

The Outer Circle

The Newsletter of the
International Service Organization of SAA, Inc.

PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270

Volume 6, Issue 2

March - April 2012



**THE ISO ENCOURAGES GROUPS TO REPRODUCE
THE OUTER CIRCLE, SO THAT COPIES WILL BE
AVAILABLE TO ALL MEMBERS.**

***THE OUTER CIRCLE* IS MAILED FREE
TO ALL WHO REQUEST IT.**

MEMBER DONATIONS ARE GRATEFULLY ACCEPTED.

ISO News Articles

ISO Board News

Board Actions	Page 2
Coming Soon:	
A Draft Conference Charter	Page 3
ISO Structure Committee Identifies	
Areas for Improvement	Page 4

Literature Committee News

Meditation Book	
Submission Guidelines	Page 6
Tele-Workshops	Page 7
Personal Story Submissions	
and Guidelines	Page 8
NEW! Compulsive Sexual	
Avoidance Pamphlet	Page 10

Announcements & Reports

Inter-Fellowship Relations	Page 11
----------------------------	---------

ISO Financial News

Income/Expense Summary	Page 12
Financial Results Letter	Page 13

From the Editor

By Mike L.	Page 14
------------	---------

General ISO Information

E-mail Addresses	Page 34
ISO Structure & Contacts	Page 35

Article Submissions

Guidelines, Deadlines, Topics,	
and Release Form	Page 36

Articles from Members

Letter to the Editor	Page 16
Tradition Four	Page 17
Dear Will	Page 18
Step Four	Page 19
Dear Grace	Page 20
The Fellowship of SAA—	
Thoughts about its Deeper Meaning	Page 22
A Sleepless Night:	
Taking Refuge in the Third Step	Page 23
Tradition Three	Page 25
To Know and Not to Do Is Not to Know	Page 27
Humility	Page 28
On Habit-Taking and Recovery	Page 29
Honesty—The Biggest Gift of Recovery	Page 31

© Copyright 2012 International Service Organization of SAA, Inc. All Rights Reserved.
 Except for the purpose of redistributing *The Outer Circle* as a whole, *The Outer Circle*
 may not be downloaded, copied, reproduced, duplicated, or conveyed in any other way
 without the express written permission of the International Service Organization of SAA, Inc.

© Registered Trademark *Sex Addicts Anonymous* and the SAA logo are
 registered trademarks of the International Service Organization of SAA, Inc.

**The following actions were approved by
the Board of Trustees at their face-to-face
meeting held in Houston, Texas,
January 14-16, 2012**

- That the 2012 Delegate Conference business meeting be extended by a total of one hour by adding thirty minutes to the end of the Friday session and thirty minutes to the end of the Saturday session.
 - That the Board adopt the report and PowerPoint presentation submitted by the ISO-S Committee.
-

Electronic Formats Available!

SAA e-Book

The ISO is pleased to announce the availability of the SAA Green Book, *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, in downloadable electronic format.

The eBook can be purchased from the ISO office, or online from the SAA Store at www.saa-store.org/book/.

After online purchase is complete, you will receive an e-mail with a link to download a zip file that contains both the mobi (Kindle) and ePUB (Nook) versions of the book. One of these formats can be read on most e-readers available today.

Special thanks go out to an anonymous member of the fellowship who took the time to create the eBook version. Such generous help from volunteer members enhances the capacity of the ISO to support member groups in carrying the SAA message of recovery to sex addicts everywhere.

mp3 Audio Downloads

The ISO is pleased to announce the immediate availability of mp3 format downloads of our convention workshop and speaker recordings.

The files are in mp3 format, which may be played on almost any portable music device or computer.

Currently, the mp3 files are available for convention years 2004 through 2011, and can be purchased from the SAA store at www.saa-store.org/audio.

We will be uploading the remaining past convention years over the next few weeks, as we get them formatted.

Coming Soon: A Draft Conference Charter

The Conference Charter Committee (CCC) continues to work on a draft charter for initial presentation at the upcoming 2012 Conference and Convention. As previously noted, this foundational document will detail the purpose, organization, and basic operating procedures for the Delegate Conference. While the Conference has been viewed in the past primarily as an event that occurs once a year, the Charter will establish the framework for continuing service throughout the year by the Conference in support of the ISO mission.

The CCC envisions that developing a better organizational structure will result in better preparation of delegates, clear statement of the role of the Conference as guardian of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of SAA, and more involvement of the Conference in ISO service activities throughout the year. As the Conference is integrated more completely into the mainstream of ISO activities, the Conference would be able to assume more responsibility for committee activities that have operated exclusively under the Board in the past. In addition, more active and better informed delegates will inevitably result in more thoughtful and productive consideration of the issues coming before the annual meeting of the Conference.

As noted above, the CCC is planning a workshop at the upcoming 2012 Convention to allow members of the fellowship the opportunity to examine the draft charter, to ask questions, and to offer feedback. Any member of the fellowship is welcome to attend the workshop. In addition, members will be given the opportunity to sign up to receive announcements of Committee meetings and regular updates about Committee activities during the next service year.

The importance of the Conference Charter cannot be overemphasized. After its adoption by the Conference, the Charter will join the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of SAA and the ISO Bylaws as one of the foundational documents that guide the ISO in fulfilling its mission to support member groups in their primary purpose of carrying the SAA message of recovery to the addict who still suffers.

We hope you will seize the opportunity to come to the next Convention and learn about the plans for a Conference Charter.

ISO Structure Committee Identifies Areas for Improvement

As reported in the January-February issue of *The Outer Circle* (pp 2-3), the ISO Structure Committee (ISO-S) has been working alongside the Conference Charter Committee (CCC) and has undertaken an in-depth review of the current structure of the ISO as the first step in developing a long-range plan to improve the ability of the ISO to respond to the needs of member groups in their efforts to carry the SAA message of recovery to the addict who still suffers.

The purpose of this article is to enumerate the current constraints that may inhibit the growth and adversely affect the well-being of the SAA fellowship in the coming years.

One improvement would be to reduce the size of the Board of Trustees. As presently constituted, the Board may have as many as twenty-nine members, including alternates, participating in meetings and teleconferences. As a result, the conduct of ISO business is cumbersome and, at times, tedious. Other Twelve-Step fellowships typically average twelve trustees. Among other non-profit organizations, Board sizes vary from seven to fourteen members, which has proved to be more efficient in the conduct of business.

