
Plain Brown Rapper

THE SAA NEWSLETTER



The purpose of the Plain Brown Rapper is to be a voice of the SAA Membership, published by and for those recovering from compulsive sexual behaviors. We strive to be informative, sensitive, and responsive in expressing the experiences, strengths and hope of recovering sex addicts. Unless otherwise noted, the content of the PBR reflects the opinions of the writers and editors and not necessarily of the National Service Organization, the Literature Committee, or Sex Addicts Anonymous as a whole.

Her Life was Like Watching a Horror Movie

When I ask myself why I've stayed in Sex Addicts Anonymous, I really don't have any single outstanding reason that comes to mind, but I do remember, and still sometimes feel, the fear of being out of

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Beyond My Wildest Dreams

by John A.

I believe my addiction to sex emerged long before my first real sexual experience at age 13. It probably began when I was still "sexually curious" about other children. I was always fascinated by the prospect of seeing my friends naked and enjoyed the chance for an overnight stay with them. These sleep-overs provided the ideal circumstances for a persuasive and manipulating child like me to convince other children that getting naked together was perfectly acceptable. We called it a game, one of innocence and fun with no one getting hurt. I knew we shouldn't do it, yet the game was more exciting than the fear I felt should we ever get caught. I was usually very careful and calculating in setting up my trap, making sure conditions were always "just right." I was much like a spider waiting for its prey to enter its intricately woven web. **I had you where I wanted you, it was too late, the ritual had begun. I was seven years old.**

There was little, if any, stability in my childhood. My father was

alcoholic and unfaithful in his marriage. My mother too was unfaithful and tried to kill herself when I was five. I loved them both and think they wanted to be good parents, but somehow lacked the necessary qualifications to do so. I know from their own stories that they too came from worlds of great personal chaos and unmanageability. I believe they did the best they could in raising me...even when they used me as a means to harm the other. I didn't like it but accepted it as one of the normal things parents do. I didn't know anything differently. The day eventually came when my parents divorced and our family grew further apart.

My mother then married a much younger man. He was attractive and dynamic, but often violent and abusive. He too joined in on the tug-of-war between my natural parents and me and sometimes used threats and violence to influence my relationship between them. I didn't care much for him, but the marriage seemed to be-

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control, of spiraling downwards toward self-destruction. I can relate to some words about the First Step in the book Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions — words such as “complete defeat”, “personal powerlessness”, “absolute humiliation”, “desperate”, “hopeless”, “drowning”, “unmanageable”, “fatal progression” and “merciless obsession”.

I was so scared when I looked at the deterioration of my situation over time. It was like watching a horror movie where you can see the monsters but you can't tell the victims how to avoid the traps. I was so disconnected within myself that it felt as if my healthy self was watching my crazy addict desperately searching for happiness and connection the only way she knew how; while my rational, sane self could only observe and comment on the fruitlessness of the search

without knowing how to teach my addict the alternative strategies which I could identify but could not practice. The addict could only do, not know, the self could only know, not do.

So there I was scared and hurting, with no idea how to fix things, going to meetings where I saw women who had what I wanted — neutrality with men, relationships, sex. I kept coming back, hoping to figure out the way that they had achieved this serenity and this sanity.

There were many stumbling points — the “god” thing was the first obstacle to my involvement. But I was desperate enough to search for a way to overcome my religious objections. At first I tried to work the program without any reference to a higher power. Everytime I heard any reference to the HP I would substitute “Healthy Self” or “Rational

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Mind" or *something* to allow me to hear what was being shared without accepting the

existence of a higher power. Eventually I found my own higher power and lost that barrier to me coming back. I regard the rediscovery of my spirituality as one of the greatest gifts of the program, even though it came about simply as a tool to reach abstinence.

Another barrier for me was the discipline of working my program by attending meetings, making phone calls, reading literature and writing my steps. "I am a busy woman, I don't have time for this stuff! What about ME?" Of course I soon came to realize that there wasn't going to be a me if I didn't "change the things I can". My interpretation of the Serenity Prayer is that I accept that I don't have control over my addictive behavior, so I have to accept that I cannot change it, but I do have control over other behaviors like using the tools

and working the steps. I have to accept the responsibility for changing those behaviors and if I do, the Goddess will take care of the addiction. So do I make three meetings a week, three phone calls a day, write, read and meditate every day? No, I still argue with myself that I am too busy and I still have to remind myself that I wouldn't be doing any of the things that I am busy doing if I wasn't abstinent.

