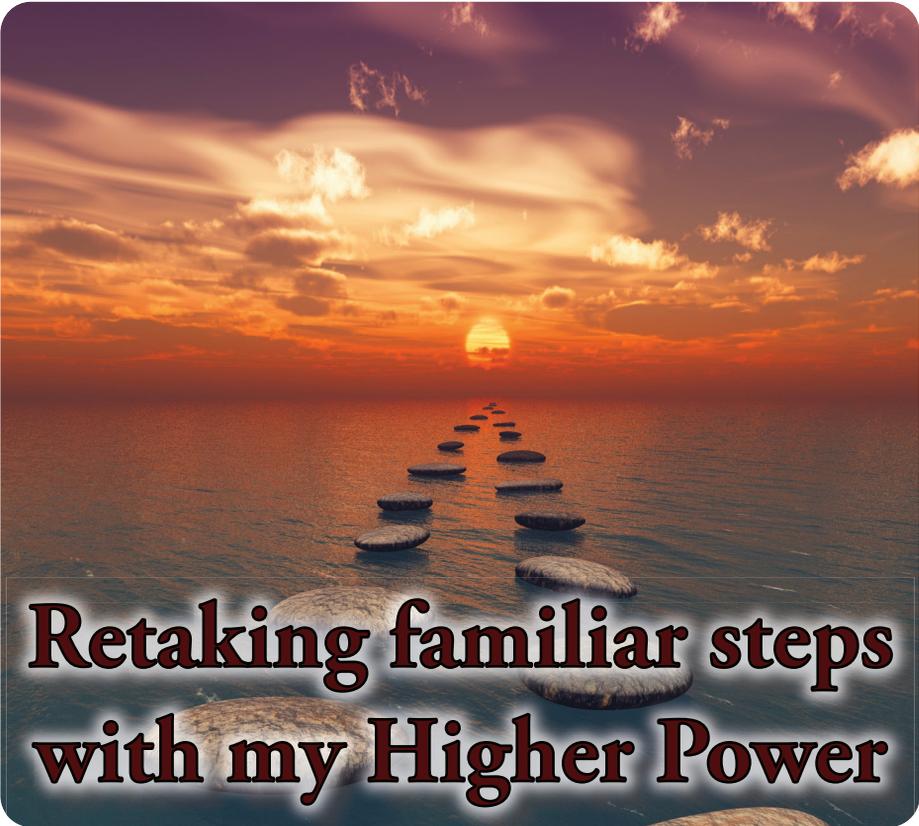
I found that I could essentially ignore the more indiscreet discussions of a Higher Power that contained unapologetic references to God. I could accept the discussions for those who needed God in those instances so they could rely on God; it did not mean I had to accept their God myself. Like the Green Book says, “we don’t claim that our program is the only way to recover” (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, p. 93). Likewise, the Higher Power in others’ programs need not be my Higher Power. Even if I do not have a Higher Power that mimics a god, I am still a perfectly good member of SAA. I am simply approaching it from my own set of beliefs. The program absolutely allows for that.

I am coming up on eight years in the program and four years of sobriety. The program of SAA works, even for an atheist like me. That is a wonderful thing for which I will forever be grateful and thankful. ☺

I could accept the discussions for those who needed God in those instances so they could rely on God; it did not mean I had to accept their God myself. I am simply approaching it from my own set of beliefs.

Get Your Story Published in *The Outer Circle*

The Outer Circle newsletter relies on submissions from the SAA fellowship. It’s a great way to carry the message to other sex addicts in the spirit of Step Twelve — and be of service! Articles may be submitted to toc@saa-recovery.org or to the ISO office at info@saa-recovery.org. Please submit articles via email in Microsoft Word format with the **RELEASE FORM** that can be found, with additional guidelines, on page 31.



Retaking familiar steps with my Higher Power

BY IAN S.

I cannot live in sobriety without thoroughly working a program that addresses my relationship with my Higher Power. It took me longer than others to understand this concept. Entering my fifth year in SAA, I faced both a major family health crisis and a personal legal crisis. Together these events had wounded little inner Ian yelling at me to “get back into your inner circle where it’s safe.” Out of love for that messed up little kid, I did not listen to his fearful demanding voice. Instead, I called my sponsor. He told me to start working Steps Six and Seven again.

I had worked all the Steps in my first year. This work got me through my initial withdrawal, led to my epiphany about the need for willingness, and allowed me to set my sobriety date with my sponsor. I did all this work while not yet being ready to respond to the need to establish a relationship with my Higher Power. I wasn’t ready because no aspect of my life had prepared me to accept that there may be a force, other than myself, that mattered in the universe. In the absence of involved, healthy, adults, I became self-centered and entitled at a young age. A god-concept seemed an impossibility.

In the second year of my program, through actively working to immerse myself in my program, I became willing to accept the notion of a Higher Power. I also took irregular, tentative steps toward prayer and meditation.

