

THE OUTER CIRCLE



Overcoming Meeting Struggles in Minneapolis

PLUS

- * Our Primary Purpose
- * A story of battle, progress, and chips
- * Step Twelve in Real Life





International Service Organization of SAA, Inc.

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The Outer Circle Mission

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

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

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

If you have comments or suggestions, please see contact information on 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

Honored to Begin

BY DON S.
THE OUTER CIRCLE
EDITOR

*The Outer Circle
is not written by
“them;” it is written
by us, by you. I look
forward to seeing
your submissions at
toc@saa-recovery.
org.*

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Recovery,

My name is Don and I’m a sex addict. I am humbled and honored to begin work as your editor for *The Outer Circle*. For a number of years now, I’ve not been active in service much beyond the very local level, but my Higher Power moves in mysterious ways indeed. I applied for this job, and almost within hours of accepting the role of editor earlier this month, I was designated to represent our area at the recent 2021 Conference. HP has flung me back into the pond, and I am grateful for it.

Having been ‘away’ for a while, I was reminded of and moved by the unique structure of our organization as demonstrated during the Conference. As a delegate, I answer not to the ISO, but to my area and its representatives, who, in turn, answer to the membership of their respective groups. Put another way, there is no *them*; there is only *us*. We’re the boss, each and every one of us.

That means we’re also responsible for this wonderful organization’s continued and successful work — carrying the message to the still-suffering addict. That principle applies to *The Outer Circle* as well. It is not written by “them;” it is written by us, by you. My job as editor is not to create *The Outer Circle*; my job is to receive your many voices and do my best to make them (you) heard. So, I have one simple request: make me earn my keep!

I look forward to seeing your submissions at *toc@saa-recovery.org*.

In Grateful Service,

Don S.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Review of the Annual Meeting of the Conference

BY PAUL M.

*Giving back to
the fellowship and
volunteering time
to help others
is a rewarding
experience.*

Once again, the annual meeting of the ISO Conference was held virtually. It was attended by seventy-one people, of which about sixty were voting members.

The motions about areas passed unanimously. The motion about approval of core documents also passed. The motion about updating the sobriety guidelines for all elected trustees failed. Also, the one about funding area expenses failed, but this spurred some discussion about a better definition of an area. The motion ensuring that future conferences can be attended by electronic/virtual means passed. The Board of Trustees will be exploring options to implement this request.

Some areas did not send a delegate to the Conference this year. This includes areas from the United States. We did have three participants from non-US areas. This does bring up the question, and fostered brief but good discussion, on how a virtual conference allows international representation.

Another issue we had was having only the exact number of nominees for open positions except for one race. When the call went out to the delegates for more candidates, we got three more nominees. Our Higher Power was working for us. Over the next few issues, we will be discussing the benefits of service work. Giving back to the fellowship and volunteering time to help others is a rewarding experience. There is a lot of work to do in many committees, and all the help we get is greatly appreciated.

I look forward to a great service year, and I am looking forward to the SAA Convention in Atlanta next year. Hopefully, we will have a great face-to-face convention and be able to catch up with old friends and make new ones. I hope you all can join us.

DEAR GRACE

Must the
Fifth Step be
completed with
a sponsor?

BY WOMEN'S
OUTREACH
COMMITTEE

*The important
part is to work
this step with
someone we trust
and who accepts us
unconditionally.*

Dear Grace,

My sponsor wants to schedule my Fifth Step, but I'm having reservations about sharing it with her. Am I required to do my Fifth Step with my sponsor?

Dear Required,

To start, it's important to honor the searching work you have done thus far and know that your questioning is just another way you are being accountable to working your program. Taking the Fifth Step requires deeper reliance on our Higher Power and on others in recovery. It can feel scary to think of coming out into the open the way the Fifth Step asks of us. Choosing whom we share this step with is an important decision.

Step Five asks only that we admit the exact nature of our wrongs to God, to ourselves, and to another human being. It does not specify our sponsor. The important part is to work this step with someone we trust and who accepts us unconditionally. "Most of us share our Fifth Step with our sponsor. Some of us choose a friend in the program, a therapist, a spiritual advisor, or another wise confidant with whom we feel safe" (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 38). However, "We do not take the Fifth Step with our partners, parents, or families" (page 38).

There are benefits to taking our Fifth Step with our sponsor, since often our sponsor is the person in the program whom we trust the most and who knows us best. They might be in a better position to gently help us find the patterns and character defects that keep coming up for us. "Our sponsor supports us emotionally as we face the most painful parts of ourselves, allowing us to look at our wrongs without flinching" (page 39).



The Fifth Step isn't a one-way street. "During the Fifth Step, our sponsor will often share his or her own experiences with us, letting us know about similar actions, feelings, and shortcomings" (page 39). This mutual sharing may deepen both our sponsor-sponsee relationship and our continuing step work .

It can be helpful to explore the reasons why we might be hesitant to share our Fifth Step with a sponsor. For instance, we might be feeling fear or other character defects that stand in our way of taking this step. In this case, it might be helpful to talk with our sponsor about these pitfalls as a way to move forward in our recovery and past the character defects that hold us back.

