

THE OUTER CIRCLE

Carrying the message of hope to the still-suffering sex addict since 1988

SERVICE WITH JOY

PLUS

- * Gratitude
- * Intimacy
- * Tradition Seven
- * Proportional Representation at the Conference





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.

March - April 2022

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FROM THE EDITOR

A spiritual epiphany

BY DON S.
THE OUTER CIRCLE
EDITOR

To begin finding a spiritual reality I can rely on, all the faith I need is the evidence that this program works for me, along with enough desperation to have an open mind and take suggestions.

Thank you to all who contributed to this month's *Outer Circle*. An editor can't have a better job than to read the heart-rending, thought-provoking, and inspiring contributions we get for *The Outer Circle*. I hope to get something from you soon!

In other news, we were reading from *Sex Addicts Anonymous* at my home group and, though I'd read the section many times, a couple sentences leapt off the page like I'd never read them before. This has not been uncommon in my recovery, maybe a combination of denial and "when the student is ready."

We were reading the section on Step Two. The first sentence that hit me was: "What is important is that we rely on a spiritual reality, or Higher Power, rather than on words" (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 27). Spiritual reality. Wow. That it is a loaded sentence—loaded with significance and with lots of room for contemplation.

But how does an addict—self-centered and frightened—become aware of, let alone rely on, a spiritual reality? Not a religious belief or moral dogma, but a spiritual reality. The answer is eloquently stated a couple paragraphs down: "And in time we discover that our faith grows not so much from a set of abstract beliefs, but from daily practical experiences of recovery and healing, as observed in others and in ourselves" (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 27). To begin finding a spiritual reality I can rely on, all the faith I need is the evidence that this program works for me, along with enough desperation to have an open mind and take suggestions. In my experience, this principle embodies what I've come to know as my Higher Power. The principle is simple, straightforward, all-inclusive, and loving.

Peace,

Don S.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Solution, fulfillment, and service

BY PAUL M.

*There are many
ways to fulfill a
life of service.*

“The steps are the spiritual solution to our addiction—leading not only to abstinence from our addictive sexual behaviors, but to a fulfilling life of service to our brothers and sisters in recovery and beyond” (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, pages 99-100).

There are a couple of important points in that quote. 1) The steps are the spiritual solution to our addiction. 2) They lead us to a fulfilling life of service.

For the first part, we know that the steps are the solution and that working them with a sponsor brings about our recovery. As I mentioned in my last article, we are working on a new meeting search for our website that will make it easier to find the next local or virtual meeting. One can filter by a specific type of meeting. Going to those meetings helps us find a sponsor who helps us work those steps. One can also reach out to the men's or women's lists through the ISO office for help in finding a sponsor. We also need sponsors for those who are incarcerated behind the walls of prisons. Just send an email to info@saa-recovery.org for help finding a sponsor for yourself or to sign up to be a sponsor for a prisoner or others.

Regarding the second part of that quote, there are many ways to fulfill a life of service. It can be on a one-to-one level by being a sponsor as mentioned above, at the group level by being of service as a group service representative (GSR) and bringing your group voice to the area assembly, as a delegate from your area to the ISO conference, or at an international level by serving on one of the many service committees of the ISO. All of these forms of service help reinforce our recovery. Go to saa-iso.org or the 2022 convention to find out more.

DEAR GRACE

Tradition One and “specialty” meetings

BY WOMEN'S
OUTREACH
COMMITTEE

Grace supports the existence of women-only meetings because we continue to hear stories of their success in carrying the message, the primary purpose that unites us all.

Dear Grace,

I thought Tradition One was all about Fellowship Unity. How do “specialty” meetings uphold this tradition without creating division?

Unity

Dear Unity,

Grace supports the existence of women-only meetings because we continue to hear stories of their success in carrying the message, the primary purpose that unites us all. Like this one:

Hello, my name is Evah, and I'm a sex addict. When I was first confronted with the statement, "You are a sex addict and you need a program," I was terrified. I was told by my marriage counselor that I needed women-only meetings. With my life on the line, I spent the first few weeks of my sobriety trying to find a women-only meeting that I could access. I live in a rural area, and there weren't any women-only meetings within a five-hour drive from me. I needed something that I could access over the phone or internet without triggering my compulsions.

I searched many different S-group fellowships until I found what I was looking for: women-only meetings that I could access over the phone. I called the meeting contact for the newcomers' meeting, and I found compassion and empathy immediately. I was told that I should try to go to a meeting a day for the first ninety days, and that I could start that very night! The telemeeting intergroup made this very doable. I was able to access two or three different women-only telemeetings a day very quickly. These meetings made my recovery possible.



Mixed meetings weren't an option for me. I would not have been able to practice rigorous honesty or to have vulnerability in a mixed meeting, not because of the men in attendance, but because of my own inner-circle behaviors and character defects. Now that I have over twenty months of sobriety and am about to work Step Twelve, I am able to give back to the SAA fellowship which gave me the tools to gain and maintain my sexual sobriety. I am the secretary of the Women's Outreach Committee, and I plan to start sponsoring soon. I am also planning on attending my first ISO convention this year as well as volunteering in the Women's Room. To be included in the fellowship of SAA, I needed a specific set of rooms, and

within those walls, I found hope, freedom, and safety. Because of the diversity of the communities within SAA, I can serve the still-suffering addict, maintain my sexual sobriety, and enjoy the loving embrace of my Higher Power.

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.*

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."



Holiday Gratitude

BY BILL I.

It's the Holiday Season and I'm flying across the country to be with my family. That is just one of the many reasons for which I am grateful to SAA and recovery.