In addition, the current method of electing members to the Board does not guarantee that the persons elected have the service experience and sobriety necessary to serve effectively as trustees. Service on the corporate Board of Trustees involves legal and fiduciary responsibilities that carry major implications for the well-being of the corporation and the fellowship-at-large. Ill-prepared or inexperienced trustees may expose themselves or the ISO to legal jeopardy.

Another area that could be improved is the Delegate Conference. The Conference is becoming too large to conduct business in an efficient and expeditious manner. The Bylaws of the ISO of SAA permit every registered group to send a delegate to the Conference. With more than 1,200 groups currently registered, the Conference could become so large that ample and affordable meeting space would be difficult to find, and Conference business sessions would become very difficult to manage. Conference attendance has recently reached 160 delegates, representing only 12% of the potential number of delegates. Even at this level of attendance, the Conference has experienced inefficiencies that have impeded our capacity to make thoughtful, well informed decisions on issues of concern to the fellowship.

One improvement could be more delegates with service experience. Each year, approximately 40% of delegates are attending their first Conference. Many are relative newcomers to the fellowship. Although their participation in the Conference and convention is a good learning experience for them,

they often do not have enough service experience or sobriety to be able to make good decisions on behalf of the ISO. To decide about issues in an informed and thoughtful manner, delegates should have substantial prior program experience, should be well-versed in the principles laid out in the Twelve Traditions of SAA, and should have discussed ISO issues at local levels prior to the Conference.

For all practical purposes, the Delegate Conference is seen primarily as an event that occurs once a year. Although delegates are, in fact, elected to serve for a full one-year term, there is a sense that the service responsibility of the average delegate is limited to the annual meeting. As a result, interest and participation in service activities drops off soon after the Conference and convention, but the work of the ISO continues throughout the year. This drop-off in participation results in projects not being completed in a timely fashion. The Conference Charter Committee is also looking at this issue, as they develop a structural model for organizing the Conference into a more stable and productive component of the ISO.

Another finding of the ISO-S is a lack of awareness and interest in the ISO at the local level. Often, important support and coordination activity that the ISO provides to groups and to the fellowship-at-large goes unrecognized. As a result, a few members of the fellowship have a disproportionately large responsibility for carrying the volunteer workload of the ISO. Opportunities to learn about and participate in service at the ISO level are often overlooked, and members do not gain the experience of being involved in ISO service.

The difficulty of holding regional caucus meetings at any time other than the annual Conference adds to the disconnect between the ISO and local groups. Current regions span such great geographical distances that members are hard-pressed to get together and discuss ISO and fellowship issues more than once a year. Participation, therefore, is limited to members who can afford the expense and the time to attend the annual Conference and convention.

Finally, as our fellowship continues to grow outside the United States and participation in telemeetings increases, we need to be sure that these groups have a voice in ISO activities. To accommodate this growth under our current organizational structure would necessitate adding one or more regions, further increasing the size of the Board and Literature Committee, which are already too large to function optimally.

You may view the complete ISO-S report, including the recommended changes to the ISO structure, in the Members Area on the ISO service website at www.saa-iso.org. To get the user name and password to access the Members Area, please contact the office at 1-800-477-8191 or email at: info@saa-recovery.org

Any questions or comments may be addressed to: director@saa-iso.org

ISO Literature Committee Guidelines for submission of entries to be considered for the *SAA Meditation Book*

The ISO Literature Committee welcomes submission of entries from the fellowship-at-large for possible inclusion in the SAA Meditation Book. The Meditation Book will consist of 366 entries, one for each day of the calendar year.

To ensure consideration, submissions should follow these guidelines:

A short quotation should be taken from SAA publications that are Literature Committee approved or Conference approved (see list at the bottom of the page). The quote must be exact and followed by a citation that includes the name of the publication and page number, using the following style: *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, p. 20. Submissions using quotes from other sources will not be considered.

The main body of the entry should be a thought-provoking expansion of the topic or principle expressed in the quotation, ideally including some fresh perspective on a particular aspect of SAA recovery. What we're looking for is your experience, your strength, your hope, and your voice. ***Please note that we have found that using "I" rather than "We" in the body of the meditation makes for a stronger meditation message.***

At the bottom of the page, a concise statement in the author's own words should summarize the main idea of the meditation or offer a poignant challenge or affirmation.

Each entry should be 200-300 words including the quotation and the closing affirmation, so that each meditation will fit on a single page. Multiple entries may address slightly different aspects of the same subject.

Submissions must include your name and contact information and be accompanied by a signed release. By signing the release, the author grants the ISO of SAA, Inc. sole rights to edit, alter, publish, or reject any submission. A blank release form is available in this newsletter or may be obtained from the ISO office or downloaded and printed from the SAA website.

SAA Approved Literature

<i>Sex Addicts Anonymous (SAA Book)</i>	<i>Abstinence</i>
<i>Abstinence and Boundaries in SAA</i>	<i>The Bubble</i>
<i>First Step to Recovery</i>	<i>Writing to Prisoners</i>
<i>Getting Started in Sex Addicts Anonymous</i>	<i>Group Guide</i>
<i>Sex Addicts Anonymous (SAA Pamphlet)</i>	<i>Intergroup Guide</i>
<i>Sexual Sobriety and the Internet</i>	<i>Three Circles</i>
<i>A Special Welcome to the Woman Newcomer</i>	<i>Tools of Recovery</i>
<i>Recovery from Compulsive Sexual Avoidance</i>	

Meditation Book Vision Statement

(approved by the Literature Committee)

“The SAA Meditation Book carries the message of recovery by collecting into one volume diverse voices of the SAA Fellowship to serve as a resource for meditation and prayer for the addict in recovery and the sex addict who still suffers.”

Send your meditation, contact information, and signed release form to the ISO.

(release form is located on the last page of this newsletter)

Please send a digital copy of your submission (attached as .doc, .docx, .rtf, .txt, or in the body of the email) to [**meditation@saa-recovery.org**](mailto:meditation@saa-recovery.org).

Include complete contact information and, if possible, a signed scanned release. All submitters must send a release form – one per author - before submissions can be considered.

You can also send your meditation, contact information, and signed release by postal mail to: ISO, PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270.

If at all possible, please send your submission in digital form. We will, of course, consider all submissions. You will be sent a confirmation that your submission has been received.

Meditation Writing Tele-Workshops

All those interested in contributing to the Meditation Book are invited to attend one or more tele-workshops. We will go over the guidelines and process for submission; there will be ample time for writing, and time for sharing as well. Please consider joining us for this unique service opportunity!

All workshops are the 4th Sunday of each month at 5:00 p.m. Central Time and last until 6:30 p.m.