If we don't trust our sponsor, or otherwise don't feel like the connection is strong enough to support such a vulnerable experience, we still have options to explore. For instance, we might choose another trusted person to share our Fifth Step with while

continuing to work with our sponsor in the rest of our step work. Or we might bring our concerns to our sponsor to try to work through some of the hesitations we are feeling with honesty, courage, and gentleness. In some cases, we might realize that there have been other signs that our relationship with our sponsor isn't the right fit. "The sponsorship relationship is flexible: it is up to the sponsor and 'sponsee' to decide exactly how they will work with each other" (page 14). This includes the freedom to change sponsors to better support our individual recovery, if needed.

Taking the Fifth Step is part of our deepening spirituality, so it can be helpful to remember the tools of prayer and meditation when faced with decisions such as with whom to share our Fifth Step. With our Higher Power's guidance and the support of others in recovery, we can walk through this in the best way to strengthen our sobriety and deepen our commitment to recovery.

In service, 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.*



The Knight

A Story Based on the Chip System of SAA

BY DRAKE M.

Once upon a time, there was a knight who wanted nothing more than to prove himself strong and worthy of praise. He longed to win a medal for his valor. So, he went to war against the king of the realm and fought him long and hard in single combat. But the king was stronger than the knight. Though he gave his best efforts, the knight was forced to his knees on the battlefield beneath the white flag of surrender.

The white chip is the desire chip and the surrender chip. The chip that says I want to stop my addictive sexual behaviors, and I give up the fight. Does anyone need a white chip today? To start or start over in the program?

The knight was badly injured from the fight. So grievous were his wounds that he fell into a faint on the battlefield and passed into a deep sleep. The king lifted the knight in his arms and carried him home, tending to his wounds so as to help him take the steps he needs to recover. Many hard, painful nights passed until, finally, after a month of care, the bleeding stopped.

The red chip denotes one month of sobriety. Does anybody need a red chip today?

Another month passed, and still the knight was bedridden with battle-sickness. He shivered, though warm and feverish, and would often mutter madness, his wild, unseeing eyes darting with terror. Every day the king remained by his bedside, tending to his needs as the healing continued. And then, at the end of two months, the knight found his sight beginning to clear, and the first bright rays of sunlight started to pierce the darkness.

The yellow chip denotes two months of sobriety. Does anybody need a yellow chip today?

The next month saw the knight's slow recovery from the atrophy of his slumber. Weak legs learned to walk again, weak hands learned to carry messages for the king, and a weak voice learned to speak. Every day the king instructed the knight in gentleness, and slowly taught him to live free of the armor that had weighed him down for so long. Then, at the end of the third month, the king led the knight out of the castle and back to the battlefield. The knight was amazed to see the carnage he had wrought, but on second glance, took hope. The trampled ground was soft and beginning to sprout with lush green grass. And in the gouges his sword had plowed through the earth, small flowers were starting to grow.

The green chip denotes three months of sobriety. Does anybody need a green chip today?

*Be thankful for the chips you hold, and keep coming back—
it works if you work it!*

For the next three months, the knight tended to his garden every day, working hand-in-hand with the king to plant and weed and tend and care. The land was broken and scarred but fertile, and readily shaped to the king's design. The days passed quickly in the hard labor, until one day, at the end of the sixth month, the king spoke, "You have spent a long time looking down," he said. "Looking down at the earth in your labor, looking down at your path so you would not stumble, and looking down to hang your head in shame. Now it is time for you to look up, and let me see your face." Then the king placed his fingers beneath the knight's chin and lifted his face to the sun. And for the first time in a long time, the knight looked up, and saw the king's face framed against the bright blue sky.

The blue chip denotes six months of sobriety. Does anybody need a blue chip today?

The following three months were the hardest the knight had ever faced, and soon he wished again for longer hours in the garden, for now the king began to clothe him with new robes of purple, the color of royalty. And while at first the clothes were heavy and ungainly, with time the knight found that they fit him better than any he had ever worn.

The purple chip denotes nine months of sobriety. Does anybody need a purple chip today?

The knight stayed with the king and continued to learn, work, and grow, until the one-year anniversary of his defeat finally arrived. On that day, the king called the knight before his court and, in front of them all, placed a shining medal around the knight's neck. "But my king," said the knight, "I have done nothing to deserve this honor."

"Sir Knight," said the king, "Too long have you believed yourself unworthy. Too long have you known only shame, and pain, and heartbreak. But today, I say that you are now, have always been, and forever will be my child, whom I love, and it pleases me to give you the desires of your heart. Do not give up. You must continue to take the right steps." So on that first year anniversary, the eighteen-month anniversary, and every year afterward, the king placed a shining medal around his son's neck, not because the knight deserved it, but because it pleased him to honor his child.

We have medallions to celebrate one year, eighteen months, and yearly anniversaries of sobriety. Does anybody have an anniversary or birthday today?

The knight lived on, tending daily to the garden which had grown upon the battlefield. One day at a time, he worked and stepped, hand-in-hand with the king who had always loved him. And as long as he lived, he always remembered the most important day of his life: the day he waved the white flag, surrendered, and gave up the fight.