I am writing this in my fifth year in SAA. At this point, I have been able to grow to trust my Higher Power and pray regularly. This has made all the difference. “How did I get to this point?” you ask. I took time every day to work my program: diligence, practice, and the willingness to fail, get up and try again are my tools. No god shot but rather diligence in applying program principals to my day-to-day interactions with life and the processual immersion in the culture of SAA. Through this work I built new healthy habits. All this work culminated in a strong relationship with my Higher Power. Faith? Maybe. Work? Absolutely.

It’s OK with me that my relationship with my Higher Power took a long time. In working the Steps, I discovered that willingness on my part extended to being willing to wait for my program to evolve to the point I was ready for a relationship with God. It was not instantaneous. I did not need to define it or worry about what it was. There is no need for a predetermined structure. My relationship with God took time to mature. In each instance I was honest and open with my partner, family, and friends in the fellowship. I shared with them my fears and doubts about my own capacity to sustain a relationship with my Higher Power. In each case, in

being willing to be present for the experience of a loving Higher Power, I have been blessed with a relationship whose depth I could not have imagined.

So, in year five, facing a crisis, I was finally ready to work with my Higher Power on sustained sobriety. At this point my “spiritual rubber” finally met the road and, with my sponsor’s help, I went back to rework Steps Six and Seven. The first time I worked Step Six I treated the step like a statistical ordering of my defects rather than the spiritual work of becoming ready (willing) to let go and have God remove my defects. I was similarly limited in my Seventh Step understanding: working only with an intellectual understanding, followed by an unenthusiastic writing of my own prayer at my sponsor’s behest. The humility and ability to ask God to remove my shortcomings was not in my skillset. With the legal consequences of my past acting out becoming clear and fear

© *Continued on page 17...*

The ISO is looking for an editor of *The Outer Circle* to edit the submissions received from members of the fellowship and write additional material as necessary to complete each bimonthly issue. Candidates should be skilled in writing, copy editing, and project management. Experience as an editor or published author is preferred.

For more information, email info@saa-recovery.org.

LIVING IN SOBRIETY

Joy in relaxation

BY MICHAEL P.

When you know
peace, doing
nothing can be
some of the most
fulfilling moments
of your day.

I used to be easily bored, especially in my addiction's roaring twenties. Type-A didn't even begin to tell the story as I coveted action and movement. I was go! go! go! More people, more excitement, more opportunities for titillation. I was never satisfied.

Even throughout the lion's share of my nineteen-plus years in prison, I had to have books to browse, pals to pen, television to take in, puzzles to noodle out, and fitness to exercise. I needed something to do to stay busy.

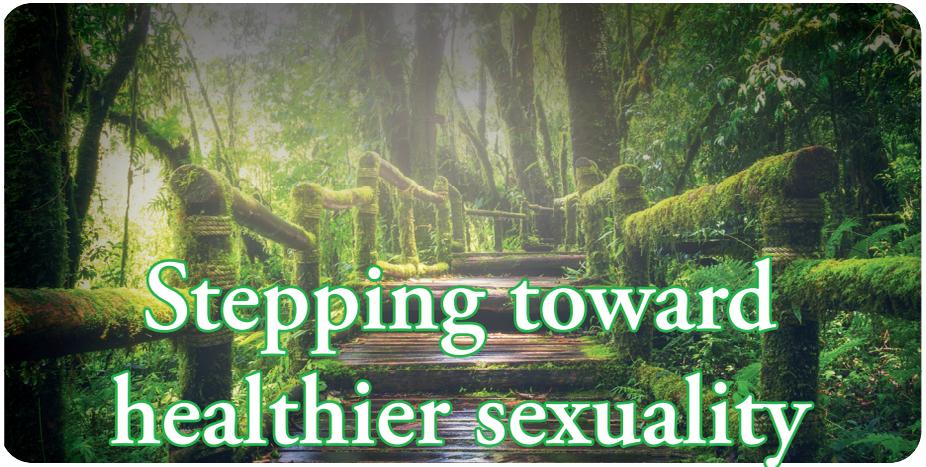
My first anonymous group was a bust. Hoping to strive for righteousness didn't jive with everyone else reveling in euphoric recall. Anonymous round two was sullied by a farce of a facilitator feigning familiarity with the concepts to finagle favor. To me, twelve-step groups were a joke, so I focused fully on biblical resources.

Prayer was an obligation, and one I rambled through, using it as a tool for begging. Listening? Quieting the mind? Nope. Not going to happen. There's too much to fix.

A decade later, I found books and a couple of programs that faithfully follow the tried-and-true formula set forth in anonymous twelve-step programs. "How about that?" I said to myself. Practiced properly, the Twelve Steps are parallel to what I've been earnestly pursuing since my arrest.

There was no conscious choice to change a specific discipline. The best way I could illustrate it is that I learned how to breathe. Read a portion; take a breath to ponder how I can utilize this for my growth. Write a piece; slow down to think if it says exactly what I intend.

In my early letters, I felt it was disingenuous to edit. Using a false claim of self-righteous honesty, I



BY ANONYMOUS

The fellowship of Sex Addicts Anonymous does not define healthy sexuality, nor does SAA condone or condemn any specific or general sexual behavior. Those decisions are left to each member's personal conscience while working with a sponsor and consulting their Higher Power. What some consider unhealthy behaviors may be perfectly healthy for others.

