Helpful perspectives from women who've "been there, done that"

Each time I walk into an SAA meeting, I scan the room for women. Not for the reasons I may have done the same thing as a sex addict who's not in recovery, but because I now realize how much I need recovering female sex addicts for my own recovery. Now that I have three and a half years away from my bottom line, exhibitionism, I am farther out of the cloud that kept me from seeing that women hurt too.

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Part of the reason that I selected women to abuse through my indecent exposure is that I saw them as the enemy. In my distorted thinking, women were present on the earth only to hurt me by arousing me through their attire and flirtations, only to deny me when I came to the point of wanting intimate contact. I could not understand how they could exhibit their bodies and flaunt their sexuality unless they wanted something physical from me.

Today, I can see that the way some women dress and interact with men are products of a male dominated society. I have heard the stories of women who searched as I did for the next sexual partner the way a gaunt vampire searches for blood in the night. The women in recovery have taught me that they and I are the same. We are sex addicts, and we hurt as we try to run from the pain of rejection and self loathing.

As I step forward into recovery, I am able to see women in a more positive and realistic light, but I also realize that inside that meeting place is the only place where I can see them for now. The meeting room is my classroom. Our society has more women in it that it has men, and I use that classroom to learn how to properly interact with them in that society.

In the rooms where we meet, women feel free to express their inner hearts so addicts like me can see how genuine and how similar their pain is. I can see how I only increased that pain by using them as sexual objects and denying their humanity as an active addict.

The women in recovery know what to look for in an active sex addict, and have no problem with pulling my covers if I slip back into my old behaviors. They have "been there, done that." They can see what is inside me before I can see it myself and I learn from that. Also in that room are my fellow addicts, male and fe-
male who can see that which I cannot see. They too, have no problem pulling my covers at the slightest sign that I am acting or thinking improperly.

Why is all this important? Because my recovery is threatened each and every time I enter a mixed meeting and find only men. I am glad there are stag meetings for men and women who do not need that safe learning zone of the mixed meeting, but I’m not there yet. To go into a stag meeting for me is to deny the need to learn in a constructive and safe environment how to interact with women as people, not as objects. You might well imagine the joy I feel when I see women in the room, dealing with their addiction, and at the same time, helping me to better deal with my own.

I can only guess how much courage it must take for a women to reach the door and see a dozen known, admitted sex addicts and still have the courage to come in. But I know how much I thank my higher power that they have that courage because without them, I truly believe I would stand a far smaller chance of succeeding at the four letter word we call “LIFE”.

Tony L. • Texas, California

Personal Stories Wanted
from members based on their experience strength and hope for

• What it was like, what happened, what it is like now.
• How taking the Twelve Steps changed my life.

Local meetings and intergroups can help in this process by planning workshops or retreats focusing on story writing. Members who like to write might be moved to help others less comfortable with writing to put their stories into written form, possibly even working from tapes. Stories should be from 2000 to 5000 words long and submitted either typewritten double-spaced, laser printed or printed on a dot matrix printer using the “best” or “near letter quality” mode. Even better would be submitting the stories on a 3.5 inch Macintosh or DOS formatted floppy disk or a 5.25 inch DOS floppy disk. Submissions accepted for the book may be edited for length and clarity, but no changes will be made without the approval of the contributor.
TRADITION TWO

For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority, a loving God as expressed in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.

This extraordinary tradition has two parts; let me address the one about “leaders” first. A few months after I had joined SAA and had given my first step, my group nominated me as trusted servant. I was stunned. Did it mean that I was an exemplar of recovery? Did it mean that people looked up to me? Did it mean that administrative decisions were mine now?

I was clever enough to figure out that my delusions of grandeur were misguided, but I was not wise enough to know that success or failure of the group had nothing to do with how I functioned in the job of trusted servant. I assumed for instance, that weekly attendance depended on how I ran the meetings, that it was solely my job to make newcomers feel at ease, that it was solely up to me to fill in or find a replacement if someone who had volunteered for a presentation couldn’t make it. The trusted servant before me had been witty and well-liked; I thought I had to measure up. I must have conveyed my anxiety, because finally an old-timer told me to settle down; the group was going to be fine all by itself. What a revelation. Basically all I had to do was be sure we covered the agenda and had enough time for presentations and check-ins. (I also found out later that my group had a long tradition of nominating newcomers; my recovery had nothing to do with it.)