The white chip is the most important chip we offer, and the only chip we offer twice. Does anybody have a desire to stop their addictive sexual behavior and commit or recommit to this program? I'll leave a chip on top of the box in case anyone is too shy to come pick one up. Be thankful for the chips you hold, and keep coming back—it works if you work it. ©

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.



Greetings from Minnesota: The Land of Ten Thousand Difficulties

BY THE MEN OF THE TUESDAY MORNING MINNEAPOLIS GROUP

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a disruptive time for our group, as we are sure it has been for many. We wanted to share our experiences and lessons learned. Several permanent changes have occurred, and we hope for the better!

Initially, we tried to do our meetings through a telephone conference call. We found this far from satisfactory. However, within a few weeks, one member made the appropriate arrangements for hosting a 90-minute Zoom meeting.

The biggest immediate benefit was that we could see each other. This may seem trivial, but the visual cues (how many people are present, reassurance that silence doesn't mean a dropped call, facial expressions, etc.) really matter.

Reciting the Serenity Prayer as a group over Zoom is... shall we say "interesting"? Zoom really isn't designed for multiple simultaneous speakers, so we began having one person recite the Serenity Prayer to open the meeting while others self-mute, and then reciting the "We" version all together at the end of the large group time (with the inevitable audio reverb feedback cacophonous chaos), just before going to small groups/breakout rooms.

Using the Breakout Rooms feature of Zoom has worked well for small group time.

Readings were a unique challenge by phone conference. Readings depended on multiple people having the physical book(s), and technical issues often made listening challenging. Zoom was a minor improvement until one member got skilled at screen sharing, allowing everyone to read along and making reader-to-reader transitions easier. Of course, since Zoom does not seat us in a circle, the finishing reader must request a volunteer to take over rather than simply passing to the left; yet another change to our ingrained patterns!*

Thank you, ISO, for making all the literature available online. It's been a Godsend for sharing/reading over Zoom.

But order your own personal copies! Support your International Service Organization!

We noticed that certain routines that worked well in person did not work quite so well over Zoom. One of our members volunteered to zoomify our meeting agenda to make it work better for virtual meetings. In the process, this turned into a complete audit/overhaul of our meeting procedure. For example, we were insufficiently familiar with the extensive literature offerings from ISO, including the daily meditation book. We had been using the non-SAA book *Answers in the Heart* for many years but moved to using the Literature Committee Approved *Voices of Recovery* daily meditation book. As an added bonus, the daily reading can be shared over Zoom so anyone can read aloud and everyone can read along.

But order your own personal copy! Support your International Service Organization!

As part of the overhaul, we also decided to change our cycle of readings. Rather than reading one step a week followed by an open topic/group conscience meeting (a thirteen-week cycle), we would insert a topic every 4th week (eg. sponsorship, the three circles, abstinence, tools of recovery). Our thirteen-week cycle became a seventeen week cycle. This has allowed us

The net effect of the pandemic on our group has been positive. Recovery has gifted us with seeing blessings despite difficulties.

to become more familiar with the other tools and literature of the program. It also allows one week a year for mini-First Steps without breaking the cycle.

Perhaps the greatest unexpected blessing of COVID and the use of Zoom was our new ability to include members who had been unable to attend in person. One member lives and works in India and could attend in person for only two weeks during his annual trip back to Minnesota. Now we see him every week. Another member had retired about five hours away but is now able to attend faithfully. Another member has mobility/health issues that made in-person attendance functionally impossible, but he is now a faithful Zoomer. The rest of us have managed to improve our attendance rate with Zoom. Whereas pre-pandemic we would typically have six at a meeting, we now routinely have twelve.

During the year plus that we were apart, we continued to pay our room rent faithfully.

When the opportunity to return to in-person meetings arrived, we decided to adopt a hybrid model. We meet in person on the first and third Tuesdays of the month, and meet by Zoom the other Tuesdays (including the fifth Tuesday when a fifth Tuesday occurs).

In addition, our trusted servant has been given a low threshold to declare a snow day. Bad weather would often drop turnout to three or four or fewer and cause late arrivals. Zoom fixes that.

Our trusted servant set up an email address that distributes messages to everyone's email and sends that message as a text message as well. This is handy for sending reminders about the upcoming meeting's format.

Since the pandemic started, we have brought three new members into our group. Twelfth Step work doesn't stop for a virus! The initial "Twelfth Step" meeting was done by phone for two of them; the other came right as we returned to in-person meetings.

A concern arose about the possibility of one of us experiencing a medical emergency while on Zoom. We created an emergency contact list and made it available to a limited number of our long-term members to know who to call or where to direct an ambulance if calling 911 was necessary. Since this information involves a higher level of confidentiality (address, name and phone number of spouse, etc.) we don't share that info with everyone (as compared to our member phone/email list that we offer newcomers). We encourage all groups meeting by Zoom to consider doing this. The helpless feeling of watching someone collapse on screen and being powerless to assist is not a feeling anyone wants.

Those are the high points. The net effect of the pandemic on our group has been positive. Recovery has gifted us with seeing blessings despite difficulties. If your experience has been less so, hopefully some of our experiences can help you.