The purpose of SAA is to provide help and support for sex addicts who are trying to abstain from their particular compulsive sexual behaviors. As such, the SAA Green Book provides an informative general discussion of healthier sexuality, a topic on which many are searching.

What are the general characteristics of healthier sexuality and how do we go about finding and identifying the ones we want to include in our daily lives? To paraphrase a wise old friend from my childhood, I believe the short answer is "we'll know it when we find it." Our Higher Power will let us know, our inner self will recognize them, and our relationships with friends and loved ones will offer us guidance as to when we are on the right path.

When I began SAA's twelve-step program, my main objective was to evolve into a person who, when looking into a mirror, could generally feel comfortable with the reflection I saw looking back at me. I had been unable to do that for a long time. But how could such a massive evolution take place? This pursuit is a main focus for many members of SAA. As a twelve-step fellowship, SAA is good at what it does. In addition to a multitude of tools already proven to be effective, SAA encourages each of us to forge specific tools to meet our specific needs as we struggle to stay sober and to achieve healthier sexuality.

The Twelve Steps of SAA are the centerpiece of our efforts to obtain sobriety and to maintain healthy sexuality. I learned that merely reading the Twelve Steps was not sufficient. Any hope of sobriety required that I actively work them. I had to live them in my daily life until they become a central part of my being. I also found that another indispensable component of the fellowship was finding a sponsor to guide me through the Steps. These two components make up the heart of my Twelve-Step program.

Working the Twelve Steps confirmed my belief in the importance of being honest with others. More importantly, it taught me the importance of being completely honest with myself. I had never considered the possibility that one might be untruthful to one's self. As it turned out, this level of honesty was one of the first challenges I faced as I made my initial attempts to probe my spiritual and emotional psyche.

Because my recovery was to be a spiritual journey, and because spirituality is a fundamental requirement of working the Twelve Steps, I had already chosen a spiritual entity to guide me through this spiritual realm of my soul. SAA allows each of us to choose our own personal Higher Power. I had chosen one that I could trust to protect me as I embarked upon this journey into the dark side of my soul. If worked correctly, the Twelve Steps give us what may be our first glimpse into who we actually are, not who we think we are or who we want to be. With the help of my sponsor, my

Higher Power, my new friends in the fellowship, and the tools now at my disposal, I was ready to take this emotional spiritual journey back through the painful memories and emotions of my entire life, as far back as I could remember.

This journey is not for the faint of heart, but my Higher Power did keep me safe. I was protected and guided as I explored and surveyed this dark landscape littered with my old emotional wounds, fears, shame, mistakes, regrets, and assortments of other hurtful memories. It was important that I record what I found there so I could later discuss these findings with my sponsor. By confiding in another person, I was able to expose all of these hurtful memories and emotions, some of which were my most guarded secrets. No longer hidden in darkness, they lost their power to hurt me and simply evaporated away.

The purpose of this inward look into our past is to enable us to find and to recognize the causes and effects brought upon us by our character defects. It is necessary that we be thorough and meticulous in order to break through the old scars and the more recent open wounds resulting directly and indirectly from our character defects. In doing so, we are able to recognize and to accept who we are, both good and bad. This acceptance is an absolute necessity as we begin our healing process of recovery from sexual addiction.

Recognizing and accepting my character defects, as well as acknowledging

my positive characteristics, made me ready to work toward making the changes in my life that were necessary to obtain the sobriety I so desperately wanted and needed. I became able to forgive myself and others. I also found the courage I needed to make amends to those I had harmed.

Somewhere along the way, I began to experience something I had searched for most of my life. I began to feel worthy of a healthy sexual relationship. With this new feeling of self-worthiness, I found myself more capable of communicating with others and of actually listening to what they have to say. I could allow myself to be more honest in all aspects of my daily life, especially with those I love and care about. I found myself able to feel compassion and empathy. I was more willing to compromise and less likely to judge others. I found myself trying to be more dependable in all of my relationships, trying to go the extra mile, to do the right thing.

As a result of this inward spiritual journey, I came to realize that self-worthiness is essential to my finding and securing sobriety and the healthy sexuality that comes with it. In believing that I am worthy, I now have the confidence to seek out and to engage in relationships and activities that I previously felt unworthy to do. I am now able to gaze into my mirror and see an image looking back at me who I recognize as a decent person, someone I am grateful to be able to call a friend. ©



The Sinking Boat

By Paul P.

God, today help me stay afloat,
Stop this boat from sinking
Allow me to surrender
Turn over my troubled thinking.

Lots of triggers and challenges,
A rather turbulent ride
Allow Your will to direct my course
A true ally who's on my side.

Keep myself balanced and whole
Steer the boat straight ahead
Clear my thoughts and attitudes
From the morning until I go to bed.

Allow me to affirm the good things
Help me to have a heart of giving
You have helped me navigate
A better way of living.

Today I will work my program,
With dedication from my heart—
Remembering where I came from
From the very start!