In the eight years since that time, the group has had many trusted servants with lots of different styles. Occasionally I see someone as nervous as I was; sometimes someone comes in who is more gung-ho and authoritative than I would like. (That’s when I learn about patience!) They usually settle down too. The group has survived no matter who has been on the post. I attribute that remarkable fact to something other than their “leadership” more likely, it results from service. Most obvious to me, however, is the power of a group of

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HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE S.A.A. LITERATURE COMMITTEE FALL MEETING in Mpls. Mn:
Here are some of the major issues and items that were addressed.

FIRST STEP QUESTION / PROBLEM
The committee voted to suggest a possible compromise in order to avert the usual long
discussion and deadlock over the wording of the "First Step". In the past the delegates
have been unable to decide between:

We admitted that we were powerless over our sexual addiction—that our lives...
We admitted that we were powerless over our sexual addiction—that our lives...

The word "our" was dropped to bring the wording in line with other 12 step groups and to
emphasize the fact that we are powerless not only over "our" additions but also the
addictions of others.

FELONIOUS BEHAVIORS COLLECTION
Some pieces have been collected and will be kept on
file at the National Service Office. Groups desiring more information on dealing with
this issue will have a packet of stories photocopied and mailed to them. Collection of
articles dealing with this issue will continue.

CONFERENCE APPROVAL OF THE THREE CIRCLES
Lots of positive feedback was reported on this pamphlet. The Literature Committee will
present it to the 1993 convention for conference approval.

ONE AT LARGE POSITION FILLED
Connie B. was voted in as an At Large representative from the office area. Connie is filling
a vacant position which needs to be approved again at the next convention.

OUTSIDE LITERATURE ISSUE
The committee voted that the National Office should only sell literature produced by SAA
with the exception of the books Alcoholics Anonymous, and Twelve Steps and Twelve
Traditions. The latter works, which are published by Alcoholics Anonymous and Twelve
Steps and Twelve Traditions. The latter works, which are published by Alcoholics
Anonymous, were mandated for sale by the National Office during the 1991 convention.
An article explaining this will appear in the PBR Book of Stories. The committee believes
it is of highest priority to produce a book of personal stories that carry the message that
the program works. The goal is to have this book ready for distribution at the 1994
convention. Stories will focus on: What it was like, what happened, and what it is like
now. How taking the Twelve Steps changed my life.

POG We agreed that Promises Of Grace needs to be worked on some more.

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recovering addicts compared to the strength of any individual. As a trusted servant I learned something about humility, and this brings me to the first part of tradition two, the manifestation of God in our group conscience.

One time at a speaker meeting I heard someone say, "When I was acting out, I was operating with only part of a brain. So I look around this room and figure that all of us addicts put together probably come up with one good brain."

My brain is usually just a fragment of a perfect one. Like a loose light bulb, it has good days and bad ones. All in all, it is much steadier than it used to be, but sometimes I need the help of others. I look around the faces of my group. Some reflect serenity and confidence, some are troubled. Some are learning to let go, others are afraid of being out of control. Some are willing to make a leap of faith; others are afraid there will be no safety net. Furthermore, no one’s light bulb is perfectly constant. Yet light always emanates from the group and in that group I am safe. Substitute “spirit” for “brain” in the wise speaker’s remark and we have something even more astonishing. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Put the small spirit that resides in each of us in the presence of others like it, and it flourishes. To me, that is the meaning of “a loving God, expressed in our group conscience.” I count it as another occasion for humility and gratitude. John D. • Mpls.

A Moment of Clarity
I am waiting for my life to start
I hesitate;
I wait for some force to come and turn me
And get me moving.
While I anticipate—Nothing happens.
I believe
Something happens
Even when nothing happens
As long as I do not linger elsewhere
Then where I am

Life starts anew in my being
It’s not my own doing
All I’ve done is
To stop fighting it
...when I can.

