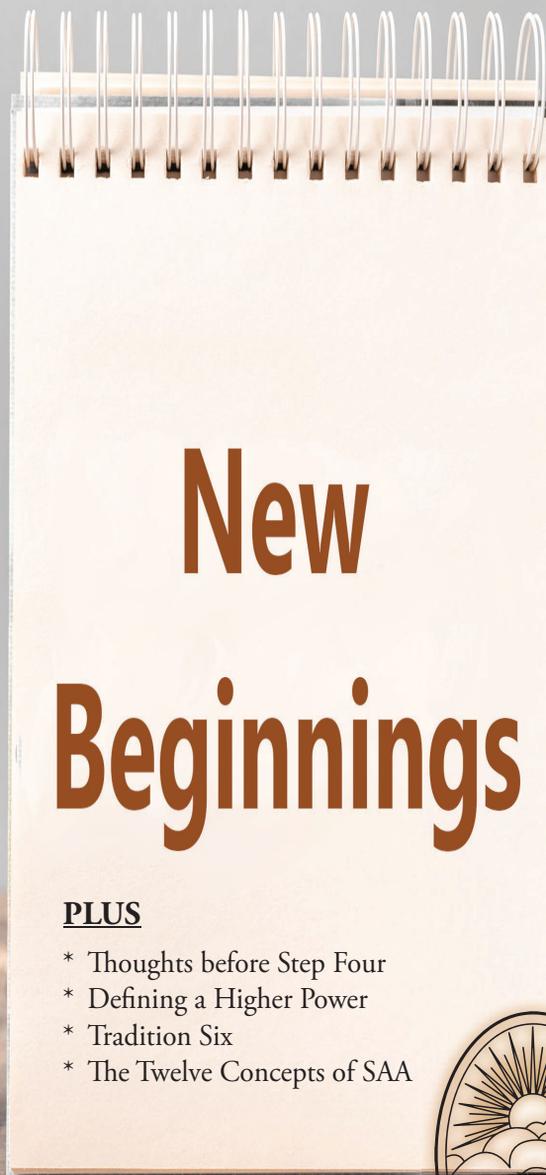


THE OUTER CIRCLE





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.

CONTENTS

Columns

- 4 From the Editor
- 5 From the Director
- 6 Dear Grace
- 16 Living in Sobriety
- 20 Dear Will
- 22 Stories of Service
- 24 From the Board

Departments

- 2 TOC Mission
- 26 ISO News
- 30 Calendar
- 30 Contact ISO
- 31 Submissions
- 32 Twelve Steps

Special

- 12 Poem: "On Athens and Jerusalem"
- 13 Call for International Service
- 22 Draft Twelve Concepts

Feature Articles



- 8 New Beginnings
A First-Step-style letter from an addict in prison.



- 10 Defining Your Higher Power
Looking at how we understand "God"



- 14 Taking the Fourth Step
Thoughts on progress and the future of recovery before the Fourth Step



- 18 Roots of Tradition Six
Exploring the foundations of the Twelve Traditions: Tradition Six

FROM THE EDITOR

Lessons learned from a holiday relapse

BY DON S.
THE OUTER CIRCLE
EDITOR

*I need to stay
vigilant and
mindful, even
after I've made
it through the
challenge.*

The holiday season can pile loads of stressors onto our lives. For many of us in Sex Addicts Anonymous, this time also comes with additional triggers. I learned three lessons the hard way regarding the holidays.

The first lesson I learned was that this is a particularly triggering time, and I need to, at the very least, maintain my hold on the program – meetings, sponsor, friends, morning practice, step work, service. My first holiday season in recovery, I knew it would be hazardous, so I made a pact with myself to get through the holidays sober. And I did. I didn't have a support network, and only one meeting for that matter, so it was pretty much a solo effort. When a holiday obligation meant that I would miss my one meeting, I didn't make up for it by attending another meeting. After the gauntlet, sometime in the first week of January, I relapsed. It was three horrible months before I made my way back to recovery.

Lesson two: Time takes time, but my sobriety is never more than a twenty-four-hour proposition. It's not about getting through the holidays; it's about this day. If I stay grounded in the moment and connected to my Higher Power and the program, I stand a good chance of getting through a day.

I learned lesson three years later. It's called the-day-after-the-day-after effect, which I learned when my then-wife and I would visit our families of origin. We would have no meltdowns or shutdowns, but a couple days later, one of us would lash out at the other for no apparent reason. In other words, I need to stay vigilant and mindful, even after I've made it through the challenge. Just because I kept my sobriety and acted with serenity doesn't mean I wasn't affected by a situation.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Resolution: Stay in touch with the ISO in 2022!

BY PAUL M.

*Correct meeting
information
is critical to
reaching out to
the sex addict
who still suffers.*

I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday season, is healthy, and ready to reach out the hand of SAA to anyone that asks for help.

Correct meeting information is critical to reaching out that hand. Please have a representative from your group email info@saa-recovery.org or call 713-869-4902 to verify its information.

There is a rumor going around that many members do not read *The Outer Circle* (TOC). If you are reading this article, I know you read the newsletter. We send this out to over 12,000 members electronically and another 1,400 in print form. If you read the TOC, please send an email to info@saa-recovery.org with the subject line of "I read the TOC." If you are not getting the TOC by email, send an email to info@saa-recovery.org to sign up.