Sunday, March 25

Sunday, April 22

Sunday, May 22

Sunday, June 24

Sunday, July 22

To register, call the ISO at 1-800-477-8191,
or send an e-mail to:

[**meditation@saa-recovery.org**](mailto:meditation@saa-recovery.org)

Personal Story Submissions for *Sex Addicts Anonymous*:

Do you have a personal story to tell?

The ISO Literature Committee continues to accept personal stories for consideration for future editions of the SAA book, *Sex Addicts Anonymous*.

Guidelines for Submission of a Personal Story

Stories in the SAA book, *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, are an intensely personal way to help carry the SAA message to the addict who still suffers. While there are no absolute requirements for the content of a personal story, the Literature Committee recommends that a story describe:

- What it was like before entering SAA;
- What happened to bring you into SAA;
- What happened within SAA;
- What it is like now with the ongoing experience of SAA recovery.

It is recommended that a story emphasize the experience, strength, and hope found in SAA recovery. It is further recommended that the writer disclose his or her length of sobriety (or abstinence from addictive behaviors).

Personal stories are intended to help carry the message to the addict who still suffers. As much as possible, highly explicit descriptions of places, people, or acting out behaviors should be avoided. The best stories provide sobering details of unmanageability contrasted with the hope of recovery from sex addiction.

The preferred format for manuscripts is double-spaced with one-inch margins on all four sides in MS Word (or similar). Each submission must be accompanied by a signed release conveying ownership to the ISO of SAA, Inc. The release form is available on the last page of this newsletter or from the ISO office or SAA website (www.saa-recovery.org).

Submissions and a signed release form may be e-mailed as attachments to the ISO Literature Committee at info@saa-recovery.org.

They may also be sent in hard copy by postal mail to the ISO Literature Committee at ISO of SAA, PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270.

IMPORTANT

Please carefully read the following before submitting a personal story for *Sex Addicts Anonymous*:

Every story submitted for possible inclusion in the SAA book will be thoroughly reviewed and given in-depth consideration by the ISO Literature Committee, which is deeply grateful to every member who takes the time to write and submit a story.

The ISO of SAA, Inc. and the ISO Literature Committee do not guarantee that any particular story will appear in a future edition of the SAA book. Once submitted with a signed release form (located on the last page of this newsletter), the written story becomes the permanent property of the ISO of SAA, Inc., and may be edited or modified as deemed appropriate by the ISO Literature Committee.

Please also note that, while the ISO Literature Committee will acknowledge the initial receipt of a story, the ISO may or may not communicate further with the author about the suitability of the story or the likelihood of publication in *Sex Addicts Anonymous*.

Audio Version of SAA Green Book Now Available for the Visually Impaired

The National Library Service has recently produced an audio version of our SAA Green Book (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*). This audio book was produced by the government and is not available for sale by or use by the ISO of SAA, Inc. However, those who qualify for eligibility under the government guidelines may receive the SAA audio book from the National Library Service.

The website address for the National Library Service is:

www.loc.gov/nls/

***If you know of someone who could benefit from this service,
please let them know about this exciting development!***

Compulsive Sexual Avoidance

New Pamphlet Available!

The ISO is pleased to announce approval
of a new piece of SAA literature:

“Recovery from Compulsive Sexual Avoidance A Return to Intimacy”

is now available online at the ISO website:
www.saa-store.org

Thank you to all who put so much hard work into producing
this new addition to SAA literature!

SAA pamphlets available to read online!

The International Service Organization of SAA is pleased to announce the availability of SAA pamphlets on the SAA website (www.saa-recovery.org). The pamphlets may be found by following the “SAA literature” sub-tab from the Home page. Also available online are the pamphlets in Spanish and the “Pathway to Recovery” pamphlet in French.

This milestone has been accomplished by the combined efforts of the ISO Literature Committee, the ISO office, and the ISO Board of Trustees and its committees, specifically the Online Presence Committee and the International Development Committee. We believe that ready access to SAA literature online will greatly enhance the capacity of member groups and individual members of the fellowship to carry the SAA message of recovery more effectively and more efficiently.

As before, the printed pamphlets are available for purchase from the ISO – either through the online SAA Store or by telephone or postal mail from the ISO office. Don't forget to ask about our volume discount.

This development is a good example of how the ISO is working to support members of the fellowship and member groups. As you benefit from having access to the SAA pamphlets online, please remember that the ISO is totally dependent on financial support from members, member groups, and intergroups to offer and maintain this type of service for the fellowship. If you appreciate what the ISO does for you, please consider making a tax-deductible contribution today.

Inter-Fellowship Relations Committee Report

Our committee's main focus these past two years have been to get a pamphlet into the fellowship's hands for ready reference. This tri-fold pamphlet explains the purpose of the Inter-Fellowship Relations Committee, its history with the Inter-fellowship Forum, and with reference to guides for S-groups and COSA. It has now cleared several committees for approval and the ISO Board of Trustees. It now resides with the literature committee. After their approval, we will be able to print it.

At the last convention, very little interest was shown by members of the fellowship for our committee. We feel that we have not share with you the impact of our work. As chair of the Inter-Fellowship Relations Committee for the last ten years, I feel that it is time for someone new to take over. I had a passion for the recovering addict who is in a geographical area with only one SAA meeting. By cooperating with other S-fellowships, we have created a website that enables anyone who is sexually addicted to get to a S-fellowship meeting, in their geographical area. With that meeting, the suffering addict is able to continue their progress of recovery.

Once a year, I, as the board representative, or these past years as the IRC Chair, have had a face to face meeting with the Inter-Fellowship Forum. Members of other S-Fellowships discuss with us how we can cooperate with each other to reach the still suffering sex addict. At the next convention, look for a tri-fold of our committee work and consider joining us for a face to face meeting there and a monthly telephone conference call meeting of one hour to further the mission statement of our committee.

Francie E., Chair
Doug C, Board liaison

History of SAA Project

The ISO Literature Committee is working on a project to compile and document the history of the founding and development of SAA. The research and initial writing will be done by a long-time member of the fellowship, who has graciously volunteered to spearhead this project.