There’s more to me than me.
STEP SIX - Were entirely ready to have God remove all of these defects of character.

.... I have come to learn that there are many facets of my inner self, some of which seem to consistently struggle against one another. Therefore, I can only be as entirely ready as different parts of myself are open to be. My adult seems to understand and see things long before my inner child does or can.....

......So any feeling of intimacy with God or people has always been predicated on the belief and admission of my own badness and worthlessness.
Perhaps when it comes to relationships, because of my woundedness and inability to trust, I have felt that I too must somehow remain alone at life's shut gate, outside the reaches of sweet companionship. But time is tempering my outlook to include the vision of healthy people who neither need others to take all the blame nor wish to assume they are always at fault. Eventually, my healthier inner child might even be able to experience God's love as a gift of goodness, rather than a businesslike trade for constant self-denigration. So for me entirely ready must begin with asking God to teach me how to feel close to him without these conditioned self-hateful behaviors. ......It's very hard, but I realize that a loving, trusting, truly intimate relationship has to start with readiness for my child as well as my adult to believe that God will be there for me as I believe He will be for anyone else who desires His help. So I'm just asking, and quietly waiting and hoping. And I'm not really trying to make anything happen, because I don't know how.

In one of the meditation books, Anna Wickham is quoted as saying "Desire and longing are the whips of God." The whips of my own longings and desires have brought me to undertake these twelve steps in a search of a greater and healthier spirituality. That has been a humbling mission, because I was so sure that I had that in place when I came to S.A.A. I now realize, much as I wanted healthy intimacy with God, I didn't have it. Therefore, like a small child I must begin all over again, and try to learn how; and for that, I am entirely ready.____ Nadine (MN)
NSO BIZ
BOARD OF TRUSTEES:
Highlights of Nov. 1 teleconference

We discussed the upcoming midwinter board meeting to be held in Chicago on the M.L.K. weekend in January. Arnold requested that people do what is necessary to raise funds so they may attend the meeting. There was a discussion regarding changes in the adopted travel policy, agreed to an interim arrangement and agreed to that the travel policy would be an item to be reviewed at the mid-winter meeting.

The office report was delivered by Jill S. It was resolved that the bonding letter, that had not been finished, would be sent out within one week. The Joint Management Committee agreed to conduct a complete job performance review on staff by 12-31-92. Jill agreed to send out copies of the job description, performance evaluation sheets that were previously used.

A financial report was given by Robert S. (Treasurer). He went on to commit to send out a chart of accounts that he suggests we use with our new accounting system. Robert declared an intention to spend time in the coming months helping with the computerization of our bookkeeping.

There was a report on the Louisville Ky. convention to be held on Memorial weekend 1993. There was discussion around finances, developing a convention operation manual and a general update.

Alice reported on her attendance at a convention planning meeting in held in Atlanta with S.E. Region SAA members. The meeting was reportedly successful. Alice expressed a wish that Victor G. (Convention Chair-person) should be partaking in the portions of Board teleconferences that relate to the convention because he is more familiar with the day to day happenings of the committees. It was agreed to have Victor participate, with him sitting in at Alice's home, to avoid additional expenditures.

Discussed purchasing a Macintosh computer for the office. Staff spoke of understanding our financial limitations and recommended a system which had fewer capabilities than what had been proposed. He reasoned that the loss of speed and power were probably necessary sacrifices in lieu of our economic standing. Board members asked several
questions, with several knowledgeable computer users advocating spending more money for the system as proposed. It was also advised that a color monitor be included with the system. It was motioned by Jill S., to authorize the purchase of a Mac II CI system for $3,600. Seconded by Tony. Motion carried unanimously.

It was agreed to table discussion on the goals due to time constraints and because some members were unclear as to which board sub-committees they had signed on for. Douglas agreed to send out copies of the goals and related sub-committee members.