Recently we have had some discussion about special interest meetings. There are now meetings for only women, only men, LGBT, Intimacy and Sexual Avoidance (ISA), BIPOC, and others. Some feel this is divisive, but I personally feel that these meetings offer a space for people to feel comfortable sharing. My hope is these people also go to mixed meetings so our diversity can be known to others in our fellowship.

We are updating our meeting search to make it easier to find all types of meetings, including special meetings, to better facilitate locating certain meetings. We also hope to roll out an opt-in texting service in the near future to help us stay in contact. These projects require funds to create and maintain. Please consider donating at <https://saa-store.org/7thTradition/>.

I hope you have a healthy and sober 2022, and I hope to see you at the convention.

DEAR GRACE

Who is Grace?

BY WOMEN'S
OUTREACH
COMMITTEE

*Although “Grace”
isn’t an individual,
her “voice”
represents both our
group conscience
and the grace that
is available from
working the Twelve
Steps.*

Dear Grace,

Just who is Grace? Are you an individual? Can I be Grace?

Curious

Dear Curious,

These are great questions! “Grace” is a nom de plume, or pen name. It was adopted by the Women’s Outreach Committee of SAA (WOC) for use in two different outreach efforts: this column and the Women’s Outreach List. It’s also a word for our group conscience.

This column is written by a workgroup, a subset of the members who serve on the WOC. For each issue of *The Outer Circle*, we create an answer to a question collaboratively through group conscience. We try to answer from the perspective of a long-sober woman member who has experienced a spiritual awakening and is active in service. Although “Grace” isn’t an individual, her “voice” represents both our group conscience and the grace that is available from working the Twelve Steps.

The other outreach effort that uses “Grace” as a pen name is the Women’s Outreach List. Some people call this the “Grace list.” This is a contact list of women in the fellowship who agree to support one another. (It’s like the phone list of a face-to-face meeting.) To join the list, a woman sends a request to the e-mail address grace@saa-women.org. The person who answers the e-mail is a woman serving on the WOC who meets certain guidelines. She must have two years’ continuous abstinence from inner-circle behaviors and have worked the Twelve Steps



with an SAA sponsor. She must have working knowledge of the Twelve Traditions, the endorsement of her home group, home internet access, and working knowledge of e-mail and Excel. The position of “Grace” is a one-month, rotating service position. Although none of these women is actually named Grace, we think of them all as Grace. They are supported by a different WOC workgroup, which has written guidelines and holds regular meetings.

To become involved in either of these outreach efforts, please contact the ISO for information about how to attend a meeting of the WOC. Getting

involved there would be the first step to finding out more about serving as Grace.

**In service,
—The WOC “Grace” workgroup,
known collectively as “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.*

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.”



BY MIKE R.

Like most stories I've read, my addiction started out in my early teens and has carried through until today. As much as I tried to hide it or promise others my behavior would change, things only got worse.

From the age of twelve discovering adult novels on incest in dad's dresser, using sister's old doll to practice sex, and stealing adult magazines from the corner store, my life has been lived out in isolation and fantasy. I joined the Navy at the age of seventeen. With no close friends, I was always on the outside looking in, doing anything to gain attention (often negative).

This negative behavior and sexual acting out is what led to my being kicked out of home and joining the Navy. I figured joining the military would provide that sense of belonging and direction. That's just what it did. The only thing that didn't change was the sexual behavior. If anything, my addiction took a deeper root with sexual exploits in each port and all-night porn parties when underway. I fit right into the Navy of the early 80s. Life was good and I was accepted for who I was until I reenlisted and moved on to shore duty. During this tour of duty, I met and married a sixteen-year-old woman. The only reason we married was because we had been fooling around and she became pregnant. I really didn't love her, but I wanted to do the right thing. Plus, she made me feel needed.

Our marriage lasted for seven years. During that time, I led a double life—one when I was home with my wife and kids (two more added during this), and a second life

when I was deployed. Though I never physically cheated, I cruised strip clubs and porn shops not knowing the damage I was doing to myself and our marriage. We divorced in the mid-90s and went on with our lives. Feeling like a total failure for not making my marriage work, I fell deeper and deeper into addiction. I went everywhere looking for sex – porn shops, the internet, chatrooms – any place I could find to escape the pain I was feeling. I even went as far as sexually abusing my own children.

This cycle went on until I met my second wife in the late 90s. I thought we needed each other and that I'd be able to escape from the addiction. We married in March 1998. For the first couple years, the porn stopped. We were happy doing everything together. Yeah, we'd flirt and joke (often sexually) with our friends, but we never crossed that line.

It wasn't until our schedules crossed and she started working nights that my porn use started up again. Feeling alone and bored, I'd spend evenings surfing the net. I'd go from site to site searching for whatever would fill that need. Some nights it was entering chat rooms as a female. Other nights it was surfing for the bizarre and out-of-the-ordinary. It was during one of these searches that I discovered the dark side of pornography – the world of underage girls. My interest was piqued. My wife had no idea. She knew about the occasional

porn use and my promises to stop, but never knew about the underage fantasies I had found. That was until 2001 when, using a Navy computer, I was busted. I was processed out of the Navy, losing a twenty-year career and all the benefits that came with it.