Questions about the project and information or anecdotes for possible inclusion in this volume can be sent by postal mail to the ISO office, or e-mailed to:

info@saa-recovery.org

ISO Income/Expense Summary

As of January 31, 2012

	Jan 12	Monthly Avg	Jul '11-Jan 12
Income			
Sales	16,921.41	15,220.68	106,544.79
Shipping & Handling	1,397.50	1,312.14	9,184.99
Donations	28,708.03	26,450.62	185,154.36
Delegate Meeting Registration	100.00	19.29	135.00
Interest Earned	33.77	31.66	221.63
Other Income	0.00	6.93	48.49
Convention Revenue	641.00	108.00	756.00
Total Income	47,801.71	43,149.32	302,045.26
Cost of Goods Sold	8,207.85	7,247.76	50,734.31
Gross Profit	39,593.86	35,901.56	251,310.95
Expense			
Wages	17,885.87	18,378.42	128,648.96
Insurance	320.54	320.54	2,243.78
Payroll Taxes	1,530.64	1,501.26	10,508.81
Employee Benefits (Not Wages)	3,439.75	3,627.35	25,391.42
Travel-Related	6,574.08	2,522.84	17,659.85
Office Postage	12.02	39.97	279.82
Communications	627.74	736.33	5,154.34
Professional Fees	500.00	71.43	500.00
Office Expense	363.82	817.82	5,724.74
Occupancy Expenses	1,198.58	1,359.72	9,518.05
Board/Committee Expense	1,015.41	1,352.81	9,469.65
The Outer Circle	1,785.90	1,399.37	9,795.59
Financial Charges	930.17	928.91	6,502.37
Bad Debts/Refunds	30.45	124.92	874.43
Translating/Literature Projects	0.00	142.86	1,000.00
Depreciation	175.00	175.00	1,225.00
Payroll Expenses	18.66	19.42	135.94
Total Expense	36,408.63	33,518.96	234,632.75
Net Income	3,185.23	2,382.60	16,678.20

Financial Results for January 2012

In the month of January we showed a surplus of \$3,185.23. We had budgeted for a surplus of \$9,051.70. This was below our estimated surplus by \$5,866.47.

Our sales revenue for the SAA Green Book exceeded our estimate by \$635.65 for January and has exceeded our estimate by \$1,760.58 for the current service year.

Our pamphlet and booklet sales exceeded our estimate by \$1,543.41 for January but are below our estimate by \$118.90 for the current service year. Our bronze medallions exceeded our estimate by \$580.00 in January and have exceeded our estimate by \$2,528.41 for the current service year. Our Chips exceeded our estimate by \$57.50 in January but are below our estimate by \$624.78 for the current service year.

Our total sales for January exceeded our estimate by \$165.41.

Individual donations were below our estimate by \$5,897.37 for January and are below our estimate by \$4,003.69 for the current service year. Group donations were below our estimate by \$2,654.60 for January but have exceeded our estimate by \$1,298.05 for the current service year.

Our product inventory is valued at \$30,319.59.

Our expenses were below our estimate by \$2,454.67 in January.

Summary of the current service year (July 1, 2011 to January 31, 2012):

- Sales are below our estimate by \$10,747.21
- Donations are below our budget estimate by \$2,705.64
- Expenses have exceeded our budget estimate by \$2,940.95
- Net surplus is below our budget estimate by \$14,075.00

Note: Discontinuance of Non-SAA material has added \$9,102.37 to our budget shortfall

Our operational reserve amount is \$131,921.00 and is fully funded. This is the estimated amount necessary to run the office for four months, and is reset each January. Our other reserve accounts, which are funded based on sales, were all fully funded.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

In Your Service,

Joe H.


Director of Operations

director@saa-iso.org

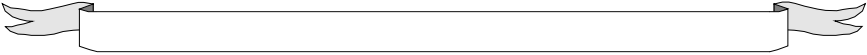
[Editor's Note: The ideas expressed in the literature section of The Outer Circle reflect the opinions of the authors of those articles, and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the ISO or of the SAA fellowship as a whole.]

From the Editor by Mike L.

And the journey continues. New Year's Eve was very uneventful for me. I stayed up late enough to shake the hands of a few men who were living in a facility for dealing with another addiction and then went home and went to bed. This was a far cry from the year when I decided that my resolution was going to be that I was going to have a lot more sex, since I was convinced that I was not having enough. That was one of the shortest-lived resolutions on record, as an experience I had later on that New Year's Eve was enough to convince me that I was perhaps a bit hasty in making this resolution. Still, I was several years shy of actually doing anything about my sex addiction.



*The topic article for the November/
December issue is short and simple:
"The Home Group."*



I was able to get to sleep reasonably quickly, since my subdivision has passed an ordinance against setting off fireworks. This is not to say that one or two people decided to ignore the ordinance, and still it was nothing like it had been in previous years.

I was therefore able to get up at a normal hour on New Year's Day, something else that my addiction kept me from doing on a regular basis, and not just on New Year's Day. Driving around town at nine a.m., I decided to drop in at the club of another Twelve-Step program I belong to. I there discovered that there was going to be a meeting of another fellowship I haven't attended in some time and that goes through the Twelve Steps of that fellowship in the course of a year; so I was getting in on the ground floor. I think the issues addressed by that fellowship in some ways underlie all of my other addictions. Although this was not my first meeting of this particular fellowship, in some ways it felt as though it was

since I haven't been around there for so long. I had once again that familiar first-meeting feeling that I was being given permission not to suffer the results of the issues addressed in that fellowship. I have been happily attending those Sunday morning meetings since then, and look forward to some genuine recovery from that issue.

I'm very happy with the articles in this issue of *The Outer Circle*. I've had similar experiences to that of Fernando F., the author of the Tradition Three article, where I had a spiritual experience as the result of reading one or two sentences in the SAA Green Book that addressed a particular issue I was experiencing. Anytime I find myself running low on articles, I take the opportunity, rather than using up every article I have, to pore over past issues of the newsletter for articles that I think deserve a second hearing. I found a couple this time that I really enjoyed, and I hope you will too.

Speaking of articles, the topic article for the November/December issue is short and simple: "The Home Group." Do you have a home group? Most people I talk to do have one. How has your home group helped you? How has it been a factor in your recovery? Feel free to take this topic in any direction you like. Also keep in mind that I'm always looking for articles related to the Steps and Traditions for that issue. For example, the July/August issue will have—I hope—articles on Steps and Traditions Seven and Eight. See the page at the back of the issue for deadline dates and addresses for submitting the articles, either electronically or by regular mail.

I hope you enjoy this issue of *The Outer Circle*. I look forward to talking with you again next issue.

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

I feel compelled to make a response to a letter in the current issue's "Dear Will" column, which includes the following: "A woman whom I had never seen before came to the earlier meeting, and she really triggered me. I had a hard time focusing on the meeting."