All of the reasons not to come back, to drop out, to quit the program were overcome eventually by the unfolding of the Promises. Everyday that I don't obsess about men and sex, everytime I interrupt myself before I objectify another person, every night that I go to sleep not hating myself for the latest humiliating, embarrassing risky escapade I feel free, peaceful, serene and happy. I don't cringe every time I remember past experiences because I understand my powerlessness.

I don't feel sorry for myself anymore because I feel strong and grateful about my recovery. I am not incapacitated by fear because I know that I am not the center of the universe, that whatever is meant to happen, will happen; I can do little or nothing to affect outcomes.

One of the most exciting things about recovery has been and is the continuous feeling that my eyes are opening, that blinders are falling away. I comprehend the world better everyday. Many times I come to *understand* things that I used to *know* but not really. I could talk about the subject but my experience was all intellectual and now I am integrating an emotional, spiritual or physical component to the understanding; parts that were shut down, cut off before. I could go on and on, but I will end and simply say "thank you" to all the members of SAA who have made my recovery possible. Keep coming back, it works!
Grainne M•Kalamazoo, MI

It's That Time of Year Again!

No, It's not the difficult holidays or those dreaded birthdays, it's "Send your Regional Reps to the Convention Time!" As the literature Committee Rep from the Southcentral region, on three different occasions I have sent out letters introducing myself, communicating my goals, accomplishments and keeping my region updated on convention minutes, etc.

Now please pay close attention to this part: the second time I sent 50 letters to groups outside of Houston asking for financial support to get to the Mid-Winter meeting. Not one group donated. The next time, only two groups chipped in. Fortunately, all 28 groups here in Houston and NSO feel that the literature this fellowship generates not only for the addict still suffering but for the fellowship as a whole is vital, so, once again bore the entire expense. I don't feel this is fair. It makes me angry, sad, embarrassed and frankly, reminds me of my family of origin. **It is That time again.** Send contributions to NSO P.O. Box 3038 Mpls. MN 55403
Thanks, Joni R. Also, My term with the literature committee is up this year, while I may stay on in a special one year at-large position, for purposes of continuity, the Southcentral Literature Position will be vacant. This kind of service work is very exciting and rewarding. I have learned and grown so much these last few years because of my involvement with the Literature Committee. Interested persons should contact NSO.

Intergroup Close-up: Michigan

This very large intergroup has developed into an effective statewide network for reaching out to those with concerns about sexually addictive behavior. Michigan has created a second intergroup, to better serve the large geographical area—West Michigan Intergroup, located in Grand Rapids.

Finding SAA is easy now with 37 meetings statewide, but it hasn't always been so. Extensive effort including free local newspaper notices, referrals from therapists, clergy or other Twelve Step groups and using a grant funded organization called "Self Help Clearinghouse" has made a wide variety of SAA meetings very available. There are meetings for men, women, mixed, prison inmates, clergy and people wanting boundary groups. There are workbook groups and an interesting one

called "lunchtime drive through" for those short on time who need to make a positive SAA connection.

Currently a strong focus of this intergroup is prison outreach, with Mark N. putting an enormous amount of energy towards organizing meetings in prisons and encouraging a successful letter writing campaign. Currently there are several established SAA prison meetings and seven more in the process of developing. This very month, the first known national level meeting for women in prison begins.

The sheer numbers of meetings and people that the Michigan Intergroup tries to coordinate, has resulted in the usual growing pains. Some of the current issues are: concerns that there's too much focus on the prison program, questions about what exactly is the mission and the wider focus,

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and plans for how to incorporate new ideas and the need for change while holding firm to the founding intentions. Presently, the Board and chair are elected in November and begin their terms in January for one year. The chair for 1993 is also the Michigan Intergroup contact person, Barbara K. She mentions that one way intergroup maintains its connections with other groups is to have an open meeting every month with COSA that includes dinner and speakers. Within their own intergroup, which meets on odd-numbered months, they also maintain a supportive environment by limiting the business portion to two hours if at all possible and always leaving time afterwards for sharing. "Hurrahs" and "Thank yous" go out to Michigan Intergroup for their efforts and their successes.

Fred J.

Higher Powered

"Hi, my name is Grainne and I am a sex addict."