When I came into the program I was “somewhat connected” to my family, just as I was “somewhat connected” to friends and work colleagues. That means that I really wasn't connected to them in a deep, relaxed, caring manner.

Before the program, my connection with people was quite superficial, brusque, and self-centered; after coming into SAA, it is deeper, richer, and more sincere. It is one which allows and encourages me to articulate and feel my happiness, fears, successes, hopes and wishes, and to hear theirs in return. That is important to me because now I am a more reliable and honest person. I am leading a life that is spiritually, emotionally, and physically healthier.

Many people have helped me get to this point. Some of those folks are known to me, some are not. Some are still in my life; many, unfortunately and not surprisingly, are not. I am eternally grateful to all (well, almost all) of them and try to express that gratitude on a regular basis to them, in-person when possible, otherwise through prayer.

When I am reminded of those people with whom I am not connected to today, I think of a cute movie from roughly twenty years ago called *Pay It Forward*.

The premise of that film was that we get to where we are in life because of many people who were in our past but are not in our present and likely won't be in our future.

There is a young boy who teaches his alcoholic mother and physically—and emotionally—scarred teacher that all those people who have crossed our path helped us get to where we are, that we have many blessings in our lives and thus, those people deserve our gratitude. We can do so even when we can't express it directly to them by "paying it forward." That is, be generous and appreciative to those who are in our lives today and are yet to come, whether directly or indirectly.

It is in part because of this concept that I have chosen to contribute to SAA's Lifeline Partners. The amount I contribute is a fraction of what I wasted when I was active in my addiction, yet it is what I choose to do today. The regular monthly charge to my credit card is an easy and painless way to contribute. It's a built-in expense just like my cellphone and utility bills. It also has the added

benefit of being a reliable, predictable source of funds for the ISO. Having been involved in ISO activities (and having run my own business), I appreciate that a stable, predictable cash flow allows an organization to plan and execute its mission more effectively. I think of it as a Ninth-Step amends, and that's important to me today.

Though this message will not reach you in time for 2021, I can look forward and wish you a Happy 2022 Holidays and, more importantly, a sober day. ©

Before the program, my connection with people was quite superficial, brusque, and self-centered; after coming into SAA, it is deeper, richer, and more sincere. It is one which allows and encourages me to articulate and feel my happiness, fears, successes, hopes and wishes, and to hear theirs in return.

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.



Service with a Side of Joy

Writing to prisoners to guide them through the Twelve Steps may provide an abundance of joy.

BY TOM B.

A few years ago, I walked through the door of my first SAA meeting. I had no idea what to expect, but I did know that I needed help. People in the meeting greeted me with smiles and talked to me with kindness. I was comforted to know that I had found a place that was accepting, and that it might also offer hope for me to find a solution to my addiction. I just wanted to stop what I was doing—it was destroying my life.

Fast forward a few months, and I had gained a number of program friends who became part of my calling network. One man in particular, John O., helped me with Steps Two and Three, and our friendship grew. Over time as he shared, I learned he had a legal issue. I remembered his help for me in my step work, and in gratitude I wanted to learn what I could to help him with his journey.

Around this same time the ISO reached out to groups in our state to see if anyone could provide support for the development of meetings at a local prison. Inmates there had contacted the ISO for assistance. Our local group responded, and I joined the formation team that founded two groups to hold meetings at two different prison units. I continue this same kind of formation work through my involvement on the Prisoner Outreach Committee (POC), working with prisons and special commitment centers around the country.

I learned from the inmates what helped them the most with their situations and entry into prison, and used that knowledge to help shape my assistance for John O. as he began his entry process. I also learned more about the laws, the courts, legal hearings, and other related issues. I realized that I myself was at risk in my addiction if I had continued down the path I was on. I took this as a sign from my Higher Power that I should help John O. just as he had helped me, and that both of us could help others who are on their own journey into prisons, doing their time, and finally coming back home to their families.

Through my work with the POC, I have learned just how important it is to offer SAA to inmates. Through the writing program, I have also taken on sponsees in prisons across the US. In working with my sponsees, I have found that all of them want what we have—the solution to our addiction. They want the message, support, and a program that will help them change their lives. One of the things I most often hear is that they don't want to fall back into what they were doing after they go home, because for many of them those activities brought them to prison in the first place. Our program works on attraction and not promotion, but once there is a request, that opens the door to conversations, options, and solutions.

There are some joyous times I get to ex-

perience in my service work with prisoners. These examples from my own experience help show how beneficial SAA can be to those who seek it:

1. One of my sponsees was getting ready to be released from prison in another state. However, he was required to meet with two psychologists to determine if he should be civilly committed following his release. Civil commitment is when the state says they have an interest in keeping the inmate confined to a facility even after their release in order to require them to go through treatment. The rules around this are often fluid depending on the state. Many people who enter civil commitment have a murky future where their eventual release may not be guaranteed any time soon. Because my sponsee let these psychologists know about his work in SAA, they indicated that was a good thing and his interviews were successful. He was able to be released to society, near his children, and could start rebuilding his life. When I got the email from him noting he was to be released and wouldn't have to be civilly committed, I was overcome with joy for him and his family.
2. I have been able to take on sponsees that are in some of the meetings I attend in local prisons. One of my sponsees started coming to the SAA program because he did not want to repeat the same patterns that had

brought him back to prison twice already. As I worked with him, his release date was coming up. Because of his work focusing on twelve-step groups including SAA, he was accepted into the sober living house he wanted, and did not have any issues preventing his release. This man never wants to go to prison again, and I am very happy that I could be a part of his journey to a new life of sobriety.