I've been taught in recovery to avoid use of the word "trigger"; I often used to use it, or some similar language, so that I could maintain a firm grip on the role of victim. Recovery has taught me about taking responsibility for myself and my actions. I used to defend my objectification of women who were dressed in revealing clothing ("they are looking for it"); I now realize that it doesn't matter what others are doing—for this sex addict, what is most important is what I do in situations that could arouse my compulsion. There is a beautiful passage in the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* that reads:

"Assuming we are spiritually fit, we can do all sorts of things alcoholics are not supposed to do. People have said we must not go where liquor is served; we must not have it in our homes; we must shun friends who drink; we must avoid moving pictures which show drinking scenes; we must not go into bars; our friends must hide their bottles if we go to their houses; we mustn't think or be reminded about alcohol at all. Our experience shows that this is not necessarily so.

"We meet these conditions every day. An alcoholic who cannot meet them, still has an alcoholic mind; there is something the matter with his spiritual status." (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, fourth edition, pp. 100-01)

Over my years in SAA I have frequently shuddered to hear men talking about women who "triggered" them in meetings, simply because they were women recovering from sex addiction. This strikes me as unfair, and a risk to the female members of our fellowship, who are sometimes in the position of being blamed for making things harder for the straight men in the program. Our local SAA is in a very mixed area sexual orientation-wise, and many of our meetings have a large demographic of gay men. Although I hear some of these men talk about the occasional struggles of being in the rooms with lots of attractive men, I have not heard any of them complain that someone was triggering them in a meeting. It is possible that straight men may do this as part of the privilege that we hold in our culture. I encourage all members to speak about the actual and potential harm being done to female SAA members when a male complains that their presence in meetings is triggering. In my opinion, it is our duty to make our program available to all who need it. Men do not own sole rights to this program. If I am in a position where I am too distracted to be in a meeting or to keep the meeting safe for all, then I need to graciously step out and work on my

issue through another resource (e.g. sponsor, program friends, inventory, etc.).

Grateful for the gifts in SAA,

Tim E., SF Bay Area

[Editor's Note: For an alternative viewpoint, see this issue's "Dear Grace" column.]

Tradition Four

By Arthur L.

"Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or SAA as a whole."

Near the beginning of Tradition Four in the Green Book, the question is raised "How can an organization function without any outward control in establishing its groups?" (p.83). In the case of SAA and other Twelve-Step programs, this has actually proved to be the best way in terms of a local fellowship having groups that are attractive to its members.

If there were a central governing board that required as part of its bylaws, say, a certain percentage of Step meetings, a certain percentage of speaker meetings, a certain percentage of Tradition meetings and so forth, some of the meetings might not have a chance to get off the ground because they might not be the kinds of meetings that members of the local fellowship wanted.

While the Tradition itself reminds us that each individual group should not take actions "in matters affecting other groups or SAA as a whole," it is true that individual groups may take other groups into consideration in making decisions. For example, members of the fellowship may consider, if starting a second Friday night meeting, not to have the meeting within a five-mile radius of an already existing meeting on Friday nights; or they might decide to have a second meeting anyway and find that both of them are very well attended.

In any event, each group, even those that have the same basic format, is going to have its own specific character. That is why I hear in so many meetings, not just of SAA but of other Twelve-Step groups, "We suggest that you try six different meetings before deciding if our fellowship is for you." This suggestion would work less well if the groups themselves were not autonomous and could not establish their own personalities.

Dear Will

Submitted by SAA Men's Outreach Subcommittee

Dear Will,

I am fairly new to SAA. I have heard a couple of First Steps that included some real horror stories as to things that happened to these guys growing up. I didn't have those kinds of experiences, and yet I am still a sex addict. I think that if I knew why I became a sex addict, I would have a lot easier time recovering from it. Can you tell me some reasons why I might be a sex addict, since I don't have any traumatic childhood memories?

Normal Childhood

Dear Normal:

I was taught very early on that I can "why" myself right out the door of recovery. I may never know the answer to "why", but I do have a solution through SAA. SAA is not the place to find out why we are sex addicts. It is also not the place to learn how to act out less often. SAA is a place to find the solution, if we want a solution. Nobody can ever truly know why he or she is a sex addict, any more than anybody can know why he or she has multiple sclerosis. But here, together, we can find freedom from our addiction.

This does not mean that one need always maintain an attitude of "You dare not look." (*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, p. 49) Along those lines, I want to take this opportunity to describe some of the differences between therapy and SAA's Twelve-Step recovery program. As described on page 74 of *Sex Addicts Anonymous*:

"We may also seek therapy as part of a commitment to self-improvement or awareness. . . . We may simply consider therapy part of an ongoing program of psychological self-care. . . . In addition, some of us have sought professional medical treatment for depression, anxiety, or other mental health issues. . . . For some of us, both the SAA program and treatment may be necessary for full recovery. However, the process of recovery through working the Twelve Steps is a completely different process from therapy, although the two may complement each other. For us, it was important to recognize that none of the resources mentioned above are substitutes for working the SAA program. SAA neither endorses nor opposes any other fellowship or religious organization, or the use of any particular medication or form of therapy. As SAA members, we view all these as outside help that is available if we need it."

Most of us come to SAA because we desire to stop compulsive sexual

behaviors which are causing us chronic negative consequences and yet we find ourselves unable to control. The origins or causes of our addictive behavior are less important initially than gaining abstinence from destructive behaviors. Once our recovery from addictive behaviors gains solidity, some members gain the clarity to explore their emotional and psychological issues.

In fellowship,
Will

Step Four

by George T.

“Examples of troubling emotions that bring out our character defects may include fear, envy, loneliness, shame, embarrassment, or self-hatred.” (Sex Addicts Anonymous, p. 35)

I have found the laundry list contained in this quotation from the Green Book to be very helpful over the years. It’s certainly not the only list of its kind; I think immediately of the “seven deadlies” that have been referred to in the literature of another Twelve-Step program. I wasn’t familiar with any such lists when I originally did my Fourth Step. So I wrote down each individual situation in my resentment list and saw each of them as an isolated event, none of which had anything to do with each other or with the rest of my life.

Even though I had read the phrase “the exact nature of our wrongs” many times between the time I came into the SAA program and when I eventually did my Fourth Step, these words really didn’t resonate with me. My sponsor was able to pull out three or four items from my resentment inventory and say, “Do you see how you’re doing the exact same thing each time? These actions all derive from fear.” Fear is of course the big deadly, although any of the others could easily apply.