Keep this boat from going under,
Rescue me from my troubled past
Keep my head above water
Make this feeling last!

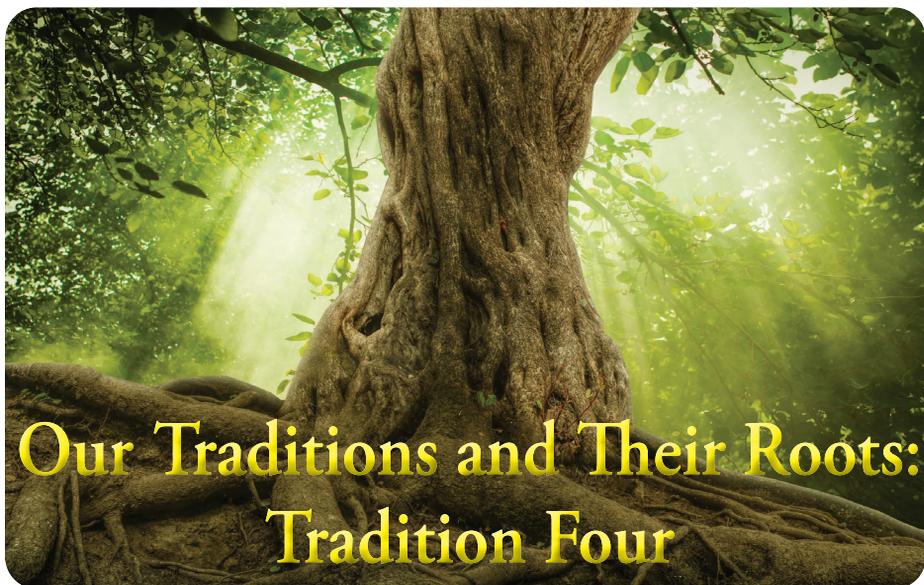
driving a wedge between me and my sobriety, I was close to relapse. To counter my fear I began to work hard with my sponsor to understand the danger of my situation. I came back to Step Six with a fresh perspective. I realized that much of my earlier work was a reflection of pride in my capacity to demonstrate mastery of the material and to present myself to others in a way that looked masterful. It was my first sponsor who had told me early in my program that I would make real progress in recovery only when I gave up my concern as to how others thought of me or how

In working the Steps, I discovered that willingness on my part extended to being willing to wait for my program to evolve to the point I was ready for a relationship with God. It was not instantaneous. I did not need to define it or worry about what it was.

good I worked my program. I got back to basics with Step Six to look deeply at my defects. I saw that humility meant dropping my defenses and pretenses and becoming vulnerable and patient as the relationship with my Higher Power grew.

After reworking Step Six, I worked Step Seven again with a new perspective. My relationship with my Higher Power is now one of active trust on my part. I no longer wonder what form my Higher Power takes or if I'm in a relationship. Every day I see God's grace in my life. I am willing to have my defects removed. Reworking Step Seven meant becoming an enthusiastic participant in, and fully accepting of, my life. Specifically, my part of the Seventh Step is to actively turn toward health. This includes limiting exposure to triggering or stressful media (including the news), abstaining from voyeurism and image searching, saying yes to participation in unfamiliar social situations, making calls to fellows, socializing within the fellowship outside of meetings, being of active service to others in need, attending and participating at meetings, being honest in my interactions, being open to learning and growth, and accepting the potential that a program failure on my part is an aspect of longer term learning and growth.

I close with this thought: sobriety is achieved through an active relationship with my Higher Power. My job is to work on abstinence, patience, and willingness. I accept my life as it is and let go my hope for a better past. I honor my primary relationship. I work all aspects of my program. These actions are my way of humbly asking God to take away every single defect of character. This is my work in year five of my program. I am filled with gratitude. ©



Our Traditions and Their Roots: Tradition Four

“Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or SAA as a whole.”

Editor’s Note: This is the fifth in the series 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. The author of this article is not necessarily the same as previous articles.

BY ANONYMOUS

The Fourth Tradition holds great significance in the success of a sex addict’s sobriety. By maintaining autonomy, each group is empowered to choose, change, and adapt to what works for that group, or as written in the SAA Green Book, “develop our meetings in different ways, in order to meet the varying needs of our diverse fellowship” (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, p. 83).

This freedom to experiment with different ideas also “contributes to the overall health of our fellowship,” balancing autonomy with the awareness that we are all part of a greater whole. Despite any differences, it is imperative that all meetings can be identified as SAA meetings, “offering hope to all who seek recovery from sexual addiction.” The SAA Green Book goes on to say that without clarity, “our primary purpose can become confused and entangled with other ideas, goals, or causes” (*Sex Addicts Anon-*

ymous, p. 83 – 84).