3. A sponsee of mine in another state was accepted into that state's treatment program following his diligence in pursuing options that would help him in recovery. We worked together on a proposal to bring SAA meetings to his unit. Not only has he been through the Twelve Steps working with me as his sponsor, but he has helped other men with their twelve-step work on the inside, even before a meeting could be established. Our diligence brought good attention to this need, and the state now has the proposal in the right hands. We continue to be hopeful, and pursue each new contact he finds. To know that the work we have been doing has helped the state determine he should enter the treatment program is extremely satisfying. This sets him on the right path for his eventual release with a hope to avoid any issue of civil commitment.

In all of my service work through the POC, the one thing that has been a constant for me is the joy that I experience when I see how our work comes

to fruition. Not only am I able to help someone on the inside, but I am also indirectly helping their families, friends, and the community they want to go home to. We all benefit from the good that SAA can do in our lives. I do this service work in honor of my friend John O. who has now become my co-sponsor and one of the best friends I have ever had in my life. Our friendship has grown even stronger during the time while he has been in prison, and I am grateful for all of the support and encouragement he gives me in my service work with prisoners.

Through my service on the POC, and most especially directly with the prisoners, I have developed a stronger connection with the program and my recovery. I find I am happiest when I am living my life in sobriety, and I find the most joy in service through Step Twelve. My experience suggests such activities as carrying the message of SAA to other sex addicts in prison provides amazing experiences with a side of joy. ©

» 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



BY ISO CONFERENCE NOMINATING COMMITTEE

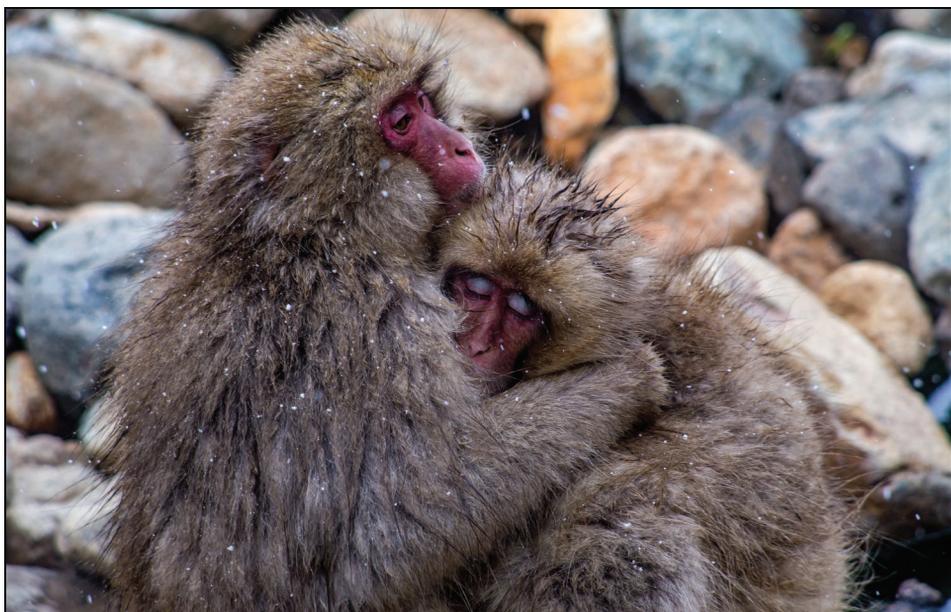
As we begin a new service year, the ISO Conference Nominating Committee (Nom-Com) wishes to remind members of the fellowship of the many service opportunities available within the ISO. Trusted servants are needed at multiple levels.

The NomCom is charged with the responsibility of bringing to the Conference annual meeting in October nominees to fill open positions on the Board of Trustees, Literature Committee, Conference Steering Committee, Conference Area Coordinating Committee, and Conference Nominating Committee. From a practical standpoint, this means that each year, the NomCom needs to identify between fifteen and twenty-five members of the fellowship who meet the guidelines for international service and who are willing and able to serve the fellowship in one of these important roles.

Members interested in being considered for possible nomination should submit a service résumé. The form for that purpose may be found on the service website (saa-iso.org) under “International Service” on the left-hand menu. The Guidelines for International Service may also be found on that page.

All new or updated service résumés submitted each year are placed in a raffle. The winner receives free registration for the 2023 SAA International Convention.

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 (info@saa-recovery.org). ©



Moving from abstinence, to anorexia, to intimacy

BY JOE R.

In 1998 I was locked up for my sexual acting-out behaviors for good reason. In 2001 sitting in prison, I found SAA and it was God-sent. I had already decided to be abstinent with others which, for a bisexual man in prison with many willing people, was not easy. But I found that being abstinent with myself would be much harder.

It took me until 2014 to be able to be abstinent with myself, and I became sexually anorexic. For seven years I was living a life of no sex at all. I was fine with that, but I was still locked up, just not in prison. Prison was better.