It was from there that I was able to see how often my behaviors all boil down to a very few underlying emotions, not necessarily just the “six deadlies” outlined in the Green Book, although these six pretty much run the gamut, with anger being another big one. From there, I was able to see a little more clearly that my sex inventory was pretty much the same behavior over and over again, just with different partners.

And from there, it became obvious to me why the sex inventory was included in the original Fourth Step, even though it was designed for a program whose primary concern was not sex. My experiences with sex present a particularly clear example of how I misuse this God-given gift, similar to the way I sink into the “six (or seven) deadlies” in my misuse of the way that I respond to those “life on life’s terms” situations.

So now, when I am confronted with a situation and am inclined to react, something at which I am expert, I stop first and count to ten (well, a hundred sometimes). Then I ask myself, "to which of the 'six or seven deadlies' am I resorting to deal with this situation, rather than dealing with it in a healthy manner?" Sometimes I still find it easier to go to the "deadlies" at least for a time; I know I can always, and eventually do, make the conscious decision to act in accordance with the principles of the program in responding to the situation in question.

Dear Grace

Submitted by SAA Women's Outreach Subcommittee

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 receives. *Names have been changed to protect anonymity**

Dear Grace,

What do I do if another woman triggers me at a meeting? Can I ask her to stop coming to the meeting?

Triggered

Dear Triggered,

Sex addicts often find that their emotions are heightened when they stop acting out. It isn't surprising that we may have strong feelings about another member because of what they are wearing, the explicit details of someone's share, or personality conflicts. It may be helpful to ask for direction from a sponsor or trusted member.

Some face-to-face meeting formats have a section requesting that members raise their hands if they find a speaker's share triggering due to explicit details of acting out or language. The speaker would then modify their share by talking in more general terms. It's perfectly acceptable to raise your hand if you need to. Other members choose to quietly leave the room for their own safety, rejoining the meeting when they are comfortable. If we react strongly to a share, it may be that we have work to do around a similar issue. A sponsor or trusted recovery friend can guide us in finding appropriate steps to take.

It's important to remember that our primary purpose is to carry the message

to the addict who still suffers. Issues of meeting etiquette, meeting boundaries, etc. can be tricky issues for individuals in groups to come to terms with. There are bound to be disagreements. The health and safety of the meeting is what is important, while being inclusive to all members. This is why we rely on our Higher Power and the process of group conscience to come to group decisions. Our groups are founded on a stronger foundation than the will of individuals.

The only requirement for SAA membership is a desire to stop addictive sexual behavior. No one member has authority over another, so it isn't appropriate to ask one member to stop attending a meeting. You may choose to attend other face-to-face or phone meetings. The Third Tradition opens the door to all sex addicts seeking help, so that we will be welcomed in our meetings and encouraged to keep coming back. This may challenge us to open our hearts and our meeting to those different from us and to seek ways to show the compassion and hope that have been given to us.

Good luck on your recovery journey!
Grace

Disclaimer: we cannot guarantee that this advice will be equally applicable to every woman, although it is our hope that such will be the case.
– SAA Women's Outreach Subcommittee

The Fellowship of SAA—Thoughts about its Deeper Meaning

by Jim L.

We often read or hear references to the SAA fellowship. Typically, we assume that such statements refer to the broader physical membership of SAA—anyone anywhere who is willing to work this simple program as a means of recovery from sex addiction. It is the same in other Twelve-Step fellowships. But our demographic view may be overlooking the fact that there is a spiritual dimension to fellowship, as well. What is the deeper meaning of our fellowship?

Recently, while reading a meditation, I was struck by the remarkable similarity between fellowship within SAA and fellowship with God that we cultivate, as we work the Twelve-Step program.

The model for fellowship within SAA is our relationship with God. Conformity to God's will, not our own, becomes the driving principle that guides our behavior. To the extent that we can let go of our self-centeredness and grasp the will of our Higher Power, we will experience the conscious contact mentioned in Step Eleven. We will relate differently to other people, who are striving toward the same goal. We will experience fellowship. In other words, as we let go of self-will and grasp the reality that God will provide all that we need, we are free then to be concerned about others.

Fellowship is rooted in the fact that genuine relationship—real intimacy—is based on love. God loves me, so I am free to love myself and to love others. That means that we are free not to regret the past or to shut the door on it. We are free to place the needs of others within the fellowship ahead of our own needs. Service to others out of love becomes a motivating force in our lives.

Our desires become less self-centered and more in line with God's will. We begin to see that our "wants" are different from our "needs." That realization clears our thinking, so that we can actually see the needs of others.

Fellowship means that we can relate to other addicts in their struggles. We recognize that sex addiction is manifested in many different ways, but we also learn in recovery that we are able to understand and to empathize with other addicts, because of our own experiences. To have someone understand my struggles and accept me as I am—warts and all—is a powerful source of support and encouragement. To be able to support and encourage another addict gives me hope for continued recovery.

Service is an integral part of fellowship. As we experience love and acceptance, we are energized to reach out to others—to see ways I can be

of service to them. It is in service within the fellowship—locally, regionally, and internationally—that I find enormous gratification and encouragement both in my personal recovery and in helping others to recover.

The power to work in fellowship comes from God. I am incorrigibly self-centered. The power to look beyond self comes from my Higher Power. Likewise, my ability to love and support my fellow addict comes from God. Without God, I would focus only on my own personal interests and, in doing so, remain in an addictive pattern of behavior.

The joy of recovery is experienced primarily in fellowship. Every day I learn from other addicts in the fellowship. Every day, I experience the privilege of working with other addicts and sharing in their struggles, their sorrows, and their triumphs.

The program of SAA—to be specific, the Twelve Steps—has given me the enormous privilege of experiencing fellowship, the perfect model for which can be found in an ever-improving conscious contact with my Higher Power. By God's grace, I found SAA. By God's grace, I enjoy the benefits of living in spiritual unity—in fellowship—with recovering addicts at home and around the world.

A Sleepless Night: Taking Refuge in the Third Step

by Larry E.

It is five a.m. I've been awake for several hours, unable to detach from my conscious self. I tried the old way to detach: sexual fantasy. But as a result of being in recovery, I have peeked behind the curtain of my illusions enough so that magical thinking no longer holds the same allure or power it once did.

Now, I usually fall right off to sleep. Unburdened of the lies and deceit of the double life I lived in my active addiction, sleep typically comes easily. But sometimes my thoughts are chaotic; even meditation does not still them. Tonight is one of those times.

Nothing specific cries out for attention. I am simply unsettled. So I get out of bed, ponder, and reach for acceptance and my keyboard. Writing helps calm the swells of the rough sea I am trying to navigate.