Kevin requested to review the action items and deadlines that people had committed to perform. Kevin motioned to include action items to become a part of the actual meeting minutes. This would be a list of peoples names along with what they agreed to do by a certain agreed to time. Seconded by Ed G. and the motion carried. (Meeting adjourned)

Highlights of Dec.13 teleconference
Kevin expressed a desire to know how individuals are doing on their chosen goals. Ed motioned, then amended his motion including deadline dates, for each member send in a paragraph on each selected goal summarizing their progress, to be in to the office by 12-28-92, with copies to be sent out by staff by 1-6-93. Kevin seconded amended motion and the motion carried.

Arnold described the business rules booklet he has been reviewing on parliamentary procedure and recommended it to others as an instructive tool to enable us to conduct business more clearly and expediently.

Arnold instructed members and staff to arrive in Chicago on the 14th and to leave 18th of January. He announced the afternoon of 14th would be the first of our two meals for that day. We agreed to commence business at 8:30 Friday morning, Jan., 1993.

Discussed the upcoming convention as Victor G. of the Louisville Intergroup, national convention committee joined the teleconference and expressed a desire to firm-up the processes for handling the registration. Ed, Victor and Douglas agreed to schedule a convention committee meeting within the next week.

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Victor provided an overview on how Louisville is approaching the delegate business meetings (with more specific information coming at the midwinter meeting). He discussed concerns about the past handling of agenda items and voiced a desire to change the process by which items make their way to the floor for discussion.

Discussed a literature committee policy change to no longer carry outside literature. Some board members expressed some distress as to whether such a policy determination was within the domain of the literature committee to make. There was discussion about the ramifications of the change, reasons for the change, and reasons for the issue being a pressing matter. Discussed the lack of information being exchanged between the Lit. Com. and the Board. Ed motioned to exceed to the literature committee on their decision, to reevaluate the decision at the midwinter meeting. Seconded by Tony and the motion carried. Jill reported the office had purchased a MacIntosh computer. Douglas committed to have a draft office operations manual for the midwinter meeting. Jill reaffirmed that a staff-job review would be held by 12-31-92. Action items for this teleconference were reviewed.

Meeting adjourned

National Office Notes
Volunteers—John K. has put in hundreds of hours volunteering at the national office in the past several months—going to any lengths to recover.

RAP-AROUND
WELCOME NEW SAA GROUPS
Ridgeway SAA, in Soldotna, Alaska For Women Only Group, in Vancouver, B.C., Canada; Emerald SAA, in Boise, Idaho Monday Night SAA, Metro SAA; in Evansville Indiana Wabash—Marion SAA, in Marion, Indiana The Bossier Parish Jail Breakers, in Benton, Louisiana (correctional facility meeting) Brooks Hope & Recovery, in Muskegon, Michigan (correctional facility meeting) Lake Region SAA, in Devils Lake, North Dakota

* QUOTE OF THE MONTH *
My first line of defense in attempting to stay within my boundaries consists of making a phone call to someone in the program. If this is not possible, it is helpful to say and meditate on the Serenity Prayer or other prayers and program slogans. (P. 22 in Abstinence and boundaries.)
At its mid-year conference in November, the National Literature Committee unanimously decided on a policy opposing the sale of “Outside Literature”, some of the reasons are as follows:

1) Discussions of and investigations with other successful national 12 Step fellowships such as Overeaters Anonymous and CODA indicate that SAA is the only group that sells literature produced by private professional businesses.

2) The original decision to carry outside literature was made administratively, not by elected people who are accountable to the fellowship and charged with adhering to the 12 Traditions of SAA.

3) The Literature Committee is charged by the by-laws of the National Service Organization of SAA with being:

   "...faithful to the 12 Steps and Traditions of SAA, as adapted from those of AA and to the 12 Concepts for World Service of AA, to whose authors and whose trusted servants it must continue to bear its gratitude..."

We feel that carrying literature not authored within the organization or by Alcoholics Anonymous violates our traditions. And by allowing our organization to breach those traditions, we on the Literature Committee break our pledge to uphold SAA’s by-laws.