After seven years of being sexually anorexic I met someone and we started a relationship. I was looking for someone I could be close to and share my life with. He kept asking for a sexual relationship while I was comfortable with a platonic friendship. I was afraid of what a sexual relationship might do to me. How would I react after so long with no sex? I explained my fears to my friend. He seemed to understand, but he still wanted a sexual

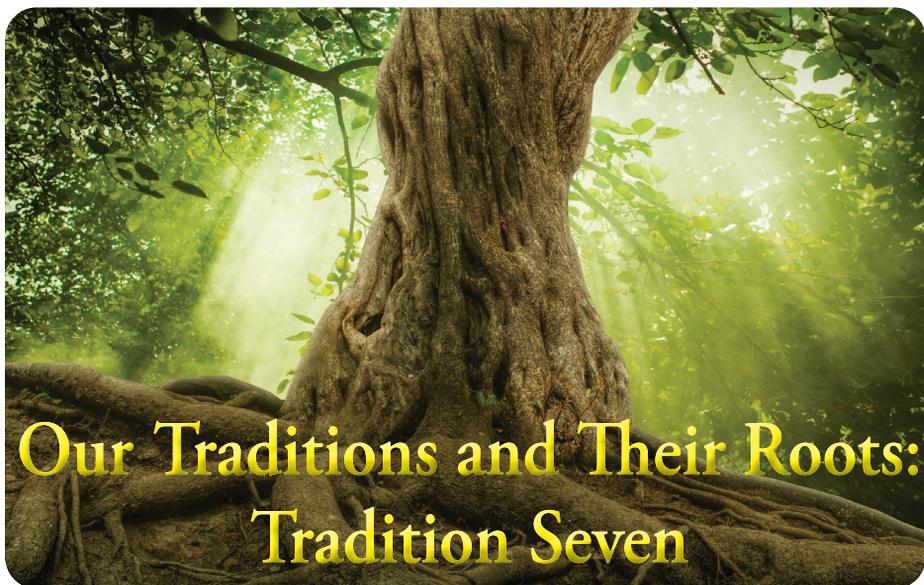
relationship. My need for closeness with someone left me a little susceptible, and I agreed to a sexual relationship.

After we started being physical with each other, I found my fears were baseless. I didn't become obsessed with sex and I didn't crave it. I was more concerned with closeness than sex, which was a very new and big eye-opener for me. It turns out that this relationship didn't last and wasn't what I thought it was. My partner was unfaithful to me and was having sex with many others that I didn't know about until much later. Nonetheless, I have to thank him because I learned I can now have a sexual relationship. My first priority, though, is to have a real friendship. That friendship and trust can lead to a physical relationship. I don't have to fear sex any longer nor do I have to have sex to fill a need. I only need a loving relationship. ©

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).



Our Traditions and Their Roots: Tradition Seven

“Every SAA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.”

Editor’s Note: This is the eighth 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

The A.A. Preamble puts it: “There are no dues or fees for A.A. membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions.” In other words, we pay our own way, and we don’t take handouts. This is often the first tradition we learn, hearing it in our meetings when the basket goes around. Like all the Traditions, this one was born of trial and error (usually lots of error).

There’s a sort-of dovetailing between Tradition Seven and Step Twelve. For our group or SAA as a whole to function, we are all called upon to be of service with both our money and our time. Somebody needs to open the meeting space, chair the meeting, and serve as group treasurer, literature person, or greeter.

“As addicts, we were often all too ready to shirk responsibility and allow others to take care of us, clean up our messes, and attend to the necessities of life. In the program we learn instead to be accountable for ourselves and our recovery” (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 87).

Our core text, *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, expands on the dovetailing between Step Twelve and Tradition Seven: “Some of us have a natural tendency to sit back and let others do all the work; others are only too willing to take on service positions and hold them indefinitely. Although this might seem to create a perfect balance between those who take over and those who sit back, in actuality such a situation works against becoming self-supporting.... We are fully self-supporting when we all take ownership of our commons welfare, secure in the knowledge that even if certain members leave, the group will be strong enough to continue to carry its message” (pages 88-89).

A practice I try to maintain is to always have a service position at one of my meetings, but only that one, so others have an opportunity to contribute as well.

Before going deeper, a general note on the Twelve Traditions. SAA adopted and adapted these from the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous. Like much of the core concepts and literature in A.A., the Twelve Traditions were penned by A.A. co-founder Bill W. However, he states:

“In reality I had not been the author of the Traditions at all. I had merely put them on paper in such a way as to mirror principles which had already been developed in A.A. group experience. A.A.’s General Headquarters, its Trustees, and its staff had actually made the formulation of these vital principles

possible. Had there been no Headquarters to bring our group problems into focus, the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous could never have been written” (*Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*, page 204).

Regarding Tradition Seven, Bill W. wrote, “Probably no A.A. Tradition had the labor pains this one did” (*Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions*, page 160).

The best way I can think of to tell the story of this Tradition is to draw as much on the words of Bill W. as possible. All italicized excerpts in this next section are from *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*, pages 110-114.

Would A.A.’s brand of spirituality mix with any money at all? Or, on the other hand, should we have a lot of money, the better to do good works? One end of the continuum argued: We don’t need it. We can meet in homes ... Why do we need books and offices and world services? One alcoholic carries the message to another. The other end argued: Not only do we need essential services,... [w]e need hospitals, paid therapists, traveling lecturers, rehabilitation centers...

After a while we awoke to the pleasant fact that ... [w]hen we got rid of our grandiose ideas about hospitals [and] research ... not much of a bill was left to pay. Other enterprises needed large sums, but we did not. A big factor in our thinking at the time was the philosophy of St. Francis of Assisi.... Not only would we have the least possible service organization; we would use the least possible money. For us this does not mean no money at all. But*

it does mean the least possible money to do the job well.

In those early days, Bill and his wife, Lois, were living like paupers in a small room in the local A.A. clubhouse. The book then relates three temptations that came to the young organization regarding their new-found philosophy. The first temptation was when John D. Rockefeller invited a small core of "old-timers" to a dinner along with a number of prominent (and wealthy) people.

Ideas of comfortable and well-paid jobs, chains of A.A. hospitals, and tons of free literature ... seized our imagination. But Mr. Rockefeller had other ideas. He said, "I think money will spoil this." ... St. Francis had given us the idea, but John D. wisely forced us to live up to it.