I haven't been able to say those liberating words in a while. I miss the feeling of confirming my addiction and my commitment to recovery which I used to get at least once weekly. But my Higher Power has led me from Houston, Texas to Kalamazoo, Michigan and the fellowship is not as strong here. I haven't met any other women sex addicts here although I have spoken to a couple from surrounding towns on the telephone. In Houston I attended a women's meeting every Sunday for the two and a half years that I had been in recovery. I could be sure of seeing at least one or two women at every meeting to which I went.

Here, the meetings are run very differently. With all the crosstalk and feedback, it feels

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First Impressions

When I first went to SAA I thought my problems with pornography, masturbation, fantasy and lust weren't as important or serious as other people's. Some of the other members were child molesters, exhibitionists or voyeurs and had hit some definite bottoms involving the law, loss of job, marriage or family and possible prison sentences.

I wasn't quite sure what I was doing at the meeting because I was both scared and acting out. There was always the chance that I might hear some titillating stories that would turn me on or meet women who were prostitutes and I could learn about that forbidden profession that I had always been too scared to approach.

I felt like an impostor and thought I didn't qualify because I hadn't hit a low enough bottom. Even though the only requirement for being there was

a desire to stop compulsive sexual behavior, I had trouble honestly admitting I wanted to stop. I'd had so little success stopping my acting out in the past that my desire to recover was numbed out and buried beneath my helplessness.

Thank goodness I stuck with the program and found it wasn't at all what I thought it would be. The secret for me was to identify with our common struggle as addicts and not compare differences. My grandiosity had wanted me to be the worst of the bad and my pride didn't like finding out that I wasn't unique in my problem. There's much more comfort in viewing the group as a power greater than myself. My struggle to achieve and maintain my sobriety is as hard as anyone's, as evidenced by my constant slipping and picking myself up again.

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Without alcohol, drugs, caffeine or nicotine to aid me in escaping from myself and medicating my emotions, my last bastion has been sex addiction and sexual acting out. I will continue to be patient with myself and not use my slipping as an excuse to beat myself up and prove that I am undeserving. It is those same feelings, coupled with shame, that motivated my addiction in the first place and are to be avoided at all costs. If I want my sobriety to be serene and not the white-knuckle type, then I must also be working my program. This means turning things over to my higher power, letting go, taking my inventory and giving it away while humbly admitting when I'm wrong and making amends as needed.

Mike • Ann Arbor, Michigan

Humor

How many sex addicts does it take to screw in a light bulb?

None. It's against all their boundaries.

Minnesota

Humor

It was
so cold last
week,
we actually
saw an
S.A.A. group
walking in
“V”

formation,
led by their
trusted
servant and
heading
south.

We think
they may
have become
migratory.

Dave • Mpls.

"Just a, Just a Cruisin', Oh Yeah!"
!!! NOT !!!

I am a woman who had been in SAA for approximately one to two years when all of a sudden I realized that I had cruising behavior. I'd listened to men in meetings talk of cruising activities which engaged them for hours. I'd heard them speak of being obsessed with sexual fantasies during this time, and how sometimes they'd even pick someone up. I remember thinking that I was sure glad that I didn't do this and that therefore I didn't have this problem.

Then, I became aware of my cruising behavior. I realized that while I am driving I cruise the streets, looking mostly at men sometimes at women. I look at their bodies and how they're dressed. Usually, I just want to make eye contact, nothing more. Sometimes, I just want to see if a man finds

me attractive. I have been in other 12 step meetings and cruised them wanting to make eye contact or I'll be at a store or mall and I'll look around at the men to see if I can make eye contact - as I wait for them to make a move. I really don't want the interaction to go any further than glances because I'm just playing a game with them and with myself.

Fortunately, I don't do this too often, especially since I've become aware of it. Now, I turn my attention to where I'm driving or whatever I'm shopping for and choose not to indulge in the intrigue of cruising. The three second rule has worked well when I find myself looking too long.

Dee N. • New Orleans, LA.

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like a support group than a 12 step program, which I find threatening. I am also a member of COSA, but when I attend both sets of meetings I am told that I am making people uncomfortable.

Undoubtedly my Higher Power has a purpose in bringing me here and in putting these potential barriers in my path. This purpose will be revealed eventually and I will be able to see the gifts and lessons given me. My recovery will be stronger and my life richer. Although I have absolute faith in this fact, I feel very alone and scared right now. Some of my old thoughts and feelings are creeping back. I am aware that, although I have no intention of acting out (having been abstinent since 1/18/91 though the grace of my Higher Power) my addiction is still cunning, baffling and powerful. At any moment, my sexual addiction could leap up, grab me and drag me back down to that pit of self hatred, secrets, and shame.