When acceptance eludes my grasp, I can turn to the Third Step. A little more than five years ago I first made the decision to turn my life and my will over to the care of a higher power. What did it mean to me to make that decision?

I was used to making decisions. It's what I did in my workaday world then.

Every day I heard witnesses, weighed evidence, and constructed a logical chain of connections leading to a rational decision. I made more than 4000 such decisions. Some took as many as eighty pages to explain, but most were easier. Was the decision to turn over my life like those?

In some ways it was. In Step One, I witnessed thirty-some years of addictive behavior and the chaos and unmanageability that resulted from it. It was a logical decision to turn away from the destructive karma of cause and effect in my active addiction. But to turn my life and will over to a higher power, even one which I had come to believe could restore my sanity, took more than logic. It took faith.

Having long ago found traditional religion sorely wanting, I was plum out of faith. But I knew how to act "as if." I had acted for a long time. I knew how to act as if I was in control, even though I was terrified. I knew how to act as if I was a trustworthy husband, even though I had repeatedly broken my vows. So I acted as if I had faith.

When I cannot sleep, perhaps my unconscious self is afraid, or resentment and expectations bubble up, and I feel angry or hurt. But mostly I'm practicing my old ways. I think I am in control. I am deluded that my will is enough to achieve serenity, to restore my sanity. After a couple of hours of staring at the ceiling, I remember the Third Step.

Time to make that decision again for the umpteenth time; to turn my life and my will over to the care of my higher power; to have faith in something other than me; to let go of control; to let whatever power exists care for me, and to love myself just for being, as I know others do.

There; that feels better. It is now six a.m. It took me an hour to write this. Some nights are tough; some days, too. Being in the program is not a panacea. It does not ensure bliss. On the contrary, it requires hard work and rigorous honesty. For me, it also requires decisions to be made repeatedly to find refuge in the wisdom of the steps.

Maybe I can go to sleep now. Or maybe I'll take a nap this afternoon. That's okay. Once again I put myself out there and let go of the result. For me, that is enough faith that a higher power exists in some form and that care and love flows from that power. Sweet dreams to all my peers in the program and to all those who still suffer.

Tradition Three

by Fernando F.

I had been in the SAA program for several years and had reached a certain point in my recovery, and found that I could not get any further. I was acting out every few months. At one point, I shared a story related to some inconvenience I had experienced as a result of my use of alcohol. After the meeting, a man came up to me and told me that I might want to take a look at my alcohol issues. I said that I would; because I was convinced that I didn't have any, I was essentially doing it so that I could tell him that I had done as he had suggested.

It was essential that I find an open meeting of this group because I knew from being in SAA that closed meetings were just for those who actually had the issue being addressed in the group. It was easy enough to find open meetings of the group, of course; a little more difficult was figuring out a way to introduce myself at these meetings. I eventually settled on introducing myself as a member of some groups that were related to alcohol, groups that I was actually attending from time to time. With a couple of outspoken exceptions, the members of the group were more than willing to accept me as I introduced myself.

I did stop drinking alcohol as a result of attending these groups, and it was not long until I discovered that my life was improving in a number of ways, including that I was no longer acting out. So the day eventually came when I introduced myself the same way the others did. On that first day, I told a very abbreviated version of my story, leaving out all references to sex addiction of course. In response, one of the members of the group, an old-timer in both senses of the word, said in reply, "Fernando, you always have fit in here real well."

Fast-forward to many years later. I discover a couple of members of my local SAA groups using a particular phrase to introduce themselves, a phrase I had never heard before and that makes no reference to any addiction, let alone sex addiction. This really annoys me, to the point that at one meeting I make an "indirect" reference to their way of introducing themselves. Eventually I stop attending the meetings where I'm most likely to encounter either of these individuals out of frustration that nobody else in the group recognizes that my way is better.

One day I'm reading *Sex Addicts Anonymous* and encounter this sentence on page 82: "Although it has become customary for members to identify as sex addicts at meetings, it is not required that we do so." The reading goes on to explain that having the freedom not to identify as sex addicts allows those members to "feel safe to open up and share about our addiction, many of us for the first time in our lives."

I think back way past my recent encounters with these two men to the members of the groups I attended. Those groups had a much more longstanding tradition of appropriate self-introductions, a tradition that I was breaking every time I introduced myself. Further, I'm not aware of anything in the literature of that program that allows for other means of self-introduction. Still, the members in their wisdom were willing to let me safely find my way into the group until I finally realized that I belonged there as much as any other member.

I don't know whether these two SAA members will ever change their means of introducing themselves. However, I do know today, as a result of reading those few brief phrases in the SAA Green Book, that it is more important that they feel safe in attending SAA meetings. Better yet, I get to attend those meetings once again and can feel safe there as well.

To Know and Not to Do Is Not to Know

by Bill S.

[Editor's Note: This article originally appeared in the August/September 1998 issue of the SAA newsletter.]

I have resisted writing this for some time. I kept telling myself that I had to get it right before I could share it. I was wrong. My name is Bill and I am an incarcerated recovering sex addict.

I have been in treatment/group/recovery for going on nine years. For most of that time I was in prison, both the one with fences and guards and the prison of my imagination. It is only in the last few years that I have had any growth in my recovery. I knew what to do, or so I told myself, but I would not do it. I hemmed and hawed, rationalized, justified, and excused all of my slips. (My slips are giving in to lust, fantasy, and masturbation.) My slips often contain a lot of anger. I seem to be able to find anger in anything.

Currently my anger is directed at being in prison again. Yet I, with some help, put myself here just as assuredly as I did the first time. My Higher Power gave me direction and I chose my own way instead. Again, I knew, or said I did, that I should and could trust my Higher Power whom I call God, and didn't.

I finally came to the point where I decided that I didn't know, not in a sense that I could act on, and so I remembered something one of my therapists said to me, "To know and not to do is not to know." I wouldn't do, so I didn't know.

Well, now I know. I have come to the realization I need to do what I know to do and not wait, as I was, until I knew it all. I now take my life, my relationship with God, and my recovery, one day at a time. If, at the end of each day, I can lay down at peace with myself and my world, it is a good day. I used to live in the past or the future. Now I have set myself in the now. So, I don't say I know any more unless I am doing. As I do this, I find I know more and do more.

One other thing I have learned is to take things on their own terms and not try to force them to happen, to adjust to the program and not try to make the program adjust to me. Currently there are only meetings of two other Twelve-Step groups here. I was refusing to go to those meetings because I didn't suffer from either of those addictions and I could not talk about my addiction there. I cut myself off from any fellowship and sharing I could have had. I am trying to get them to let me back in. It is in God's hands.