We do not feel that selling Alcoholics Anonymous (the A.A. “Big Book”) or the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions is a violation of those traditions because our steps, traditions, slogans and many of our readings have been adapted from those works. In line with this, the 1991 SAA convention in Grand Rapids, Michigan directed that the National Office provide these works for sale. Those, in fact are the only books that have been approved for sale by SAA besides our own internally produced literature.

Some of the Traditions which are breached:

• Tradition Six • Selling outside literature amounts to endorsement, real and implied, of outside enterprises.

• Tradition Seven • This literature has been bringing in approximately $200 per month. By depending on the profits from the sale of outside literature we could be growing dependant on outside enterprises for our survival.
This year's annual convention in Tucson was my third. My wife attended with me for the first time and I anticipated sharing with her the spirit of recovery I expected at our convention. During the 1991 Grand Rapids convention, my commitment to SAA was greatly deepened as I encountered the sincerity of so many brothers and sisters in recovery trying to make our fellowship work.

Tucson was another experience altogether. Of the workshops I attended, one was very strongly focused on sex addiction recovery and consequently was uplifting. A second was intentionally playful without a direct sex addiction recovery focus, yet impressed me as tastefully presented. Another was intentionally focused off sex addiction recovery and, in my opinion, had no message for either the addict or the non-addict. The fourth was a living example of sex and relationship addiction being acted out before us during the presentation, and was highly inappropriate. My greatest disappointment came the night Terry K. told his story of recovery at dinner. Midway through his story, some individuals at the table next to where I was seated, started throwing food and napkins at a nearby table. Two other tables joined in and for thirty minutes these three tables engaged in a food and napkin fight. All the while, Terry K. continued telling his story. At one point, I went over to one of these tables and told them that members at my table were greatly distracted and unable to hear Terry K. they continued throwing things and laughing loudly.

I left the banquet room that night irate at the distractors, disappointed at the loss of an important opportunity to experience recovery and embarrassed to have my wife witness what had just taken place. A brother had just courageously shared his story of recovery from a life-threatening disease—my disease—our disease. What a reception; what a lack of respect he had received in return. For years I have thought...
Your meeting may not allow cross talk but we do.

Cross Talk:

Six months later, I am still angry and disillusioned at what I experienced. I keep asking how our conference could get so focused off recovery in the first place. Has “fellowship” become our primary goal and “recovery” a secondary goal? Are we becoming a fellowship of support groups for acting out sex addicts, or are we focused on recovery from our life threatening addiction?

I make three recommendations: 1.) Have board approved written guidelines for all national conventions. 2.) Provide feedback forms for each convention workshop and for the convention in general. 3.) Encourage each SAA member to honestly and courageously look at the direction in which our fellowship is heading.

Jim M. • Georgia

(Ed. Opinions sought about the pros and cons of having a dance at the upcoming national convention.)
Before I was married, I thought all I needed to quit acting out was a steady sex partner. After several arrests for exhibitionism and several failed relationships, I decided that perhaps I needed to get married. After all, isn't it the sanctity of matrimony, blessed by God that keeps a man on the straight and narrow? NOT!

It's now been more than three years and six months since I have had to go below my bottom line. Not because I've remarried, but because with this, my fourth wife (yes, it took that many) I learned a new word and how to live it. The word is honesty. I finally learned that to be abstinent I have to be accountable and honest with my mate. If I were in a relationship where I still had to live a double life, going to meetings at night, but lying about where I was, how is that different from lying about where I was when acting out? If I couldn't talk about how I hurt and why with my mate, what separates me from the raging sex addict that kept everything a secret inside myself until I got arrested and the whole town found out?

I'm only in meetings for two or three hours a week, at best. But I'm at home with my wife 10 hours a night or more. She can see it on my face when I'm hurting, but too macho to say so. She loves me too much to really pry, but she will hand me my meeting directory or personal phone book and quietly say, "Dear, you need to call someone."

There have been times when I denied what she knew. After all, I'm a man, I can take it, I can handle this... but she would make the phone call for me and hand me the phone with a group member on the other end. Now what am I gonna do? Simple... I'll take the phone, tell my friend that my wife over-reacted, and hang up. But my friend in the program knows better too. He won't let me end the conversation until I have come clean. I know many of our members will lose their marriages and loved ones if they were that honest, but I can only encourage them to keep on trying.