The result was my falling deeper into addiction. My wife and I tried working on our marriage, going through periods of separation which led to further unhealthy sexual behavior. During one of these separations, I tried going to SAA meetings in my local area. As I started working the Twelve Steps, I found myself out of work and struggling. I turned to truck driving as a means to support myself. In so doing, my sponsor at the time left. His reason was that if I was going to drive trucks and spend most of my time isolated, he could not be my sponsor. So what did I do? I hid my feelings of failure in deeper porn use. This time my use didn't end until one night I again abused my daughter.

Now I sit in prison, having lost everything, or so I thought. It's been during this time that I have found freedom from my addiction through my Higher Power and the program of Sex Addicts Anonymous. With the support of my new sponsor, I've started my journey in recovery. I acknowledge it's going to be a long road, but every journey starts with just one step. My story is not over but just beginning. ©

*My story is not over
but just beginning.*



Defining your Higher Power

BY RICH B

I was grateful to see the article in the Sept./Oct. 2021 TOC by Anonymous, affirming that agnostics and atheists are welcome in SAA. I was relieved to learn this a few years ago when I first joined SAA. I wish I had understood it thirty years ago because I might have begun my recovery that much sooner. This point is also brought home by one of the newer SAA pamphlets – “What if I Don’t Believe in ‘God?’”

When I began working the Steps, I was faced with a question: As an agnostic or atheist, how do I define a Higher Power that works for me?

I asked myself what believers in God gained from their belief. Here are the answers I came up with:

- an accountability partner, to keep them honest with themselves
- truth, usually from a holy book or tradition, and a set of rules to live by
- faith that everything is going to turn out okay, that their life is running according to some greater plan, and that their efforts and sufferings serve a purpose
- judgment, and a sense of conscience, which often bring regret and remorse, but also correction and integrity
- love, a feeling that they belong and are cared for, that they have intrinsic value and are not worthless

I think most people will agree that these are all things we need in our lives in some way. All of us have values and principles, even if we do not always abide by

them. Without some kind of belief that the sun will rise and that life will go on as it should, we would live in constant fear and uncertainty. Without rules and consequences, our lives would be chaotic; without hopes and goals, they would be meaningless and empty; without love, we are left feeling lonely and worthless.

When I first did my Steps Two and Three, I put together a vision of a Higher Power made up of values and beliefs that motivated me, and they have become stronger and more clearly defined as my recovery has progressed.

Here are the elements of my own Higher Power:

- the Twelve Steps themselves, as a path of recovery, and the twelve-step community
- the truth, which I must face without denial or distortion, including uncomfortable truths about what I have suffered and the suffering I have caused others, and my own personal responsibility in all of this
- my desire to make amends to those I whom I have hurt
- faith—the simple belief that everything will be okay even if I do not control the outcome
- my own conscience – the quiet, honest voice that I hear when I am not in the throes of addictive or distorted thinking

- patience – a belief in my ability to change and grow over time, which neurologists call neuroplasticity. Just because I feel stuck does not mean that I will always be stuck.

I have been told a couple of times by fellow group members who believe in God that I did not have a “real” Higher Power, but I respectfully disagreed. I must confess that I have been tempted to view other people’s God as just an imaginary friend. Bickering over such issues serves no good purpose and only takes us all away from our common goal of recovery. It doesn’t matter what other people think, as long as your own Higher Power is something that you believe in and that motivates you toward recovery.

Defining a Higher Power is our first step toward integrity as we integrate our beliefs into our daily lives and our every action. Addiction has a way of making us set aside our solemn values so that we can violate them again and again in the pursuit of our next fix. In the throes of our addiction, the object of our addiction (sex, drugs, alcohol, etc.) effectively served as our Higher Power. Our craving to fill the emptiness we felt in our hearts took the place of a healthy conscience, respect for ourselves and others, and peace of mind.

For the new member, just a recognition of one’s own powerlessness and an acceptance of the Twelve Steps

can be enough to begin the journey. At meetings, people offer us love and acceptance despite knowing the worst about us, and they are living proof that following the Steps can lead us to recovery. They also give us the accountability we need, as the Steps give us rules to live by and a truth that overcomes the lies we have been telling ourselves. In Steps Four and Five we build a conscience, and slowly, gradually, we learn to listen to it, judging ourselves fairly and honestly. In Steps Six and Seven we begin the slow process of actually clearing the piled-up wreckage of our lives and selves. Steps Eight and Nine bring us to face regret and remorse for those we have hurt. These steps also provide the means to make amends, to forgive and to earn forgiveness, and to relieve our feelings of guilt. Over time, we come to realize that despite our pain, fears, and worries, everything really does turn out OK. We can create meaning in our lives by the way we choose to live and by the honest way we tell our story to ourselves and others.

Even believers have to ask themselves, and reassess from time to time, exactly what their Higher Power stands for and expects of them. Agnostics and atheists are no different. Such questioning is how we grow, and our understanding of our Higher Power and our personal beliefs can grow with us. I have come to believe that a Higher Power is not something outside of us that comes to our rescue, but something that lives within us, a better nature that grows in

clarity and strength as we nurture it.