The original AA tradition declared each group an individual entity, “strictly reliant on its own conscience as a guide to action” (*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, p. 147). It goes on to advise groups to “stick to its course or be hopelessly lost,” stating that “sobriety had to be its sole objective.” The SAA Green Book similarly reads, “autonomy goes hand in hand with self-respect and a new sense of freedom, as we take responsibility for our groups” (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, p. 83). The Fourth Tradition grants autonomy to each group while forming community within SAA as a whole, focusing on our similarities and shared purpose of carrying the message to the sex addict who still suffers. It advises group clarity of our primary purpose, a consciousness of the impressions that our groups make on the outside community, and our responsibility to treat the places we gather, and their owners, with respect.

We may notice the uniqueness of each meeting’s “group conscience” reflected in meeting scripts, weekly schedules, and readings, but it can appear in other areas as well, like attending to the emotional or physical safety of its members.

The AA 12 & 12 shares a story of a group of alcoholics eager for recovery. They dream up a plan for an exuberant recovery center and turn it into reality, despite being denied funding from the foundation. A promoter for the group envisioned opening a number of these centers, organizing three corpo-

rations and adopting sixty-one rules and regulations. They soon found that what worked for one individual did not always work for another. Through the confusion, fear, and frustration, the group performed a great service to AA as a whole. They exercised their right to be wrong. They humbly applied the lessons learned, had a laugh, and went on to better things.

As written in the SAA Green Book, our “most important vehicle for recovery is the group” (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, p. 82 – 83). Sex addicts start meetings which, in turn, are self-governing. This process works so well because we do it ourselves.” We stand “united in purpose while remaining free to serve our fellow sex addicts in vital and diverse ways,” with thanks to the Fourth Tradition (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, p. 84).

Questions frequently come into the ISO office such as, “How do I deal with an unruly member?”, “Can my group read from a certain book?”, and “What if my group is not following a particular tradition?” In almost every case, the answer is that groups are autonomous except in matters affecting SAA as a whole; if there is a concern, call a group conscience.

The SAA *Group Guide*, available at www.saa-recovery.org/literature, has information on group consciences beginning on page 33.

Next issue: Tradition Five. ©

DEAR WILL

Dealing with meeting taboos

BY WILL

it is not necessary,
and it is usually
not advisable, to
share details of
our acting out at
meetings.

Dear Will:

Some of my sexual attractions are looked down upon or condemned by the culture of where I live. I am afraid that I may be given a lower status. I need help, but I'm afraid of being rejected. What should I do?

Apprehensive Anonymous

Dear Apprehensive,

It is important to remember a few key points. First and foremost, the Third Tradition states that, "The only requirement for SAA membership is a desire to stop addictive sexual behavior." Nothing is said about needing to conform to societal norms and mores.

Second, remember the lesson of the Serenity Prayer. We must first accept the things we cannot change before we have the courage to change the things we can. Our Higher Power helps us do both.

Some people may think less of you because of your sexual attractions or any number of other reasons. These prejudices rest with the one holding them. It is important that you do not let them stand in the way of your seeking recovery from obsessive thoughts and addictive behavior. We cannot change other's attitudes towards us, but we can change our own.

Third, we are as sick as our secrets. The secret here is our acting-out that has harmed ourselves and others. However, it is not necessary, and it is usually not advisable, to share details of our acting out at meetings. We do not describe the age or physical characteristics we desired in acting-out partners; we do not give the names of sexually-oriented businesses we patronized; we do not name the websites



we visited or give descriptions of the type of pornography viewed.

On the other hand, I must ask: are you comfortable with these attractions? Are they result of the progressive nature of this disease? Could your attraction lead to illegal activity?

What do I mean by this, you ask? Consider this example: some men are openly gay and only prefer male partners. Some men are heterosexual but end up having sex with men as part of the expression of their addiction. The first man fears rejection for being gay. The second man may fear this as well but has an extra layer

of addiction-based shame attached. Illegal activity adds yet another layer of potential consequences.

If your attractions are not illegal and do not bother you, then rest easily with the advice I've already given. But if they are the result of the progressive nature of the disease and could lead to worsening consequences, then they must be addressed in your recovery. The best advice I can give is to attend meetings, find a

sponsor, and work with your sponsor to integrate these attractions into the Steps and your recovery.

Furthermore, there are lots of meetings, including online and phone meetings. If one doesn't work for you, try another. I am confident that you will benefit greatly by working the SAA program of recovery.

Will

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

LifeLine donations provide steady income that allows the ISO to operate and help groups carry the SAA message. Become a LifeLine partner today by calling 713-869-4902 or by going to saa-recovery.org and clicking "Contribute."

STORIES OF SERVICE

The integrity of selfish selflessness (Or ... Doing service work for FUN)

BY KATHY (AND LISA)

*Reprinted from the
January 1993 issue of
the Plain Brown Rapper*

**I failed to grasp that
just as I needed the
presence of others,
my presence was a
contribution, too.**

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

Twelve Step or service work should not be at the sacrifice of our well-being, and it shouldn't leave us feeling drained. Difficult as it may be, it is important to find the balance between self-care and service.

So many kinds of service are needed in this program there is bound to be a niche of joyous service for each of us to uniquely fill. We don't all need to be good at the same thing. Some of us are tremendously sensitive and helpful to newcomers, others of us are excellent with logistics, organization and planning, still others of us function best on committees.