In Recovery,

The Men of the Tuesday Morning Group

About our group

Our Tuesday morning Minneapolis men's group has been in existence since at least 1983. We have over 200 man-years of recovery time. We have men from all walks of life but do tend toward a higher proportion of professionals (mostly retired now!). The majority of us are married. We have supported each other's recovery through family tragedy, unemployment, relapse, health issues, and more. A healthy recovery is easier with a healthy group, and we feel blessed to be that group.

**Editor's note: At one of my Zoom meetings, someone, usually the chair, enters the names of all in attendance into the chat feature, and we follow that sequence when sharing/reading.*

In line with the Tenth Tradition, SAA does not endorse any outside product. This group speaks of their experience about a particular video-conference platform. SAA and the ISO do not endorse any particular platform. Groups that choose to have video conferencing should use the platform following their Higher Power and Group Conscience. ©



Conscious Contact with God through Prayer and Meditation

BY DAMON R.

Before recovery, prayer and meditation were out of reach. Meditation was a foreign concept that I didn't have time to learn, let alone practice. Looking back, I know that was just an excuse. After all, I could always find the time to act out.

I would pray occasionally, but only in moments of desperation. I can hardly call that prayer — it was just a one-sided attempt to keep my secrets hidden. I was trying to negotiate with God. Since my secrets made me sick, it is no surprise that these attempts ultimately failed. God doesn't want me to be sick, and God doesn't negotiate. I had to hit rock bottom, with all of my secrets exposed, to figure that out.

There I was, alone in a world turned upside-down by my acting-out behavior. My family, my career, my social network, and the life I had worked so hard to build were gone. Once again, in desperation, I turned to God; only this time I had nothing left to bargain with. For the first time in my life I had a conversation with God, and, for the first time, I actually heard a voice. It asked me to surrender.

What a concept! All this time I thought I could make deals as if God were a used car salesman. I used manipulation and false promises but never willingly gave myself over, until now.

This was the first of many spiritual awakenings that I would experience, and it was the birth of my conscious contact with God through prayer and meditation. I know now that it was not the first time God had spoken to me, but it was the first time I had listened, and listening made all the difference.

At God's direction, I set out on a new path. That path led me to a therapist who introduced me to the term sex addiction and who led me to my first SAA meeting. During this time, I read articles and books about prayer and meditation in an attempt to maintain the connection I had made with my Higher Power.

Combining different ideas and techniques from these sources, I began crafting my own personal practice of prayer and meditation, thus strengthening my conscious contact with God as each day passed. My practice continues to evolve, and my connection grows as I learn new ideas through spiritual work both inside and outside the program.

Much like defining our own abstinence, it is up to us to find the proper prayer and meditation practices that will best connect us to God as we understand God. In addition to reading books, articles, and program materials, I used guided meditations and relied upon the suggestions of others in the program to get me started.

Here are some ideas and techniques that I found to be helpful on my journey:

- **Practice Brings Progress:** In SAA we learn to focus on progress, not perfection. Committing to a daily routine of prayer and meditation made it easier to quiet my mind over time. What once seemed impossible has become an integral part of my life and continues to strengthen my conscious contact with God. I suggest setting aside twenty minutes each day in a quiet place where you can relax your body and mind. You can start with a simple prayer like the Serenity Prayer and add more over time.
- **Remain Heart Focused:** My mind is where my addict and my ego dwell. Together, they attempt to hijack my every emotion, take advantage of my character defects, and reignite the insanity of my disease. My heart, on the other hand, is the dwelling place of my Higher Power. That's why, when I pray and meditate, I do so with a "heart focus." In my breathing practice, I allow healing-breath energy to fill my heart. As I exhale, I let out negative energies, making more room for God. The best way to clear my mind to hear the voice

Much like defining our own abstinence, it is up to us to find the proper prayer and meditation practices that will best connect us to God as we understand God.

of my Higher Power is to focus on, and listen to, my heartbeat. I do this while practicing my prayer and meditation routine.

- **Thoughts Are Things:** If my goal is to maintain conscious contact with God, I must be mindful of my thoughts. I firmly believe that what I give the universe, I will receive tenfold. Negative thoughts bring negativity into my life, desire creates lack, hatred brings sorrow, and so on. That's why I try to keep my thoughts positive and, when I slip into negative thought patterns, I ask my Higher Power for the strength to do better.
- **Be Grateful:** Building on the thought that we get what we give, I have found that being grateful brings an inner peace that my Higher Power responds to and the mindfulness necessary to feel his presence. In addition to being grateful for life's obvious gifts, I am grateful for the not-so-obvious ones, and even more so for the challenges and the darkest moments that once would have had me questioning the very existence of a Higher Power. My Higher Power makes no mistakes, so I view every challenging moment as a gift.
- **Share My Blessings:** In addition to being grateful for everything that each moment presents, I have found it helpful to "bless" everything as well. As a child of God, created in God's image, I know that I can perform countless miracles each day with my Higher Power's guidance. I need only pass the blessing onto everyone and everything. From the food I eat to the hands that prepared it, offering a blessing brings me closer to my Higher Power. In prayer and meditation, I pass God's blessing onto my loved ones and my adversaries alike. With each thought that passes about a person, place, or thing throughout the day, I pay a blessing forward wherever it fits. I can do this because I know that I am blessed to be in conscious contact with my Higher Power at this very moment.