I hope my words and personal experience are helpful to you as you define a Higher Power that fulfills your needs, and motivates and accompanies you as you walk the path of recovery, regardless of your beliefs. ©

On Athens and Jerusalem

— BY CODY S.

What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?

—The philosopher queried.

The mind with the heart?

Reason with faith?

A complex admixture,
seemingly contradictory,
but pregnant with the spiritual hope
of humanity,

delivering an imperfect bastard,
though not lacking in promise.

What has sex to do with love?

—The addict inquired.

The sensual with the sensible?

The body with the spirit?

A perfect couple,
or irreconcilable differences,
giving life to relationship and
relationship to life,
burning our lives to its bottom,
for recovery into happiness.



BY THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Would you like to give back to our fellowship? International service is a great way to get more involved in the SAA fellowship, deepen your recovery, and help reach suffering sex addicts worldwide.

The Conference Nominating Committee (NomCom) presents a slate of nominees at the annual meeting of the Conference in October to fill open positions on the Board of Trustees, Literature Committee, Conference Steering Committee, Conference Area Coordinating Committee, and Conference Nominating Committee. If you are interested in serving on any of these committees and meet the international service guidelines, we encourage you to fill out a service résumé!

For more information about the positions and the guidelines for international service, please visit the service website at www.saa-iso.org and click on the “International Service” tab. Please contact the ISO office via phone, (713) 869-4902, or email to info@saa-recovery.org, for the username and password to access these documents.

Have you filled out a résumé in the past? We encourage you to fill out a new résumé each year before June 30th, 2022. All applicants will be entered into a raffle to win a free convention registration.

Completed service résumés should be emailed to info@saa-recovery.org or mailed to Nominating Committee, ISO, PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270.

In addition, members of the fellowship who would like to get a “taste” of international service before deciding about an elective position can serve on multiple committees and subcommittees within the ISO. Interested members may learn more by contacting the chair of a committee or by contacting the ISO office. ©



Thoughts on the eve of taking the Fourth Step

BY GEORGE R.

It is the night of 4 December 2021. I have begun, failed to complete, and then relapsed three times on Step Four since my wife kicked me out of her parents' house on Mother's Day, 2021.

Today, I sat with my sponsor and told him that, with just under thirty days of sobriety, I wasn't ready to begin Step Four yet. I had not been sober long enough, in my opinion. I didn't have the time to adequately do it. I needed to wait until I was stronger.

He told me to leave my excuses behind, and just begin the step. Everyone knows Step Four is hard, and it is going to be hard for me to do, but I can do it. I have the tools in my toolbox and the serenity of a Higher Power to guide me. The first time I tried Step Four, I did not believe in a Higher Power other than my wife. I was absolutely working in isolation even though plenty of people tried to help me. I just was not well enough to see it. The next two

times, I became overwhelmed with shame for not finishing it as quickly as I felt I should have if I was making it a priority, and relapsed to handle the pain.

Tonight, I have just watched a half-hour of videos about Step Four and Step Five and I feel confident. But I am nervous. Part of me wants to cry; the other part wants to go to sleep right now. None of me wants to face the Fourth Step. But that is why I am writing this, because the only way I know how to express my feelings in a healthy manner is to journal them out. Even writing this is exhausting because it is difficult; and because it is difficult, I want to hide from it. I want to cry, sleep, masturbate, anything but this. And yet, here I am – unable to shut up, unable to keep my mind still, and unable to procrastinate any longer on the Fourth Step.

For years I've hidden behind the truth of false humility – false because in my heart I did not truly believe the things I said, truth because I truly believed that other people believed the terrible things I would say about myself. I sought their validation or condemnation, telling myself either one would be fine as long as someone told me their feelings, all the while knowing I'd become resentful, bitter, and defensive if they dared say anything about me that wasn't positive.

So, if I am such a mess of nerves, why do I feel confident? I am confident in my ability to conduct the inventory, I am confident in my ability to share it, and I am confident in my ability to leave no stone unturned. I am not confident about how I will react. I am confident that I am not confident I will remain sober, but I am confident that the fear I feel about losing my sobriety is real.

Most of all, I am confident that I must be truly humble, and to be truly humble, I must be honest with myself about where I believe my strong points lay. I cannot be humble without admitting what I genuinely believe I can do with decency, because I know that if I were truly all cruel and evil, I'd already be dead. ☺

LIVING IN SOBRIETY

Sobriety leads to connection

BY ANONYMOUS

I make a point of expressing appreciation and gratitude often.

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.

My recovery began when I went online to research sex-related twelve-step fellowships to help someone else. I was curious when I came across the “Recovery from Compulsive Sexual Avoidance – A Return to Intimacy” pamphlet (retitled in 2020 as “Intimacy Avoidance – Another Aspect of Sex Addiction”). I identified with several of the symptoms listed in the pamphlet, and soon I found myself attending SAA meetings. Though I primarily focused my step work on recovering from the avoidance of sex, as I learned about sex addiction, I discovered that I, too, qualified. I was obsessed with sex, I objectified myself and others, and I was lost in fantasy nearly all the time. I couldn’t express affection through loving sex. I could only “get high” using sexual behaviors. I’m grateful I don’t have to live like that anymore.