Although we all may share certain roles of service such as presenting a step or twelve-stepping a new person, we can also focus our energy on specific tasks which match our strengths, interests and talents. Finding what and how we can give something back is surely one of the greatest gifts we can give ourselves and others. Think of how uplifting it is to see someone doing something they really enjoy. After all, part of what it means to say, "this is a selfish program", is that we give the program away not just to keep it and not just because we recognize that our lives depend on it, but because it feels good. Our frankness about this kind of 'selfishness' gives the program (and us) integrity.

For a long time, when I first came to the program, I thought that by missing a meeting I only deprived myself. I failed to grasp that just as I needed the presence of others, my presence was a contribution, too. Perhaps it is partly our addiction which makes it hard for us to recognize and accept that our presence is appreciated, that our recovery and service have a value beyond our own estimation. After all, no one else can bring just the same thing as we can to the situation, because no one else is us. Each of us has unique qualities and gifts.

FROM THE BOARD

Service: What's serenity have to do with it?

BY MELISSA W
BOARD MEMBER

We have faced the fact that we are imperfect. We are not God. We don't have all the answers.

During a time when communities and even families and friends are struggling to maintain civility, let alone cooperation and positive regard, how do we recovering sex addicts keep our meetings and our fellowship going, stay sober, and have some measure of serenity? Certainly, this is only possible with our practicing the wisdom of the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts, and our Higher Power's help. However, our sobriety and serenity cannot depend upon us working the Steps and following the Traditions perfectly, nor on expecting others to do so. In fact, we have an advantage that many who are not in recovery don't have. We have faced the fact that we are imperfect. We are not God. We don't have all the answers.

I'm one of the newer members on the ISO Board of Trustees, currently serving in my second year. My sponsor encouraged me to do service – local, intergroup, area, international – as an essential part of my recovery program. One guaranteed result is that when I do service, I will have many opportunities for my character defects to crop up and to take action by continuing to work the Steps. Will I take advantage of these opportunities and make spiritual progress or not? To the extent that I work the Steps around my interactions with other members, I will experience more serenity. By virtue of my own defects, behavior, and personality traits, I will also give others ample opportunities to do the same. Humbling but freeing.

As we practice this principle in our imperfect service, not only in SAA but in all our lives, may our serenity grow as we learn to extend to others the grace that we have received from our Higher Power and others in SAA.

Melissa W.

LETTERS



Prisoners Need Your Help - Letter from Rich B.

I want to thank Allan O. for his “Story of Service” in the May-June issue describing his correspondence with prisoners. I would like to share my experience from the other side of the fence.

I am an inmate, serving a 10-to-25 year sentence for sexually abusing my daughter. Yes, I know this is repugnant to many of you, and I offer my deepest, sincerest apologies to those of you who have suffered sexual abuse or assault. I always considered myself a feminist and a good person, and never intended to become one of the bad guys. Unlike many offenders, I personally did not experience sexual abuse, but I was emotionally and physically abused and was bullied for many years, all of which led me to commit my offense. I am currently in a treatment unit, where a few of my fellow inmates are ordered to take state-mandated sex offender therapy, while the rest of us have the opportunity to take self-help classes led by other inmates. These classes serve as a substitute for my local SAA meetings, which we are not allowed to have. Some are based on books about sex addiction while others focus on more general but related subjects like self-esteem, recovering from childhood abuse, and victim empathy. Through these classes, I have the opportunity to talk honestly with other people like myself, who have committed sex offenses but who want to change and heal, and who are working through the effects of childhood trauma and varying degrees of denial, minimization, and rationalization about our past actions. I am grateful for this opportunity, but it is limited in scope.

It is through my sponsor that I have the chance to actually work the Steps rather than just learn and talk about them. Paul M. first wrote to me in mid-2017, over three years ago, in response to my letter. He sends me written workbook exercises

Approved Board Actions

June

- Approved that the *Guidelines for International Service* be adopted as guidelines for all ISO Conference-elected trusted servants and area delegates.
- Approved process for adoption of or change to SAA core spiritual documents.

August

- Approved virtual meeting of the ISO Conference.

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that allow me to explore each step and to share what I would normally share in a meeting. With his help, I have been able to face the truth about my behavior, come to understand the flaws that led me to offend, and make real changes in myself so that I never hurt anyone else. I am about to begin Step Eight, which is a bit intimidating, but I know that Paul will give me good advice and guidance throughout the process. Despite becoming executive director two years ago, he finds time to answer letters from me and his other sponsees. The work has been difficult for me, but I could not have done it without him. I often recommend to fellow inmates who are serious about recovery and rehabilitation that they write to SAA and ask for a sponsor. They often tell me that they have waited months without a reply, so I know that the demand for sponsors and support contacts far outstrips the supply.

Please help us. Paul tells me that this work is important to his continuing sobriety, and I know that it has been vital to my own recovery. My thanks go out to all who have taken the time to write to incarcerated people like myself. Your attention helps us to remember that we are not defined by the worst thing we have ever done.