The second temptation veered to the other extreme. We got so scared of money that we went tightwad, half-refusing to support A.A.'s simple but essential ... services, without which we would fail to function and grow. Even now we haven't quite surmounted this one. We still drag our heels when the hat is passed to support local Intergroup offices and the General Headquarters. And this holding back is not for lacking of folding money, either... When sober and working ... [o]ur earning power as individuals may actually be double the average... Nevertheless, we still balk a bit when it comes to paying A.A.'s very reasonable service bills... There is not the slightest danger that A.A. is ever going to get too rich from the voluntary contributions of its own members!

*Our third temptation was the greatest peril of all three. One night the Trustees of our Foundation** were having their quarterly meeting. The agenda included a crucial question: A certain lady had died and ... left to Alcoholics Anonymous, in trust with the Foundation, a sum of \$10,000. (Adjusted for inflation it would now be >\$100,000.)*

What a debate we had on that one! The Foundation was really hard up then; the groups were not sending in enough money for the support of the office; we had been tossing in all the book income, [but] the reserve fund was melting like snow in springtime.

Then came the opposition. They pointed out that the Board already knew of a total of half a million dollars set aside for A.A. in wills of people still alive. (>\$5M today). Heaven only knew how much we had not heard about. If outside donations were not declined, not absolutely cut off, the [GSO] would become immensely rich. Moreover, at the slightest intimation to the general public ... that we needed money, we could become immensely rich. Compared to this prospect, the \$10,000 under consideration was not much, but like the alcoholic's first drink, it would, if taken, inevitably set up a disastrous chain reaction.

Then our Trustees wrote a bright page of A.A. history. They declared for the principle that A.A. must always stay poor. Reasonable running expenses plus a prudent reserve would henceforth be the [GSO's] financial policy. Regardless of current needs, the Trustees officially declined that \$10,000 and adopted a formal, airtight resolution that all such future gifts would be similarly declined.

When the newspapers got hold of these facts, there was a profound reaction. To people familiar with endless drives for charitable funds, A.A. presented a strange and refreshing spectacle. Approving editorials ... generated a ... wave of confidence in the integrity of Alcoholics Anonymous. They pointed out that the irresponsible had become responsible.

I have a soft spot in my heart for the ISO's project to create core pieces of our literature in other languages. To me, that's where spirituality and money meet our primary purpose.

The process of writing this article inspired me to re-up as a LifeLinePartner. I'm not sure, but I think LifeLinePartners is unique to SAA. LifeLinePartners is not about getting rich, but about having a predictable income so that the ISO can actually plan ahead.

I'm no saint, and when the basket is going around, I can balk, especially now that I am on a fixed income. When I do balk, two questions come to mind:

1. How much would it cost if I were still practicing my addiction?
2. What is this new way of life worth to me?

*Author's note: These guys weren't secular or even religious, but they were, especially Bill W., open-minded, and they studied everything they could that might shed light on their purposes. Bill W. even carried on a correspondence with Carl Jung.

**The Foundation is now the General Service Office (GSO).

Next issue: Tradition Eight. ©

S — Stop

Be still and silent. Recognize automatic and compulsive reacting.

See urges not as needs but dysfunctional thoughts.

O — Observe

Observe the moment and tension in my mind and in my body. Be fully aware of the sense of urgency, without mistaking it for reality.

B — Breathe

Breathing in, I calm my body. Breathing out, I calm my mind.

E — Explore with curiosity.

What do I get from this behavior? What has this addictive urge done for me? Pay close attention to how I will feel if I persist in acting out. What is a better outcome?

R — Respond with self-compassion.

Take responsibility. Exercise my "free won't," and let it go.

Re-connect to the community.

DEAR WILL

Flexible definitions of abstinence

BY WILL

*Our program
allows each
individual the
dignity, respect,
and freedom
to define for
themselves which
behaviors they
consider to be
“acting out.”*

Dear Will –

I am new to Sex Addicts Anonymous having “transferred” from another “S” fellowship. While I have found this transition to be a positive one for my recovery, I am somewhat struggling with some of the flexibility in the SAA program. I am having difficulty with defining my abstinence using the three circles as I was used to a more structured definition of abstinence from my other program. Can you help me with this?

**Sincerely,
Defining Abstinence**

Dear Defining Abstinence –

For most of us in recovery, defining sexual sobriety can be daunting. Our addiction relied on lies, minimization, vague boundaries, and self-deceit to survive. Defining sobriety, especially in SAA, requires a level of introspection and self-honesty that, for many of us, is new. It takes time and support to develop. Please know that defining your abstinence boundaries is a process and not an event. As you continue to work the program and work the Steps with a sponsor, more will be revealed, and you will have ongoing opportunities to understand what abstinence means for you and needs to be for you.

As you may have read, SAA does not have a universal definition of abstinence, yet we do describe what might make a behavior addictive or worth considering on that list. Our program allows each individual the dignity, respect, and freedom to define for themselves which behaviors they consider to be “acting out.” There is a tool called the three circles that has helped many understand how to define their sexual sobriety. You can learn more about this tool in our literature. The freedom to define

our own abstinence should not be taken lightly or as an opportunity to simply move acting-out behaviors with which we have difficulty into the “middle circle” to allow us to claim sobriety. This freedom to define our own abstinence (inner circle) behaviors is balanced by responsibility.