I used to do things like pick fights or go to bed at a different time than my partner to avoid the possibility of sex. But now, I focus on doing outer-circle behaviors with my partner that strengthen our relationship, such as going for a walk, playing board or card games, reading things together and discussing them, or occasionally watching a television show or a movie. I put effort and energy into noticing what’s good about my partner, and I make a point of expressing appreciation and gratitude often. The Tenth Step I usually do at night includes a gratitude list, too, as well as self-reflection on whom I’ve connected with that day.

These outer-circle behaviors build the foundation of emotional safety and intimacy that help me connect sexually with my partner. They include safe and healthy touching, giving or receiving simple or sensual massages, slowing down touches and enjoying the moment, flirting, inventing playful

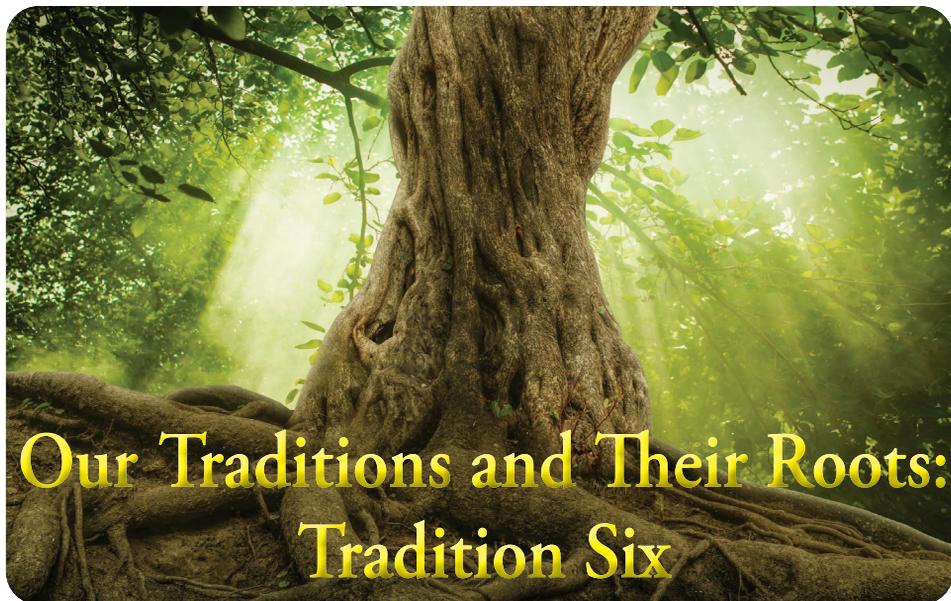
and creative ways to kiss, and other sexual behaviors that bring us joy and connection.

Since deprivation was a big part of my intimacy avoidance, self-nurturing behaviors have been integral to my recovery from both sexual anorexia and addictive sexual behaviors. For example, I regularly ignored my body's needs by waiting too long to use the restroom or eat, or I pushed myself too hard and did not get enough sleep. But in recovery, I make it a point to treat my body with love and respect, increasing my intimacy with it. When I wear comfortable clothing that makes me feel attractive, listen to and respond to my body's needs, or ask for and accept help when I need it, I send the message to myself that I have value and I believe I am worth treating with gentleness and respect. Doing these things and other self-nurturing behaviors, such as engaging a hobby, dancing, or listening to music; reduces the likelihood of me objectifying, ignoring, mistreating, or depriving my body.

The tool of bookending supports me when I know I'm going to be in potentially slippery or triggering circumstances. For example, I usually contact a program friend before and after being with my family of origin. In recovery, I also bookend with my Higher Power before and after being sexual. At first, that was really awkward! It didn't fit with my more formal, serious, "proper" way of

relating to the God of my understanding. But the God of my EXPERIENCE has changed that dynamic. Now I invite God into ALL of my experiences, including my sexual ones, because I know that without the help of a Power greater than myself, I just fall back into old patterns. It has made a huge difference in elevating my sexual connection with my partner to a spiritual level. And my concept of spirituality is totally evolving, too. It's much less frenzied and goal-oriented, and also less formal and about rules and rigidity, and much more about the flow of positive energy and freedom to play and enjoy and bond and connect.

I no longer lack intimacy in my life, but I have closeness and connection with many wonderful people. I have a great network of supportive program friends of all genders and from a wide variety of backgrounds. I can be with my uncomfortable emotions and accept support in working through the traumatic ones. I am less afraid of speaking up for myself and stating what I need. I am getting to know myself and developing a loving connection with myself. I am cultivating a close, personal relationship with the Higher Power of my understanding and learning how to listen to my intuitive guidance. I can do many things that a few years ago were impossible. Keep coming back. It works!



Our Traditions and Their Roots: Tradition Six

“An SAA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the SAA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.”

Editor's Note: This is the seventh 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

In the 1970s, SAA adopted AA's Traditions almost word for word for the purpose of preserving the common welfare of SAA groups. AA's "Short Form" has its roots in AA's "Long Form," which was published around 1946. If we are to understand our SAA Traditions, we need to understand their roots in the AA Long Form. For example, Tradition One means that our own recovery depends on our unified resolve to hold "...the welfare of the group above our own personal preferences, desires, or opinions" (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, p. 78). Tradition Four tells us each SAA group is sovereign in SAA, not subordinate to any other SAA entity. Tradition Two reminds us, "Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern."