Donate to the Annual Appeal

Dear SAA Members and Groups,

Sex addiction is a pandemic of suffering. At the ISO office, we experience this pain first-hand when we answer calls from newcomers.

One man was so upset that it took a minute to calm him down before a conversation was possible. He had been arrested the night before at home in front of his family – his wife and children traumatized and devastated.

A distraught mother called about her son who had been kicked out of his college and banned from returning because of his acting out – his full scholarship lost.

A man in a high-profile position in his community had to face the shock and anger of his constituents when his acting out was made public information.

Situations like these confront us head-on, and the suffering caused by sex addiction becomes very real, very human. The specifics of each of these situations are different but they had one thing in common. While there were long established meetings in their cities, none of these individuals had ever heard of SAA until their lives were in ruins. They didn't know that a solution to their problem was minutes away from their homes.

There is an urgent need to carry our message to many more suffering sex addicts. The most common estimates are that three to six percent of the population meets

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the criteria for sexual addiction. If we consider just the combined population of the United States and Canada, that equates to a range of 11 million to 22 million people struggling with sex addiction. As of July 2021, our fellowship has over 2100 meetings worldwide and an estimated 20,000 to 40,000 members. Clearly, we have much work to do to help relieve the enormous pain sex addiction causes.

We believe in the Twelve Steps, and we know it is possible to live our lives free from our addictive sexual behaviors. If you had the chance to give someone the gift of freedom from bondage to this addiction, wouldn't you? For many of us who are now in recovery and living a life free from our past behaviors, the answer is "Yes!" By coming together, we can change lives, relationships, marriages, and families.

Please make a donation to the Annual Appeal today. Your support will help our fellowship expand its ability to reach more still-suffering sex addicts with the message of recovery.

You can create a lasting impact if you choose to donate monthly.

Donate to the Annual Appeal here: <https://saa-recovery.org/annual-appeal/>

Text to Donate: Members in the U.S. can also text SAAHOPE (SAAHOPEG for groups) to 91999 to donate.

Sincerely,



Paul M

Executive Director, ISO of SAA

On behalf of the ISO Board of Trustees

Literature Committee needs your help!

Why is it important for members of SAA to give feedback on our publications? Because, while your Literature Committee (LitCom) is empowered to make group conscience-led decisions regarding the publication of SAA material, our mandate is to get feedback from the fellowship on LitCom-approved literature and bring those modified documents forward to the Conference for approval.

LitCom strives to encourage and be attentive to all voices of the SAA fellowship. We are tasked with ensuring that the SAA message of recovery, as found in our Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, is embodied in all printed and digital pamphlets, booklets, manuals, books, and audio recordings distributed or sold by the ISO, as well as the content of the SAA websites. Although the COVID-19 pandemic brought the printing of new SAA

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literature to a standstill, LitCom continued its work, such as approving the following pamphlets:

- **Developing Our Own Healthy Sexuality**
- **Hope and Healing for Women**
- **Are Your Sexual Behaviors Causing You Trouble?**
- **Introducing SAA to the Professional Community**

LitCom also approved an 80-second Public Service Announcement about SAA and is actively considering a motion by the LGBT Outreach Committee to use more inclusive language in the Green Book, in pamphlets, and on www.saa-recovery.org.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

LitCom is asking all SAA members to participate in the dynamic spiritual process of carrying the message of recovery by sending feedback on two LitCom-approved pamphlets that were published this year by the ISO in digital-only versions in order to serve a determined need of the fellowship, available at www.saa-recovery.org/literature:

- **What if I don't Believe in "God"?**
- **Sexual Sobriety and the Internet** (revised version addressing newer technology)

We also request your feedback on the following recently published LitCom-approved pamphlets, all of which are available both in print and online:

- **Recommitting to Recovery**
- **Hope of Recovery**
- **First Step to Recovery** (revised version)
- **Getting a Sponsor** (revised version)

Send comments via email to info@saa-recovery.org, or write to ISO of SAA, PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270 USA.

Carry the message where desperately needed!

Writing and sponsoring prisoners by correspondence continues to be the mainstay of the ISO prisoner outreach program. In addition, the Prisoner Outreach Committee has encouraged members of the fellowship to consider the possibility of starting SAA meetings in a nearby prison. As a result of the pandemic, a new possibility has emerged—namely, meeting by videoconference.

While face-to-face remains the preferred meeting modality in most situations,

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recent experience in Arizona suggests that meeting by videoconference can open new opportunities to carry the SAA message of recovery into prisons.

If interested in learning more—whether you are in the free world or in prison—contact the ISO office by telephone (713-869-4902), email (info@saa-recovery.org), or postal mail (PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270).

Conference Steering Committee Update

For the remainder of the current service year, the CSC is primarily focusing on preparation for the annual meeting of the Conference. A major part of this effort is to communicate effectively with group service representatives (GSRs) who make up the area assemblies and with area delegates who make up the Conference.

Communication efforts include GSR “Let’s Talk” sessions on Zoom on September 25th at 9:30 AM CT and November 27th at 9:30 AM CT, the quarterly GSR newsletter, and ongoing training sessions on Zoom for area delegates, which took place on Aug. 21 with one more session to be determined before the end of the year.