I have learned that my wife will fight harder to keep me abstinent than I will. Through her love, I have learned that I can't do it by myself, or even with just my group members. We cannot expect non-sex addicts to under-
stand what we have done or why we did it, but we owe them a chance to try. With counseling and guidance, our mates and significant others can become our strongest allies, because they are there with us when we might not be strong enough to work the program on our own.

Next to being honest with my higher power and my group, I found the greatest need was to be honest with my mate. Step Nine tells me that I have to make amends to my wife if I am ever dishonest to her about my feelings and needs. Step Five tells me that I must admit to myself, to my God and to another human being the exact nature of my wrongs. What other human being is there who is closer to me than my mate? The one I have chosen to make my home with and share my heart with? I firmly believe that if I cannot be honest with her as that ‘other human being’ in Step Five, then I have not yet mastered the meaning of the step.

The next time you read Step Five, consider that it is an opportunity to learn three new things. 1.) How to make the best use of your strongest ally next to your higher power. 2.) How to insure that someone will be there to help us when we cannot help ourselves. 3.) The true meaning of honesty and being willing to go to any length.

Respectfully submitted,
Tony L. • Texas/California
(Continued to serve as a Board member, replacing Greg M.)

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This goes against the goal of being self-supporting through the producing and selling of our own literature. Let us end our dependence upon outside “experts” and SAA members will be more likely to clarify a message arising out of our own experience. This is already happening as evidenced with the Three Circles, The Bubble and the Getting Started in SAA pamphlets.

• Tradition Ten • the long form found in AA’s Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions (pages 191-2) states: No A.A. group or member should ever, in such a way as to implicate A.A., express any opinion on outside controversial issues—particularly those of politics, alcohol reform or sectarian religion.... Carrying works such as A Male Grief: Notes on Pornography, though they may be wonderful works of literature, which at times may aptly describe the experience of sex addiction, can appear to endorse political and social reform. This book for instance
THE FIREMAN: How I spent my summer vacation
by Bobby Turner (5 and 1/2 years old).

Summer was really fun because we went to the circus and saw funny clowns and animals, but then my mommy and daddy had a devours and mommy went far away and daddy woke me up in the middle of the night and I was tired but he said we were going on a trip far away and that I had a new mommy but I didn't like the new mommy because she didn't smell the same as my other mommy and I told my daddy that I wanted my old mommy but he wouldn't so we went in the big truck in the dark to another state (this one) and moved into another house that was small. Daddy and the new mommy would make funny noises in their room when it was dark and it would scare me but daddy said it was because they were in love and I said I never want to be in love then my other new mommy went far away too and I wondered why I was losing so many mommies and Daddy got very scared and sad one day I pretended that I was a pirate looking for buried treasure but I found some magazines with pictures of naked women in them and Daddy yelled at me when I found them but then cried and said he was sorry and I said it was okay because it looked like Daddy was going to important meetings after work so I had to turn to cooking one time the stove got on fire and that was the most exciting because I felt like a big strong fireman who put out fires and saved people from being burned and make them feel all happy and safe but I got a few burns on my fingers and Daddy got mad when he got home but then took me to the hospital and bit me an ice cream cone and that was fun because the doctors and nurses were nice to me and I told Daddy he should marry one of these nurses and then he wouldn't cry so much but he didn't say anything when I said that. The End.

M.W. • Mn.

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comes across as a political work—a call to arms against the social ills of the pornography industry. As the Tenth Tradition states, we cannot afford to appear to take opinions, lobby or denounce pornography as an organization. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help those sex addicts who want our help. It is not to reform society. NOOPINION PERIOD! At the same time, not selling this material does not mean that we are suggesting that members refrain from purchasing or reading what they wish. Members of the program are welcome to avail themselves of any tools including psychotherapy, religious programs, social change organizations or any other activity that may feel appropriate. Steve L., Literature Committee Chair • CA