Tradition Six reminds us that none of us are, nor ever will be, perfect. Even in recovery, we're subject to such common human shortcomings as self-importance, self-seeking,

ing, desire for recognition, etc. This Tradition frankly addresses problems that arise when people inside or outside of groups wage war over control of money, property, or power. It provides practical guidelines for avoiding such group-destroying and fellowship-destroying disputes by basically implying: “We don’t need money or property to carry the message and let’s defer our personal prestige—our personal power—to the Group Conscience which has no higher authority than a loving God.” The original version of Tradition Six used the word “authority” rather than “prestige”, e.g. “. . .lest problems of money, property, and authority divert us. . .”

How do we keep problems of money, property, and authority from tearing us apart at the group level or at the fellowship level? Let’s look at money and property first, then we’ll consider the general principle established there to discuss the misuse of personal prestige/authority/power to destroy groups. The AA Long Form of the Tradition addresses money and property issues:

Secondary aids to [SAA], such as clubs or hospitals which require much property or administration, ought to be incorporated and so set apart . . . Their management should be the sole responsibility of those people who financially support them (Alcoholics Anonymous, “The Twelve Traditions”, pg. xviii, 2001).

So, if some of us think a new halfway house is a great idea, one that will help us reach sex addicts, let’s let those few

of us whose idea it is incorporate, raise money, and build the facility. We’ll keep SAA out of it and not ask SAA to endorse it. The Long Form also confirms that autonomous SAA groups “may cooperate with anyone, but such cooperation ought never go so far as affiliation or endorsement, actual or implied.” The halfway house can invite SAA members to share their experience, strength, and hope with the residents, while SAA groups can invite residents to their meetings.

Let’s examine the principle here more generally. If some of us think we know what literature is best for all SAA, then Tradition Six says, “Forget about it.” If some of us have a great idea about how everybody should conduct their meetings, refer to Tradition Two: “Our leaders. . .do not govern.” Let’s not impose our great idea on sovereign SAA groups which have no higher authority than a loving God as may be expressed in their group conscience.

If we unify around these Traditions to protect and preserve the uniqueness of our groups, groups will thrive, personal recovery will grow, and SAA as a whole will survive. Conversely, if we ignore the Traditions, our groups will disintegrate, personal recovery will stall, and SAA as a whole will founder.

Next issue: Tradition Seven. ©

DEAR WILL

The importance of sober amends

BY WILL

Consider returning to earlier steps and re-establishing sobriety and a spiritual foundation before reconsidering amends.

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

Dear Will –

I am currently working my Ninth Step and have made a few amends. However, I have had a few slips recently and my sponsor says that I may not be ready for this step and should focus on my sobriety first. I really want to push forward on my amends and continue my recovery. What do you think I should do?

Sincerely,

Stalled at the Ninth Step

Dear Stalled –

I always love hearing about others in recovery who are eager to work the Steps. Making amends for the harm we have caused is a critical part of the Twelve Steps of Sex Addicts Anonymous. Like you, I so wanted to heal my relationships and be able to move forward with my recovery. Our text, *Sex Addicts Anonymous* (the Green Book), details the experience, strength, and hope of the fellowship on some important points to consider at this juncture in your recovery.

My experience has been that acting out and making amends are not compatible with one another. Our text puts it this way “Our apologies will be seen as sincere only when it becomes evident that we now live differently” (page 44). Living differently would seem to mean not living as we did before – by acting out. In my addiction, I made apology after apology and repeated promises to stop harming others because of my addiction, yet I continued to harm others and myself when I returned to my addiction. Making amends is complicated. It involves an admission of the harm we have caused, an expression of remorse, an offer of reparation, and a change in our behavior. Without that change in behavior (sobriety), the amends we attempt may

cause more harm than good. The harms we cause by attempting to make amends that our lack of sobriety and recovery are not ready to support is like writing a check from an account with a zero balance. It may be wise to focus on your sobriety, as suggested by your sponsor, and reapproach your amends when you are in a better place.

In my addiction, I did not intend to harm those around me, but my addiction did not care. My sex addiction controlled my actions and my motives—survival at any cost! Our book reminds us, “Throughout this process, we are mindful of our motives in making amends” (page 43). When I was active in addiction, it is safe to say that my motives were, at the least, suspect. Acting out on our compulsive sexual behaviors may be an indication of reliance on self and character defects to manage our life and relationships. It is not a recipe for success when attempting to mend broken relationships. I have witnessed many in recovery who approached the Ninth Step with a spiritual foundation rooted in their sobriety. They could move through the amends process with motives rooted in the spiritual principles of our program and not tainted by active addiction. For many, it is easier to check our motives when we are not struggling with sobriety.

Our book says, “We work this step only when we have a strong foundation

built on the preceding steps” (page 43). Working the Ninth Step and making amends requires not only a strong spiritual foundation, but relying on it. When we act out, we are, in a sense, setting aside our spiritual foundation and instead relying on our addiction. To make amends I needed to walk hand-in-hand with my Higher Power throughout the Ninth Step, and I know from personal experience it is difficult to hold the caring hand of my Higher Power while in the vise like grip of addiction (acting out). Someone who is acting out when attempting the Ninth Step may want to consider returning to earlier steps (perhaps Steps One, Two, and Three) and re-establish sobriety and a spiritual foundation before reconsidering amends.