Defining your own abstinence relies on the responsibility to be rigorously honest about your acting-out behavior. For many of us sex addicts, this level of self-honesty can be elusive. I have found it helpful to keep in mind that as we progress in our steps, our ability to be honest about our acting-out behaviors, and, just as important, accurate about them, grows. My definition of my acting-out or inner-circle behaviors has evolved over time, sometimes requiring the moving of behaviors from my middle to inner circle, but more often requiring clarifying definitions of those behaviors. I had to look at behaviors in context of situations, frequency, intensity, condition, and consequence. I even had to have the same behavior (i.e., sex with my partner) defined in all three circles with a deepening understanding of how a behavior can be healthy in some contexts yet slippery or a relapse in another.

Having been imprisoned by my sex addiction, the freedom of defining my own sobriety was a little scary at first. Fortunately, we cannot and do not

have to come up with our definitions of abstinence on our own. *Sex Addicts Anonymous* (The Green Book) talks first about meetings, then sponsorship, and then defining abstinence. This is for a reason. We all deserve the support and guidance of a sponsor when defining our sobriety. It is helpful to learn from others in the program how they navigated this process in their own recovery. While acting out behaviors may be different for various members, we can learn from one another how to understand our behaviors and the wisdom of the fellowship has shown that this is done best with the support of our brothers and sisters and others in recovery.

I have found it helpful to visit some of the guidance and questions found in *Sex Addicts Anonymous* (chapter 2, “Defining Abstinence”) on this subject when considering which behaviors I should include when defining my abstinence. I hope you find them helpful.

We carefully examine behaviors which we feel powerless to stop and which lead to feelings of demoralization or other negative consequences:

1. *Do we find ourselves repeating behaviors we don't want to?*
2. *Does a behavior make us want to do something that we know is harmful to ourselves and others?*
3. *Does it violate the rights of others or go against their will or permission?*

© Continued on page 25...

STORIES OF SERVICE

The Concept of Service

BY ANONYMOUS

Service does not have to be grand and noticeable.

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

The concept of service is fundamental to the SAA twelve-step program of recovery. It grows out of two quintessential features of the program—getting out of self and helping others.

Specifically in Step Four, we learn that selfishness—self-centeredness—is the root of our trouble, and that preoccupation with our own wants and opinions stands as the major causative factor in our addiction. From Step Twelve, we learn that, as the result of working the steps, we try to carry the SAA message of recovery to other addicts and to practice program principles in every aspect of our lives. As a result, service becomes a major focus of our daily program—both within the SAA fellowship and in every aspect of our lives beyond the program.

As noted in *Sex Addicts Anonymous* on page 61, “What we gain in this program is a blueprint for full and successful living whatever may come”—not just abstinence from addictive behavior.

The implication of getting out of self immediately confronts us with the idea that we should be continually looking for the needs and best interests of others. Therein lies dozens of opportunities for service, which we come to appreciate not only as opportunities but also as obligations in grateful response to what our Higher Power has given us.

Service does not have to be grand and noticeable. In fact, engaging in highly visible service may be an expression of pride rather than true selfless service! But service done anonymously and without fanfare proves to be the most sensitive, the most caring, and, as a result, the most gratifying. Something as simple

as a phone call to a struggling sister or brother or showing up a few minutes early to a meeting to arrange chairs, make the coffee, put out literature, or welcome newcomers can be as helpful to a group as any other act of service we could do.

Long-term maintenance of a healthy twelve-step group requires a lot of effort, ideally as a team effort by multiple individuals. Opportunities for service abound. When the many tasks are spread over many members, the result is a vibrant fellowship, a caring fellowship, and a fellowship attractive to newcomers and those who are still struggling.

Service opportunities also abound within the ISO, ranging from participation in one of the new ISO areas, to joining an ISO focus committee, to participating on one of the ISO Conference committees—Conference Steering Committee, Area Coordinating Committee, or Conference Nominating Committee—or serving on the ISO Board of Trustees or ISO Literature Committee.

Active service at any level supports the fellowship, as it also serves to buttress our own recovery.

Ode to a Sponsor

You agreed to provide help
Teaching me what you learned.
You helped see my shortcomings
Showing me you were so concerned.

You helped me work the Steps,
So carefully discussing each one.
I am grateful that you really listened
My true healing had begun!

You stayed sober as an example,
Reminded me of the many gifts that result.
Gave me so much hope
Turned my inner child into an adult.

On our anniversary working together,
I am happy to be part of this event.
A life well lived,
Time in recovery well spent.

Your Sponsee,
Paul P.

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."

FROM THE BOARD

The future of the fellowship

BY BOB L.
BOARD CHAIR

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

Recent developments within SAA signal the way toward the future of the fellowship. You may remember that one of the motions passed at the Conference last October was for the Board to provide the means of electronic/video attendance by delegates. An updated analysis of having a hybrid Conference reveals that it would cost close to, if not more than, \$30,000. Some people have suggested various ways of reducing the cost, but be assured that we have fully vetted the elements required to produce a functional hybrid Conference and the figure quoted above is accurate. There was and is legitimate concern among the Board about how to manage the increase in costs and its impact on outreach efforts to the addict who still suffers.

Now that 2021 has ended and the books are closed, we can report to you that the fellowship's finances as of December 31 were more favorable than anticipated. This was the result of you, the individual member of the fellowship, being generous with your donations throughout the year, for which we are very grateful. Further, because of the funding level as of the end of the year, the Board has set aside \$30,000 in a separate account, which can fund a hybrid Conference if all goes well during the year. We are hopeful that our finances remain in good shape until the Conference, and that we will be able to implement the wishes of the Conference this coming October.

Another initiative the Board has undertaken is establishing new strategic goals for the development of the fellowship over the next several years. The strategic goals have not been reset for several years, even as the world around us continues to change. The process of establishing strategic goals is a complex one, requiring the investment of many hours

FROM THE BOARD

on the part of each Board trustee, but it is a vital undertaking to chart a course to the future for the entire fellowship. The Board will continue to work on this effort over the next few months, and when completed we will share the results with the fellowship at large.