As someone who never believed he could "figure out" how to meditate and often wondered if God was there, I could hardly imagine achieving the conscious contact with my Higher Power that I enjoy today. It's nothing short of a miracle. But, then again, anything is possible through conscious contact with God.©

Prisoner Letter Writing Program

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 video-conference.

While face-to-face remains the preferred meeting modality in most situations, recent experience in Arizona suggests that meeting by video-conference 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).

- » Contact the ISO:
 - » Phone: 713-869-4902
 - » Email: info@saa-recovery.org
 - » Board: board@saa-recovery.org
 - » Literature Committee: litcom@saa-recovery.org
 - » Conference Steering Committee (CSC): csc@saa-recovery.org
 - » More on page 30

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.

LIVING IN SOBRIETY

Me Here Now

BY ANONYMOUS

*Like my addiction, I
can give the present
moment and my
present discomfort
to my Higher Power.*

I am recovering from multiple addictions and have met and befriended people recovering from addictions I don't have. Some addictions are to substances — alcohol, heroin, nicotine, sugar; some to processes — sex, work, gambling, etc. Over the years, a trope in the background of my brain was: What is the common factor of all addictions? One day, an answer quietly percolated up. The common factor I saw in all addictions is that I (the addict) do not want to be me, here, now. Anything that will let me be somebody, or somewhere, or somewhen else, or any combination of the above, is vastly preferable to being me, here, now.

In beautiful counterpart to my addiction(s), for me, sobriety is mostly a right here, right now, me proposition. Besides surrendering my addiction and my life to the care of my Higher Power, my willingness also includes surrendering myself to the here and now. This can mean finding a way to be comfortable being uncomfortable.

Recovery has also taught me that discomfort in a given situation quite possibly, if not probably, has little or nothing to do with the specific situation and more to do with my entrenched perceptions and reactions to the world around me. As I once heard in the rooms, “Don't believe everything you think.” For me, this is especially true when the emotional reaction is quick and sharp. Recovery has been a journey of, one by one, shedding the countless assumptions I have been carrying around.

All I ever have is this moment, right here, with its potentially infinite possibilities. The question then becomes: What will I do with this precious moment?

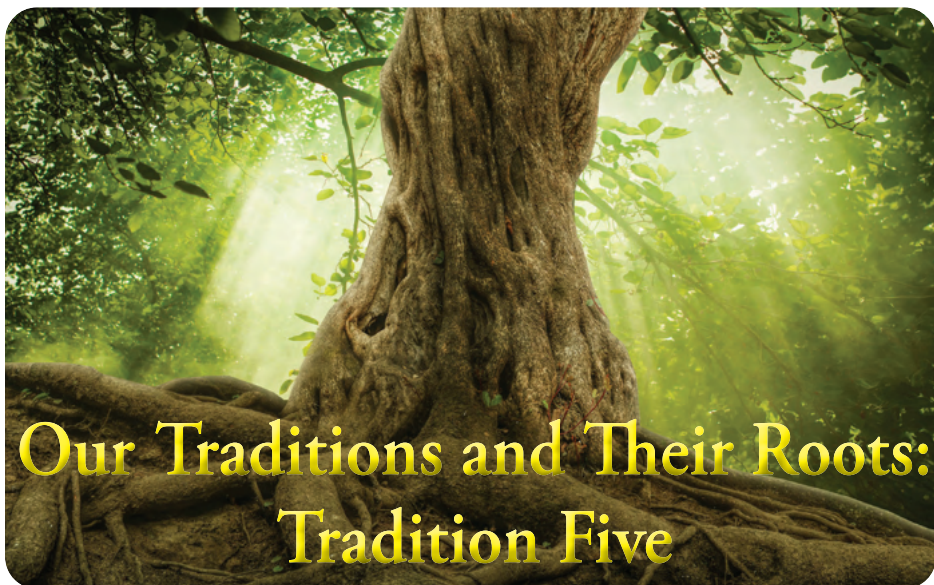
Of course, this doesn't mean I can wiggle my nose or clench my teeth when troubles arise and miraculously feel all warm and fuzzy. I'm up against a lifetime of, by now, deeply ingrained, conditioned responses to stimuli — good, bad, or indifferent. So, what can I do?

A wise person once told me: "Don't get furious; get curious." For me, when dis-ease flares, this often means keeping my mouth shut until I have had time to consider the situation so I can respond, if necessary, appropriately. But mostly, it is a time for me to seek serenity, courage, and wisdom from You-Know-Who.

Like my addiction, I can give the present moment and my present discomfort to my Higher Power. I can ask my Higher Power to guide my thoughts, words, and actions that I may act with integrity, honor this precious life I've been given, and be an instrument of peace and understanding. When going into a situation that I know is going to be uncomfortable, I can ask my Higher Power to enter the room ahead of me.