So, to answer your question of what I think you should do, I suggest you listen to your sponsor and the guidance of the fellowship, as stated in our text “We seek the counsel of our sponsor and other members who have experience working this step” (page 43). Your sponsor has provided you that counsel. It would appear that counsel is rooted in our program as reflected in our literature. You deserve the healing that comes from making your amends, amends you can trust are based in your sobriety and recovery.

**In Recovery,
Will**

STORIES OF SERVICE

SAA Twelve Concepts of Service

Concept Committee Approved Draft, Sept 11, 2021

From the chair of the Twelve Concepts Committee: SAA has been using the principles of AA's Twelve Concepts of World service to guide our service entities for many years. They are referenced in our bylaws and conference charter. Many might not know that we have been working on creating our own Concepts of Service since 2015 and we are excited to present this draft version of the new SAA Twelve Concepts of Service for the fellowship's consideration. We are now in a feedback window on the proposed Twelve Concepts of Service. Feedback will be for a minimum of one year. Our current goal is to put the concepts in front of as many members as possible. Feedback is welcomed at TwelveConcepts@saa-iso.org.

Concept 1: The final responsibility and ultimate authority for SAA service rests in the informed group conscience of the fellowship.

Concept 2: The SAA member groups delegate to their service boards and committees the authority necessary to fulfill their assigned responsibilities. The groups empower the Conference to be the active voice and effective conscience of the whole fellowship.

Concept 3: Each service entity in SAA is granted the right of decision within the scope of the defined authority entrusted to that entity to make effective leadership possible.

Concept 4: Our traditional right of participation ensures effective decision-making on the basis of group conscience at all levels and is key to harmony in service work.

Concept 5: Throughout the SAA service structure, there is a traditional "right of appeal," which encourages clear processes for the consideration of minority opinion and for handling grievances.

Concept 6: The Conference acknowledges and empowers the Board of Trustees to hold the primary responsibility for fiduciary, legal, and administrative actions of the International Service Organization.

Concept 7: The Bylaws of the International Service Organization is a legal instrument, empowering the Board of Trustees to manage and conduct international service. The Conference Charter is not a legal document; it relies for its effectiveness upon the spirituality of our program, the principles of our traditions, and the willingness of groups and members to make financial contributions.

Concept 8: Our service structure depends on transparent communication throughout the fellowship, drawing on the spiritual principles of openness, acceptance, inclusivity, and mutual respect.

Concept 9: Effective leaders in our organization exemplify servant leadership at every level. While operational leader-

ship of the ISO must be assumed by the Board of Trustees, well-chosen leaders with sound leadership qualities are essential at all levels of SAA service. Fair and appropriate methods of selecting those leaders are indispensable to the functioning of our fellowship.

Concept 10: The authority and responsibility for each service task needs a well-defined scope, a single point of decision, and mechanisms for accountability. In this way duplication of effort is avoided, while at the same time service committees are responsible for keeping those they serve informed of their work.

Concept 11: The Board of Trustees of the International Service Organization and by extension the administration of the ISO should always be assisted by the best possible standing committees, executives, staff members, and consultants. Serious care and consideration will always be given to the qualifications, selection, rotation, authority, and responsibility of all volunteer and appointed committee members; and to the duties, selection, and compensation of all paid staff members.

Concept 12: The Conference warrants that the voice of the fellowship is vital to the sustained health and integrity of SAA and that in order to accomplish that goal, the Conference hereby commits to the principles contained in the eleven

preceding concepts and to the following additional affirmations:

- The Conference shall at all times and in all decisions keep its focus on the spiritual principles of the SAA program of recovery and avoid any actions that are financially or politically motivated.
- The Conference shall in principle support the ISO in maintaining sufficient operating funds and appropriate reserves to meet unanticipated special needs or crises, taking care that it never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power.
- Within the Conference, unity of the fellowship and equality of all members stand paramount in the consideration of all issues. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
- At all levels within the Conference, thorough discussion of all issues should precede voting and substantial unanimity is always the desired goal.
- In so far as possible, the Conference should avoid open controversy; further, actions of the Conference, the International Service Organization, and its components should never be personally punitive.
- In consideration of the spiritual principles of the SAA program of recovery, the Conference should never attempt to engage in acts of government.

FROM THE BOARD

Budget for 2022, Conference meeting, and other challenges

**BY MELISSA W.
BOARD MEMBER**

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

“Steps of courage and leaps of faith” (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 98).

This phrase encapsulates our experience in recovery and aptly describes what it has been like adjusting to living with COVID-19 and its related fears and challenges. The coming year will likely provide us with ample opportunity to continue to take courageous steps and faith-inspired leaps.

The mission of the ISO is to serve member groups by helping carry the SAA message of recovery to the sex addict who still suffers. Outreach is our primary purpose. The Board of Trustees is legally responsible for the policies and finances of the ISO and are its principal planners and administrators. We are humbled by the SAA fellowship (all of you) entrusting us with this responsibility, and we are grateful for the service opportunity, which helps us in our own recovery.

At the December 18, 2021, Board meeting, the trustees approved the annual ISO budget for 2022, thanks to the efforts of our executive director, the Finance and Operations Committee putting in extra time, and the Board chair driving us to have the 2022 budget in place before the start of the new year.