Implementing the goals is another matter. Doing the work necessary to carry out the goals is likely to take hundreds if not thousands of hours. Without your help, in the form of willingness to give some of your time to working on the goals through various committees and work groups, the goals may not be met. As the goals are finalized, we will be appealing to all members of the fellowship to do service, so that SAA can enhance its efforts to carry the message of recovery to addicts here and abroad, our primary purpose. Without your help the SAA fellowship cannot be to sex addiction what AA is to alcoholics.

Approved Board Actions

December

- Approved budget for 2022

© ...continued from page 21.

4. *Do we find ourselves engaging in these behaviors in times of anxiety and stress, or when dealing with unpleasant situations and emotions?*
5. *Are their emotional causes or consequences of our behavior?*
6. *Do we notice unpleasant feelings such as anger, shame, or depression before we do them?*
7. *Do we feel shameful, depressed, remorseful, or lonely afterwards?*
8. *Are there other negative consequences, potential or actual? Do we feel uncomfortable with the amount of money we spend on these behaviors? Do we risk our health, relationships, families or jobs?*

I have found that I am best supported in my pursuit of sobriety and recovery when my circles are established with honesty and the support of my sponsor and others in recovery. I have also found that when my circles are based on rigorous honesty and answers to the questions above, I am not left feeling unsure, insecure, or defensive about what is in my circles. I feel a sense of honesty, acceptance, and surrender – the basis for my sobriety and my recovery.

In Recovery,

Will

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

OPINION

The Case for Ending “Proportional Representation” By Carol Ann M.

In his 1959 article “Leadership in AA: Ever A Vital Need,” Bill W. explained that planning is a necessary yet imperfect task. He also advised reconsideration of our plans as we gain experience. Bill wrote,

“If an idea looks like a good bet, we try it on – experimentally when that is possible. Later we revalue the situation and ask whether our estimate is working out.” (Twelve Concepts for World Service, page 41)

With Bill’s wisdom—gained through experience—in mind, it is time to revalue the idea of “proportional representation” in Conference voting and consider whether we might have made a mistake.

What is “Proportional Representation”?

Proportional representation is a political voting process used in legislative bodies like the US House of Representatives, but it is not typically found in Twelve Step fellowships like SAA—or even in Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). It got its start in the ISO years ago as the transition from regions to an area-based structure began. Members of the 2012 Conference Charter Committee (CCC) worried that, as the number of delegates naturally decreased, the Board, LitCom, and office might vote as a bloc in an authoritarian way if area delegates were less than a super-majority. A three-person work group assigned to create changes to the charter, known as the Conference Charter Content Work Group, were the first to propose language endorsing what is now known as “proportional representation” in September 2012.

As applied to the ISO, proportional representation involved balancing the ratio of area delegates to Board, LitCom and staff members. However, this balance would be achieved by removing votes from sitting ISO Board, LitCom and office staff by the Conference as the meeting was occurring in real time.

“Proportional representation” is temptingly similar to AA’s Concept IV practice of allowing broad classifications or groups of world servants (e.g., Board, LitCom, or office staff) to be pre-determined “in reasonable proportion to the responsibility that each must discharge.” Reasonable proportion of responsibility refers to determining the number of voting members from each classification or group in advance of the General Service Conference. AA’s language in Concept IV has never been used to justify the delegates (or anyone else) disenfranchising duly elected trusted world servants while the General Service Conference was underway.

What is the problem with “Proportional Representation”?

Members have been bickering about it from the start. Language supporting proportional representation was successfully added to Section II of the ISO Charter—where it remains today. Then in 2016, a CSC bylaws motion limiting Board, LitCom and office staff votes was put forward and failed, and another less specific, so-called “spiritual” motion passed. That motion was 2016-D0006 “Resolution to Affirm the Voice of the Fellowship.”

Motion 2016-D0006 stated that “delegates elected by area assemblies should at all times make up

OPINION

at least two-thirds of the delegates voting at any meeting of the Conference.” This meant calculating the number of area delegates, Board, LitCom and office staff in attendance at each Conference, and determining whether the number of delegates exceeded $\frac{2}{3}$ of the total. If too few area delegates attended, the required $\frac{2}{3}$ supermajority would be attained by asking a number of Board, LitCom and office staff not to vote. The background of motion 2016-D0006 describes how the abstentions would be requested:

“In response to this resolution, the ex officio delegates from the ISO Board of Trustees, the ISO Literature Committee, and the ISO staff would be obliged to self-regulate their participation in the meeting of the Conference rather than being subjected to the regulatory control of a Bylaws amendment.”

Interestingly, a search of the ISO Bylaws for the “regulatory control” threatened reveals: a) it does not exist, and b) Article III, Section 1 allows all three service groups to vote without any mention of being “obliged to self-regulate.”

Language validating proportional balancing was also added to the proposed SAA Concept Four in 2020—and was removed in 2021 by the CSC Concepts Subcommittee due to negative fellowship feedback.

Eventually, the debate reached a crescendo at the 2021 ISO Conference when a call came from the floor to implement proportional representation. The Conference chair complied, asking members of the Board, LitCom and office to voluntarily abstain from voting—which some did. The motion that immediately followed was 2021-D006 “Guidelines for International Service.” That motion failed.