For the Conference meeting this year, the CSC is co-sponsoring two motions with the Board of Trustees and Literature Committee. One is to define a process by which SAA core documents—steps, traditions, and concepts—might be adopted or changed. The second is to clarify the guidelines for service at the international level.

The Charter and Bylaws Subcommittee has submitted a motion to bring the Conference Charter into conformity with the new ISO area structure. The Service Manual subcommittee plans to have a rough draft of the manual to showcase at the annual meeting. The Twelve Concepts Subcommittee continues seek feedback from the fellowship to review and edit the Twelve Concepts of SAA, and hopes to have a final version ready for presentation at the 2022 meeting.

As a reminder, any member of the fellowship may participate in CSC subcommittee meetings and projects. If interested, contact the ISO office by email at info@saa-recovery.org or call 713-869-4902.

Financial Report

Our total SAA Green Book sales were above our estimate of \$5,826 by \$1,796 in July. Our HCI sales (June’s numbers, a month behind) were \$899 higher than budgeted. Findaway audio sales were \$16 above our budget of \$226. For the year we are

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104.34% of our estimated sales.

Our book *Voices in Recovery* sales for July were \$174 below our budget of \$2,050 for July. The ISO was \$8 above budget and HCI sales were \$181 below budget. For the year we are an average of 102.06% of our estimated sales. Our pamphlet and booklet sales were above our estimate of \$1,000 by \$1,342 in July. For the year we are at 144.12% of our estimated sales.

Our plastic chips sales were above our estimate of \$405 by \$475 in July. For the year we are at 143.47% of our estimated sales. Our bronze medallion sales were above our estimate of \$600 by \$1,185 in July. For the year we are at 211.96% of our estimated sales.

Our total sales for July were above our estimate of \$10,083 by \$4,609 in July. For the year we are at 115.2% of our estimated sales.

Individual donations were below our estimate of \$40,666 by \$6,750 in July. For the year we are at 99.46% of our estimated individual donations. The general donations were below our budget by \$6,054 and the LifeLine Partners amount was \$103 above budget. Our July LifeLines budget is \$26,065 with an average over the year as \$26,000 (increasing each month to \$26,665 in December) and our goal is \$50,000 per month.

Group donations were below our estimate of \$11,388 by \$453 in July. For the year we are at 97.23% of our estimated group donations. Group LifeLine partners are \$194 below above our budget of \$2,607 and general donations for groups was \$259 below our budgeted estimate.

Our total donations were \$7,203 below the budgeted amount of \$52,053. For the year we are at 98.99% of our estimated donations. Our product inventory is valued at \$68,412. Our operational reserve is fully funded at \$200,021. Our estimated three-month reserve is \$175,691. Our total expenses were \$2,469 lower than our budget of \$75,782. This is mainly from the \$2,243 reduction in Wages and Benefits by Chris reducing his hours. Our Net Income was -\$1,174 below our budget of -\$17,138.

For July of total income was \$61,944, our cost of goods was \$6,943, resulting in a gross profit of \$55,001. Our total expenses were \$73,314 resulting in a net income of -\$18,312, which was -\$1,174 under budget. If you have any questions, please let me know.

In Your Service,
Paul M. Executive Director

CONTACT THE ISO

Office

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The Outer Circle

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Administrative Assistant: Evan E.
Administrative Assistant: Harvey A.

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

Board of Trustees and Literature Committee

Board

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

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

LitCom: litcom@saa-recovery.org

Literature Committee

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

Calendar

The most up-to-date committee schedule and information about joining any ISO Committee can be found at saa-iso.org.

Prisoner Letter Writing Program

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PI/CPC (Public Information/Cooperation with the Professional Community)

The Twelfth Step says that, “we tried to carry this message to other sex addicts and to practice these principles in our lives.” At the ISO level, this is done through the work of the Public Information/Cooperation with the Professional Community (PI/CPC) committee. If you would like to work the Twelfth Step at the ISO level, contact PhillipB@saa-iso.net or call the ISO at 713-869-4902.

LifeLine Partners

LifeLine donations provide steady income that allows the ISO to operate and help groups carry the SAA message. Become a LifeLine partner today by calling 713-869-4902 or by going to saa-recovery.org and clicking “Contribute.”

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Get Your Story Published in *The Outer Circle*

The *Outer Circle* newsletter relies on submissions from the SAA fellowship. It's a great way to carry the message to other sex addicts in the spirit of Step Twelve — and be of service! Articles may be submitted to toc@saa-recovery.org or to the ISO office. Please submit articles via email in Microsoft Word format with the **RELEASE FORM** at the bottom of this page.

Deadlines for Submission and Topics

Jan/Feb:	“First Three Steps”	Nov 5
Mar/Apr:	“Taking Action”	Jan 5
May/June:	“Changes, Hope”	Mar 5
July/Aug:	“Celebration and Exploration”	May 5
Sept/Oct:	“Letting Go, Giving Back”	July 5
Nov/Dec:	“Prayer and Meditation”	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.