One of the Board’s priorities over the past few years has been to improve communication with and within the fellowship, especially during the challenging times of the global pandemic and ever-changing conditions. We recognize the need for two-way communications and are working to enhance this process through all possible means and formats. The revamped SAA Connect website will be a major step in this direction. The first phase is

FROM THE BOARD

expected to be released in the first part of 2022. The website will be accessible to the public and enhance our ability to reach the still suffering sex addict. The second phase will be a new, members-only section, which will maintain our anonymity while helping all of us connect to and communicate with each other and provide additional resources to support recovery. The Board delayed this project in 2020 and 2021 in response to the anticipated impact of COVID-19 on our finances. The 2022 budget provides funding for this long-delayed project, pushing for completion as soon as possible. The budget also allocates funds for the critical outreach work of the PI/CPC (Public Information and Cooperation with the Professional Community) Committee to continue carrying the message of recovery to sex addicts through therapists, clergy, probation officers, and other community resources.

The budget includes the cost of the annual meeting of the Conference in October 2022. The trustees and executive director closely examined the feasibility of budgeting for a hybrid conference in 2022. After lengthy discussion and analysis, the Board concluded that a hybrid conference, combined with the vital services the ISO currently provides, would require an increase in donations from members of about \$28,000, a significant reduction in outreach efforts, or both. It would also result in depleting the

prudent reserve funds. While the current budget assumes an in-person conference, the Board hopes our financial projections will prove conservative. Through contributions above budget and expenses below budget, we will ultimately be able to have a hybrid conference.

Like the rest of the fellowship, the ISO office and Board of Trustees have had to be flexible and adapt to unanticipated changes and challenges. The Board also sees the need to move forward into the post-COVID era by rethinking technology and innovative means of enhancing the fellowship. As always, we value your input. Email the Board at board@saa-recovery.org.

Approved Board Actions

November

- Approved new employee handbook (version three)
- Approved policy concerning complaints regarding meetings

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.

ISO NEWS

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 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.

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.

Represent Your Intergroup or Group in the Intergroup Communications Committee (ICC) and Help Your Local Meetings

In the spirit of the First Tradition, the ICC “exists for the purpose of facilitating communication amongst intergroups, encouraging groups to carry the SAA message to the sex addict still suffering—our one primary purpose—sharing best practices, helping new intergroups to become established, and recommending changes to the SAA *Intergroup Guide* and SAA *Group Guide*.”

Learn how other intergroups and groups engage in outreach to still-suffering addicts, including special populations like prisoners, women, LGBT, and BIPOC addicts; learn how intergroups and groups conduct retreats and practice the Seventh Tradition; and share your experience, strength, and hope in service to others.

If you would like to take part in this collaborative effort and learn from others about how to improve your intergroup and group activities, email your request to info@saa-recovery.org.

ISO NEWS

Financial Summary

Our total SAA Green Book sales were below our estimate of \$5,826 by \$898 in November. Our HCI sales (October's numbers, a month behind) were \$1,071 lower than budgeted. Findaway audio sales were \$35 above our budget of \$226. For the year we are 105.52% of our estimated sales.

Our book *Voices in Recovery* sales for November were \$520 lower than our budget of \$2,050 for November. The ISO sales were \$15 below budget and HCI sales were \$405 lower than budget. For the year we are an average of 102.65% of our estimated sales.

Our pamphlet and booklet sales were above our estimate of \$1,000 by \$1,046 in November. For the year we are at 167.71% of our estimated sales.

Our plastic chips sales were above our estimate of \$405 by \$506 in November. For the year we are at 171.57% of our estimated sales.

Our bronze medallion sales were above our estimate of \$600 by \$1,924 in November. For the year we are at 262.18% of our estimated sales.

Our total sales for November were above our estimate of \$10,083 by \$2,002 in November. For the year we are at 122.48% of our estimated sales.

Individual donations were above our estimate of \$55,065 by \$5,446 in November. For the year we are at 97.62% of our estimated individual donations. The general donations were below our budget by \$2,027 and the Lifeline Partners amount was \$655 above budget. Our November LifeLine budget is \$26,565 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 above our estimate of \$11,437 by \$1,717 in November. For the year we are at 95.38% of our estimated group donations. Group LifeLine partners are \$262 below above our budget of \$2,657 and general donations for groups were \$3,126 below our budgeted estimate.

Our total donations were \$7,163 above the budgeted amount of \$66,502. For the year we are at 97.15% of our estimated donations.

Our product inventory is valued at \$59,970.

ISO NEWS

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

Our total expenses were \$1,168 lower than our budget of \$63,479. This is mainly from the \$1,094 reduction in wages and benefits by the [former] associate director reducing his.

Our Net Income was \$7,080 above our budget of \$9,618.

For November of total income was \$87,706, our cost of goods was \$6,365, resulting in a gross profit of \$81,342. Our total expenses were \$64,644 resulting in a net income of \$16,698 which was \$7,080 higher than budget.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

In Your Service,



Paul M
Executive Director, ISO of SAA

CONTACT THE ISO

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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;
Eddie N; Karen S; Les J; Melissa W; Richard S;
Wayne K

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; 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

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.