And let us not forget the tool of tools. In grad school, I had a teaching assistantship. Unlike many of my peers who taught one class, two or three times per week, I taught two classes, five days a week. I had been doing so for several years and my supervisors liked my work. I was a seasoned pro. I also had over five years of successful and sober recovery. Out of seeming nowhere, I started getting profound anxiety attacks about fifteen minutes before I was to teach. Every day. This was pre-cell phone, so I couldn't call my sponsor. The only tool I could think of was the Serenity Prayer. As I trundled off from the office to go teach, I would repeat the Serenity Prayer over and over and over until I stepped into the classroom. Invariably, before I knew it, class would be over, and we had had a great time learning together. I had no choice but to be me, here, now, but the tools of the program let me transcend the noise between my ears and focus on the real here and now – my class and students. After a few weeks, the anxiety attacks vanished as suddenly as they had appeared. If I had listened to my fears instead of to the suggestions of my sisters and brothers in recovery, I might not be here today writing this article.

*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.*



Our Traditions and Their Roots: Tradition Five

“Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the sex addict who still suffers.”

Editor’s Note: This is the sixth in the series that looks 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. Authors have varied across the series.

BY ANONYMOUS

Better to do one thing supremely well than many badly” (*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, page 151). The Fifth Tradition instructs us to stay focused on what we are here for: carrying the message of freedom from addictive sexual behavior through the Twelve Steps of SAA. When we focus on this, sharing the message is what we do best!

Without the Fifth Tradition guiding SAA, people would come to meetings looking for recovery from addictive sexual behavior and instead, they might find therapy, religious devotions, self-help programs, or debates on political policy.

These things are not bad, of course, and for many, they are a vital supplement to recovery in SAA. However, they are not part of the SAA message and should stay out of our groups.

In addition to avoiding religion, politics, and therapy, we must caution against psychology talk. A popular topic might be, “How did we become sex addicts?” Was it childhood abuse? Genetics? Intimacy and emotional issues? These are fascinating topics to discuss, but they lead us away from the SAA message of recovery from sex addiction through the Twelve Steps.

Individual members will have their own beliefs, but in greeting newcomers, the Green Book says, “We take care not to give newcomers the wrong impression of what we offer by mixing our message with other disciplines or approaches” (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 85). This involves the greeter’s beliefs and the group as a whole.

It can be easy for groups to veer away from this tradition.

The SAA website (saa-recovery.org) is often the first place newcomers come to find a meeting. If a group does not update its meeting information, it is not helping carry the message (go to <https://saa-recovery.org/meetings/registration/> to update your info).

There are more subtle problems. Are a group’s shares more about the problem of sex addiction rather than the solution? We know we’re sex addicts. We come to SAA for the solution through the Twelve Steps, not weekly confessions.

Groups must also guard against confusing the fruits of recovery with our

primary purpose. For example, regarding healthier sexuality, the Green Book states, “While exploring healthy sexuality is a part of life in recovery for many of us, it is not the primary purpose or goal of SAA” (page 71).

Every group is autonomous (Tradition Four) and has its own needs and ways of serving its community, but every group must work to carry the SAA message to anyone with a desire to stop addictive sexual behavior, without exception (Tradition Three). “Tradition Five does not tell us exactly how to carry the message... Each group needs to work [that] out for itself” (page 85).

The Fifth Tradition speaks first to groups, but it also speaks to those in areas and international service.

There are different international service committees: the Literature Committee, the Board of Trustees and its committees such as the Women’s Outreach Committee and Fellowship Internal Standing Committee, the office, and the Conference Steering Committee, among many others.

Every one of these committees has a unique way of serving the fellowship, but each carries the SAA message of freedom from addictive sexual behavior through the Twelve Steps of SAA.

Next issue: Tradition Six. ©

DEAR WILL

Reset the Recovery Clock

BY WILL

*Do you want to
get sober? Then
work the Steps in
SAA with your SAA
sponsor.*

Dear Will –

I appreciate your service, as sometimes I need to hear the same SAA message of hope from a different source within the fellowship. I have been coming to SAA for, I guess, about six months now. While I am newer to SAA, I am not new to recovery or the twelve steps, having eight-plus years of sobriety in another program. I go to meetings regularly, make some outreach calls from time-to-time, and have a sponsor in SAA with whom I speak every couple of days to check-in, especially around my triggers.

Though I have worked the Steps in my other program and even sponsor guys there, I am not currently working the Steps with my SAA sponsor. While I have not been as diligent as I could be, I do my best. Despite all these efforts, I continue to act out every couple of weeks. I am beginning to wonder if sobriety really is possible in SAA. I am not sure what more I could do. I hope you can help this old timer reset his recovery clock!

Sincerely,
Old Timer

Dear Old Timer –

Thank you for your reaching out. I am sure by now you may have met many fellows in SAA who got sober in another program for another addiction, and who, like you, found that they also needed to recover from sexual addiction. From my own experience, I can share that sobriety from sexual addiction took a much greater level of acceptance, surrender, and willingness than my chemical sobriety. This is not said to minimize chemical addiction recovery, but rather to emphasize just how cunning



my sex addiction is, and how it hid not only in my inner circle but also in my middle circle in so many subtle ways.