What must be openly acknowledged now is that the mythical “loss of the voice of the fellowship” was never actually a problem, and that “proportional representation” has now created destructive and quite predictable problems of its own—ones which Bill W warned us about decades ago. Finally, let’s pause to consider ceasing all efforts at disenfranchising committed, hardworking trusted servants who already attend the annual Conference and put 100% of our efforts into increasing the number of new area delegates at the annual Conference!

So, what is the “voice of the fellowship”?

In the regional system, it was easier to see that the “voice of the fellowship” was expressed collectively by the delegates. At that time, delegates were sent by groups directly to the ISO Conference where they literally spoke!

With the advent of area representation, the fellowship is heard less directly. Each member group elects a Group Service Representative (GSR) who attends the area assembly, and then the area assembly elects an area delegate. The “voice of the fellowship” is carried from the groups by GSRs to area assemblies. It is carried further by the area delegates to the ISO annual Conference. The more delegates, the better!

Nothing has been lost in the transition from regions to areas. Per the ISO bylaws, the votes of the delegates, the Board, LitCom and ISO office staff at the ISO international Conference was, and still is, the ultimate expression of group conscience in SAA.

ISO NEWS

Why Do Board, LitCom and Staff Members Get a Vote at Conference?

They get to vote because the 1990 Conference said they do in the ISO Bylaws (Article III, Section 1). This is not some arcane, technical matter that causes some loss of the “voice of the fellowship.” Quite the opposite. The ISO bylaws were approved, ratified, and have been amended by numerous ISO conferences for more than thirty years!

Further, all members of the Board, LitCom and the ISO office staff can trace their elected service or special work status back to member groups through one or another ISO international Conference. In essence, the same “voice” that elected GSRs, and elected regional or area delegates, also elected Board and LitCom members, and has specifically empowered the Board to hire staff. The dedicated members of these ISO service groups are in contact with members of the fellowship throughout the service year. And all are directly responsible to those they serve—the member groups of the ISO.

In fact, in his explanation of Concept IV in the Twelve Concepts of Word Service, Bill W. wrote: *“Every year, a few Delegates will question the ‘right’ of the corporate directors, staffs and even the Trustees to vote in Conference.... To my view, it is vital that we preserve this traditional “Right of Participation” in the face of every tendency to whittle it down that we should here bring some of our pioneering experience to bear upon the problem.”* (Twelve Concepts for World Service, page 18)

Then What’s the Problem?

There is no problem. Advocates of proportional representation believed the Board, LitCom and/or the office would vote as a bloc against the interests of the delegates. Yet Bill W dismissed similar concerns from his day by observing,

“It is also noteworthy that in actual practice our Trustees and Headquarters people have never yet voted in a ‘bloc.’ Their differences of opinion among themselves are nearly always as sharp and considerable as those to be found among the Delegates themselves.” (Twelve Concepts for World Service, page 21)

Recommended Solutions

First, we can ask the Conference Steering Committee (CSC) to redirect any energy formerly spent on depriving our fellows of the “Right of Participation” and devote it towards increasing area delegate attendance at the ISO Conference.

Second, we can thank those who actively engaged with the CSC Concepts Subcommittee to establish full “Right of Participation” in proposed SAA Concept Four!

Finally, we can urge our GSRs to remove “proportional representation” language from all other ISO documents – particularly Section II of the ISO Charter.

Financial Summary

Our total SAA Green Book sales were above our estimate of \$8,300 by \$7,047 in January. Our HCI sales (December’s numbers, a month behind) were \$6,672 higher than budgeted. Findaway audio sales were \$27 below our budget of \$300. For the year we are 184.91% of our estimated sales.

Our book *Voices of Recovery* sales for January were \$56 lower than our budget of \$2,400 for

ISO NEWS

January. The ISO sales were \$71 below budget while the HCI sales were \$17 higher than budget. For the year we are an average of 98.5% of our estimated sales.

Our pamphlet and booklet sales were above our estimate of \$2,200 by \$261 in January. For the year we are at 111.86% of our estimated sales.

Our plastic chips sales were above our estimate of \$1,200 by \$235 in January. For the year we are at 119.56% of our estimated sales.

Our bronze medallion sales were below our estimate of \$2,100 by \$437 in January. For the year we are at 79.18% of our estimated sales.

Our total sales for January were above our estimate of \$16,355 by \$6,963 in January. For the year we are at 142.57% of our estimated sales.

Individual donations were below our estimate of \$41,000 by \$1,466 in January. For the year we are at 96.43% of our estimated individual donations. The general donations were above our budget by \$3,521 and the Lifeline Partners amount was \$6,018 below budget of \$29,000. Our goal is \$50,000 per month.

Group donations were above our estimate of \$9,600 by \$2,325 in January. For the year we are at 124.22% of our estimated group donations. Group LifeLine Partners are \$674 below above our budget of \$2,800 and general donations for groups were \$2,624 above our budgeted estimate.

Our total donations were \$859 above the budgeted amount of \$58,688. For the year we are at 101.7% of our estimated donations.

Our product inventory is valued at \$55,634.

Our operational reserve is fully funded at \$179,585. Our estimated three-month reserve is \$175,691.

Our total expenses were \$24,848 lower than our budget of \$68,680. This is mainly from accrual of the first pay period being paid in December.

Wages & Benefits were -\$29,126 below the budget of \$47,731. This is mainly from accruing the January 01-15 pay period wages in December that was paid in January. This resulted in only one pay period in January, while there will be three next December.

Our Net Income was \$30,942 above our budget of -\$5,824.

For January of total income was \$77,111, our cost of goods was \$8,160, resulting in a gross profit of \$68,950. Our total expenses were \$43,832 resulting in a net income of \$25,118 which was \$30,942 higher than budget.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

In Your Service,



Paul M.

Executive Director

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.