I don't ever want to be there

again so I am determined to go to any lengths to ensure my continued recovery. I need to renew my commitment and I wonder if this is an opportunity to develop new tools. Until now, I've relied almost exclusively upon meetings and the telephone; maybe this is the time to expand my writing, reading and service. That is why I decided to write this and send it to the PBR. Many times, in the past, I've thought about writing something, but I always wanted it to be "perfect" and yet wasn't motivated to spend the time to make it "perfect". This time I'm just going to write and mail without worrying about the judgement of others, hoping that somebody gets something out of this. Certainly I know that I get something out of every single contact that I have with the program whether it be talking to a member, reading the literature or attending a meeting. I'm enclosing my phone number in case there are other women out there who can relate to the sense of isolation I feel. I would love to hear from any of you. 616-349-2314
Grainne M., Kalamazoo, MI.

CROSS TALK

A FORUM FOR RESPONSE AND OPINION

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One Man's Opinion / Suggestion: "Please Rewrite the Circles"

The Three Circles will be up for conference approval in May, 1993. I believe granting approval of this version would be a mistake.

Issue One—Lumping Concepts Together The Literature Committee tried to merge two separate concepts in the middle circle. That circle, as written, includes boundary behaviors (ritual behaviors leading to acting out) and less than perfectly healthy behaviors (behaviors that can not be considered definitely acting out or healthy). Lumping these two distinct concepts in one circle does not do justice to either concept. I believe this lumping confuses newcomers. Perhaps a simple solution would be to include four circles

- 1) A list of all of a person's Acting Out behaviors
- 2) A list of all Boundaries behaviors—rituals / dangerous behaviors leading to acting out
- 3) Imperfect behaviors—behaviors that are reasonably healthy which lack complete acceptance in the person's program as behaviors they know they wish to

have as a long term part of their recovery This circle would be for "gray" behaviors (as it is termed in Promises of Grace, page 47), so we can recognize our less than perfect ways that we are sexual. None of us will have perfectly healthy sexual behaviors i.e. if we were to have sex with our partner when we were in a lousy mood, that is obviously not as healthy as we might like, but it is also not acting out. Or if we were dating and found that we were obsessing about the idea of having sex with a new partner; I would see this as less than perfect behavior, but certainly not acting out behavior.

4) A list of all of a person's healthy sexual behaviors.

I submit this MOTION to the SAA delegates—that the Lit. Com. rewrite the circles to include four circles as roughly outlined above. Is there a second?

Issue Two—Taking the Loopholes out of the Circles

This year I've encountered several examples of "middle circle" behav-

**Your meeting may
not allow cross talk
but we do.**

Cross Talk:



iors which I ask you to consider—members placing the following in their middle circle, thereby viewing these behaviors as acceptable / sober behaviors:

having sex with a person on a first, second, or third date, having an extra-marital affair, attending places for anonymous sex once in a while, using “erotica”, soft pornography with masturbation.

I offer these questions —Can a sex addict in recovery have sex with a partner in a non-exclusive relationship? Have sex with a new partner in the early days of dating? Use pornography, in any form, masturbating to achieve a sexual high, and view it as sober behavior? I would answer no for myself. It is of note that these are not “sober” behaviors in the programs of the two men who have sponsored me, men with twenty-one years of sobriety between them.

What a recovering sex addict wants to believe is not the question. The question is are these sober behaviors? (ASIDE—Asking if sex addicts can

use pornography is as simple as asking—can a recovering alcoholic use alcohol. I do not suggest people who are free of sex addiction should not use pornography. Rather SAA has no opinion on what society as a whole should or should not do with pornography—that is an outside issue.)

“But it’s progress, not perfection”, to this statement I would agree. I say, let us honor our progress. But let us understand, though this is progress, it is also not sobriety.

I believe the way the “middle circle” is written offers loop holes which enable hurting sex addicts into kidding themselves and others. We can view ourselves as special, unique—needing some special program tailored to our needs. That is great to a point, but when we act in ways most sober sex addicts have rejected, then it is us who needs a reality check.

To me, healthy sexuality and sobriety are the same. Love/sobriety, can’t be paired with having sex with a person

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To me, healthy sexuality and sobriety are one and the same. Love / sobriety, can not be paired with having sex with a person who we do not really know or care about. My addict may want it to be another way, but my addict's will is not in charge here—God is in charge. Love / sobriety is about commitment, trust, respect—not about objectification simply for the sake of a sexual good time. Love / sobriety is true connection with oneself and / or with a partner, that is not simply object based, using of one another as a drug. Still, none of our sexualities will ever be / always be one-hundred-percent as healthy and spiritual as we would want them to be. Part of recovery is learning to gain the ability to balance cutting ourselves reasonable slack, while holding firm to what we know to be sobriety.