You mentioned you are working with an SAA sponsor and stated that because of your work and experience in the other program you are not currently working the Steps. Well, to relate that to your continued acting out, how is that working for you?

By your own admission, it is not. If you want to get sober from sexual addiction, as you have from others, you may have to do what has worked for so many others: work the Steps.

SAA, like all of the other twelve-step programs, is just a twelve-step program. If you want the fruits of working the Steps you may have to actually work the Twelve Steps of SAA.

We are not a twelve-meeting program, or twelve-calls program, or accountability-partner program, but a spiritual program of recovery that leads to freedom from addictive sexual behavior through working the Twelve

Steps of SAA.

Do you want to get sober? Then work the Steps in SAA with your SAA sponsor or another SAA sponsor. Any message short of that would be doing us both a disservice. I wish you well and pray that you find the willingness to follow our path 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

They Served Cake

BY DON S.

*The last thing the
chair read was,
“...and, by group
conscience, the
speaker will do the
dishes...”*

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

I had six-plus years of successful recovery when I was asked to speak at a little meeting starting up some distance from where I lived. I was taught to never turn down a request to be of service, so I graciously consented. By this time, I was finally starting to acquire a little humility. Nonetheless, my ego was tickled at the prospect of spending a half-hour talking about my favorite subject—me. It was an open meeting, and the person I was dating (recovering in other fellowships) wanted to come along.

The meeting was in the basement of a tiny, old church, with worn checkerboard tile floors, Masonite folding tables, and dark wood trim. They provided coffee and cake (speaker night), all served in the old, worn, heavy ceramic cups and plates that came with the church. It was like stepping back to my youth in a place far away.

I told my story as humbly as I could, and the meeting attendees graciously thanked me and shared what they had gotten from my story. And my not-so-little ego drank in every word. When the chair was reading the closing, the last thing she read was, “...and, by group conscience, the speaker will do the dishes. Now, will those who care to please join me in closing with the...”

I convulsed involuntarily, and for a couple seconds I felt a hot rush of confusion and agitation. But only for a couple seconds. Then, through the grace of this program and the Steps, I saw the beauty, symmetry, and hilarity of it. During the closing prayer I could barely speak because I was chuckling so much. As I washed the dishes, my date kept saying what an insult and outrage it was after I had driven all that way, etc. All I could do was laugh and say, “No, it’s perfect, absolutely perfect.”

FROM THE BOARD

Thoughts on the Conference and New Service Year

BY BOB L.
BOARD MEMBER

*We value your
input. Email the
board at [board@
saa-recovery.org](mailto:board@saa-recovery.org)*

As a new service year begins, the Board finds much on its plate. Among the items the Board will address this year are managing finances in an era of uncertainty. For example, many group meetings have not resumed, some that have reopened have lost members to online meetings, areas will need financial support, and the pandemic has not fully abated. Another matter is the declining participation of areas in the recent Conference. There was a large reduction in the number of areas that sent delegates to the Conference this year compared to last year. The reasons for this phenomenon remain obscure. It seems that areas need more incentive to send delegates to the Conference, and the Board will explore means of aiding that effort.

Another issue is one that arose out of the Conference itself. The 2021 Conference approved a motion asking the Board to include an audio/visual component to future conferences. We have formed an investigation committee to explore the feasibility and costs to create such a hybrid Conference in the future. To some who voted in favor of the motion, the matter may seem simple. That is not the case, however. Indeed, most observers suggest that the best use of a hybrid format is one where information is broadcast primarily from one location to separate audiences, rather than holding a participatory meeting where interaction from the various groups has to be integrated into a whole experience.

The decision matrix the Board will examine is complex, and cost is but one factor to be considered. There are several practical matters involved in the implementation of audio/visual components into a group meeting such as the Conference, including balancing participation of those in the room and others on computers in our readings, questions and

FROM THE BOARD

answers about motions, and voting, among others. Enabling those in a Conference room and those elsewhere to fully participate in and experience the ethos of the meeting likely will require more equipment and operators than most people realize. Another question concerns the preservation of anonymity of those participating in the Conference. For example, many hotels do not permit the use of outside equipment as they earn revenue from renting it to the event's sponsor. If the hotel would not permit the ISO staff to operate all of the equipment, anonymity would be lost.

What appears to be an elementary calculation of cost is also more complex than that of renting or buying equipment. A typical hotel meeting contract consists of fees for meeting rooms, sleeping rooms, and food and beverage commitments. For example, if more people rent sleeping rooms, the cost of meeting rooms and food and beverage can be reduced. If in-person attendance at the hotel is greatly reduced, the per capita cost of meeting and sleeping rooms, and the food and beverage guarantee, will rise. That cost analysis is one many people don't consider in a "back of the envelope" calculation.