Literally minutes ago, on my way home I saw a person who was attired in a way that my addict finds incredibly alluring. My first thought—how can I act out with / on this person? I wanted her to be an object—an

object I could possess. You see, at times, I still wish I could go back to using pornography, exposing myself, using women, having casual sex, and even graduate into other behaviors I “missed out” on. I think that way because I am a sex addict. I go to meetings so that my thinking doesn't get me in a heap of trouble (again). I have found when I have a craving, this is not reason enough to act out. I can forever be sober, one day at a time thanks to SAA and my Higher Power. I don't ever have to act out again. I'll be the first to say that a lot of my acting out was fun—but this fact alone doesn't make it acceptable for me to act out again—and it doesn't make right to call it sober behavior.

In my seven plus years in SAA I have also seen many members paint themselves into a vicious corner by considering all their sexual behaviors to be unhealthy; I see this as destructive to their growth. I in no way endorse rigidity, for rigidity stifles our personal and collective growth. Deluded thinking also stifles our

all behaviors our collective wisdom knows are not sober behaviors, are not experiments, but are in fact exercises in certain failure.

I submit the following MOTION to the SAA delegates—that the Literature Committee be asked to rewrite the circles to more precisely emphasize our collective knowledge about sober sexual behaviors, recognizing by our nature some of our sexual behaviors are imperfect as we attempt to grow, but that we as a fellowship only support sexual behaviors that are affirming of the truth that sobriety is based in love—that sexual behaviors need to be in keeping with the principle of love and not objectification. That we see sober experiments are outgrowths of our attempts to restore our personal sexual health—that attempts to restore our sexual health are rooted in being personal, and are not anonymous. Is there a second?

Douglas P. • Mpls. Mn.

P.S. Everyone has the right to operate their program as they wish, we are autonomous. The

other part of that right, often ignored, is we individually have the right to distance ourselves from

what we see as sexually addictive behavior. In my experience as a sex addict in recovery, thereby almost by definition a co-sex addict, if a member is engaging in behavior I consider to be acting out, it is best for me to not belabor a point of disagreement with that person. I offer my perceptions once and then I let go if they react negatively to my questioning their assessment of what they see as their "sobriety". I have slowly learned it is best to move on and turn it over.

The PBR needs you to contribute stories, articles, columns and opinions. Let us know what you think of the current issue and any ideas you have for future features.

PBR

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Mpls., MN

P.S. Watch this space for ways to help make the PBR your newspaper.

what Mother wanted and that is all I believed mattered.

I learned to endure his physical and emotional attacks on me. The attacks included dressing me up as a girl and parading me about the house telling everyone how pretty the "sissy boy" is. My mother too had donned a woman's wig on my head and commented to all who would listen that I should have been born a girl. "You're too pretty to be a boy," she'd say. I was terribly confused and couldn't understand why they did these things. I hated them for it, but I kept it all inside. It seemed like the best way to cope. It also assured my safety in this new family.

When my mother and step-father eventually divorced, I felt safe enough to disclose to her what I truly felt about my step-father, especially those things she never knew. My sister too found the courage to disclose tales of sexual torment this man had put her through. It was unanimously agreed that life with him had been awful, but no action was taken nor anything said so that we could better deal with it. We just went

on with our lives—ignoring the truth and not speaking of it again.

Over the next several years, we tried to pull our lives back together. Mother worked long hours and I became a latch-key kid. I would soon learn that in order to gain the acceptance and praise I so desperately sought, I would have to become a model child. This meant that I would cook the meals, do the laundry, and take care of the house. With my friends, I was no different. I would give freely of all I had with little thought toward what I might want in return. As with my mother, I believed that my needs and my wants from friends were really quite secondary. I wanted to be liked, but felt that friendship, like her love, was only for sale. I wasn't very happy during those years. There were frequent thoughts of suicide and fantasy that a better life must exist somewhere, but it didn't exist for me. There would develop a greater preoccupation with escaping my circumstances by setting up sexual encounters with my friends. **It became an obsession occupying many days of my young life.....**

"Wildest Dreams"

To Be Continued Next Month