Yet another factor to consider is the participation of international delegates. We all acknowledge the desirability of attendance in our Conference and other

service committees of our brothers and sisters abroad. The hybrid format would appear to offer the opportunity for those people to save the cost of travel to and staying at the Conference venue. While the mathematics are valid, that calculation does not account for the inhibiting factor of large time zone differences for those abroad other than in the Americas. For example, our closest delegates across the pond are those in the UK, who are six hours ahead of Central time. Those on the Continent are seven and eight hours ahead, and further east even later in the day. These time variances make for late nights and early mornings for such delegates. Austro-Asian delegates have the same issues as well. At 8:00 a.m. Central, when our Conference usually starts, it is midnight in Sydney and 9:00 p.m. in Hong Kong. Attending a hybrid Conference from these areas is a physically taxing, if not wholly impractical, venture. Further, our recent experience shows that attendance of delegates from overseas is scant at best. Appearances at in-person conferences in Houston has at least equaled video conferences. There may be other means of addressing cost issues for in-person conferences than hybrid or all digital meetings.

In the months ahead, you will hear more about this issue and others the Board will be addressing this service year. In the meantime, if you have any

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thoughts about this or other issues within the fellowship, please send them to *info@saa-recovery.org*. We value your input and participation in service of the addict who still suffers.

Approved Board Actions

October

- Change in date for 2023 approved. Date for 2022 convention is fixed and cannot be changed.

Financial Summary

Our total SAA Green Book sales were above our estimate of \$5,600 by \$1,584 in September. Our HCI sales (August's numbers, a month behind) were \$886 higher than budgeted. Findaway audio sales were \$90 above our budget of \$226. For the year we are 109.75% of our estimated sales.

Our book *Voices in Recovery* sales for September were \$222 higher than our budget of \$2,050 for September. The ISO sales were \$6 above budget and HCI sales were \$217 higher than budget. For the year we are an average of 106.89% of our estimated sales.

Our pamphlet and booklet sales were above our estimate of \$1,000 by \$499 in September. For the year we are at 155.57% of our estimated sales.

Our plastic chips sales were above our estimate of \$405 by \$572 in September. For the year we are at 161.85% of our estimated sales.

Our bronze medallion sales were above our estimate of \$600 by \$1,435 in September. For the year we are at 247.48% of our estimated sales.

Our total sales for September were above our estimate of \$10,083 by \$4338 in September. For the year we are at 123.05% of our estimated sales.

Individual donations were below our estimate of \$46,215 by \$9,599 in September. For the year we are at 98.58% of our estimated individual donations. The general donations were below our budget by \$7,300 and the LifeLine Partners amount was

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\$2,345 below budget. Our September LifeLines budget is \$26,315 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 \$12,911 by \$4,928 in September. For the year we are at 90.18% of our estimated group donations. Group LifeLine partners are \$110 below above our budget of \$2,631 and general donations for groups were \$5,542 below our budgeted estimate.

Our total donations were \$14,527 below the budgeted amount of \$59,126. For the year we are at 94.63% of our estimated donations.

Our product inventory is valued at \$62,973.

Our operational reserve is fully funded at \$200,021. Our estimated three-month reserve is \$175,691.

Our total expenses were \$1,769 lower than our budget of \$69,902. This is mainly from the \$5,484 reduction in Wages and Benefits by the Associate Director reducing his hours offset by the cost of Sales Force applications.

Our Net Income was \$33,171 below our budget of -\$1,176.

For September of total income was \$43,501, our cost of goods was \$8,540, resulting in a gross profit of \$34,962. Our total expenses were \$68,133 resulting in a net income of -\$33,171, which was \$28,995 lower than budget.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

In Your Service,



Paul M
Executive Director, ISO of SAA

Welcome Judy K and Don S!

Please welcome the newest member of the office staff, Judy K, and the new editor of *The Outer Circle*, Don S! Judy is taking the new position of Finance Assistant. You may welcome them by emailing info@saa-recovery.org.

ISO NEWS

Do you have computer skills?

The Information and Systems Online Presence Committee (ISOPCom), a joint committee between the Literature Committee, Board, and the office; seeks volunteers who are able and willing to help with the ISO's technical computer needs. These include, but are not limited to, web design (especially JavaScript, CSS, and PHP), database management, and security. If you are skilled in these or similar areas and would like to use your skills to serve the fellowship, email info@saa-recovery.org.

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.

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.

CONTACT THE ISO

Office

ISO Office Mailing Address:
PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270

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

Office e-mail: info@saa-recovery.org
The Outer Circle e-mail: toc@saa-recovery.org
Website: www.saa-recovery.org

The Outer Circle

Editor: Don S.

Office Staff

Executive Director: Paul M.: director@saa-iso.net
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.
Finance Assistant: Judy K
Administrative Assistant: Jerry B.
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; Bill I; Bob L (Chair); Carl D; David H;
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Board: board@saa-recovery.org
CSC: csc@saa-recovery.org
LitCom: litcom@saa-recovery.org

Literature Committee

Cara A; Carole D; David C; Don S (TOC Editor);
Deb W; Don R; Doug S; Jackie J; Jim L (Chair);
Jim P; Langston M; Maud D (Secretary); Mike K;
Rachel R, Stephen P

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

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 video-conference.

While face-to-face remains the preferred meeting modality in most situations, recent experience in Arizona suggests that meeting by video-conference 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).

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

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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.