It has felt good and right to be able to share my experience, hope, and recovery. Thank you for giving me the chance.

Humility

by Greg P.

My sponsor kept telling me I didn't understand how important humility is to my recovery. I had been sober for two months. I had not gotten more than thirty days of sobriety in months and I was feeling proud! And my ego has been my addict's best friend.

It was a Saturday night. My two kids from my first marriage were not with me. I was separated from wife number two who was six months' pregnant, and I was alone.

Most of my acting out has been with other women. And my addiction has cost me more than half a million dollars, years with my kids, and almost my state bar license. However, at that moment on Saturday night ordering pornography was not acting out—it was to me a matter of entitlement, since I had worked hard all week. I was accused of cheating, so why not act out?

About midnight, I ordered it. About fifteen minutes later, unbeknownst to me, my pregnant wife came over to see if I was cheating. She came upstairs and she heard what she thought were several women in bed with me. What she found instead was me, more embarrassed than I can put into words. She went from, "You cheating jerk!" to "You are pitiful," and that taught me humility.

I am new to recovery. I thought humility was a character defect until I started recovery. I have been sober eighty-four days. Admittedly I am stuck on Steps Eight and Nine, and I wish I could undo what I have done. But the gift of humility has me pointed in the right direction.

On Habit-Taking and Recovery

by Chris A.

The psychosexual therapist who referred me to SAA in London back in 2008 was very clear about the challenges of recovery. What he told me was that I was a sex addict and needed help and that recovery would take time. He warned me that stopping compulsive behaviors was exceedingly difficult and that not all who try to do so succeed. He also said that the task of replacing old behaviors with healthier new ones was even harder than staying clean. As a newcomer who had not attended any SAA meetings and who was still apprehensive about doing it, this came as some very unpalatable news, and I threw myself into recovery regardless. Now in my third year of recovery, and with the benefit of hindsight, I can see how wise and true his advice proved to be. Trying to consciously abstain from addictive acts is doomed to failure but instigating new and positive habits of behavior keeps me on the right path.

I just want in this short piece to focus on the subject of habit-taking which is perhaps mentioned in programme literature but I feel deserves a special focus as I believe it is key to sustainable recovery. I believe that habit taking is core to surrender to our Higher Power and also about then deepening contact with that Higher Power through action.

As a human being I am a creature of habit and these habits somewhat define who I am. An American philosopher believed that beliefs were the result of habits of mind where feeling became proposition and proposition belief. He believed that over time we were brought to belief through evidence that facts were in accordance with our predictions and emotions over time. That this is the case has of course been corroborated by science ever since. Of course neuroscience also reveals that human brains have the quality of plasticity; this is the virtue of being able to rewire the way the brain reacts to external stimulus.

This plasticity is of course is very relevant to the subject of sex addiction since sex addiction is a syndrome of actions that has been brought about by a grim repetition of habitual actions over time. In my opinion it is negative habit-taking over time that ingrains compulsion and makes sex addiction a progressive illness. For example, the more I look at porn the more I am disposed to be mesmerized by graphic images. The more I indulge an arousal template, the more I distort our attraction template. The more I use masturbation to fix my feelings, the less likely I am to choose to deal with tricky situations and the more likely to take refuge in the sweet poison of the bubble.

This leads to a spiritual malady. Each time I act out, I confirm negative beliefs about my self-worth, my likelihood of getting into intimate relationships and my ability to handle life on life's terms. Over time these

beliefs ossify and seem to me to be unalterable. Of course this is not true, but as an addict I have tunnel visions and I often do not have the perspective to realize this and to counter my behavior.

In recovery, the tools are ways of helping reverse these bad habits and replacing them with new ones. For instance, meetings involve honesty, disclosure and intimacy, not secrecy; the phone involves reaching out to others rather than keeping my own counsel; prayer involves submitting to a will stronger than my own and realizing that I cannot do it on my own; service involves courage and accepting responsibilities that I would have previously shirked. All these habits shake up my previous self-beliefs.

The use of tools and new habits links in to that old programme adage about not being able to think my way into new forms of acting, but I can act our ways into new ways of thinking. I believe it is engendering of new ideas through force of habits that somehow enables grace to enter my life and allows the promises to start to come true. This miracle comes through beliefs following habits, not the other way around.

The SAA Green Book says of Step Three, “[w]e loosen the grip on our old destructive patterns, perhaps not knowing yet what will replace them, but in the faith that something better will be revealed. . . . we let a Power greater than ourselves help guide out daily decisions, opening ourselves to the possibility that we may not know what is best for us” (pp. 28-29). For me this is the beginning of taking action to embed good habits: committing to the programme, getting a sponsor and to going to regular meetings. Naturally, all these new traditions felt quite awkward at first but once the tools started to become ingrained in my daily life, recovery became easier.

Similarly, the SAA Green Book says that Step Eleven is not just about prayer and meditation: “We also gradually accept that God’s will for us extends over all aspects of our lives, not just over our recovery from sex addiction. We find our serenity growing as we align our will with God’s in each new area that is revealed to us.” I like to think of this as welcoming God’s grace into my life. I never really understood the idea of Shame to Grace, but my time in the programme has gradually brought more clarity. I now understand that the good habits I have gotten into are not just to stay sober and away from bottom line behaviors, they also serve to help me stayed connected to my Higher Power.

Honesty—The Biggest Gift of Recovery

by Chuck H.

[Editor's Note: This article originally appeared in the April/May 1998 issue of the SAA newsletter.]

One of the most important things in my life is honesty. I have often said that I could live in a marriage without love if I had to, but I could never stay in a marriage without honesty. That's not to downplay the importance of love, but I truly believe honesty is the most important ingredient in any relationship, including the relationship with ourselves.

From the time I was very young I tried hard to practice honesty. The times when I was dishonest it would eat away at me until I had to come clean. I sometimes carried this too far. I remember driving back across town to return the seventy-five cents I realized a clerk had overpaid me. I've also driven back as far as twenty miles to return the pen I accidentally took when writing out a check at the grocery store. I never wanted anyone to say I wasn't an honest person.

As I started recovery, the topic of honesty would come up from time to time. I always felt good inside because I knew that there was at least one subject that didn't apply to me—and I really believed this! Then one day, several months into recovery, it hit me like a ton of bricks. Someone was reading those words I had heard hundreds of times about "rigorous honesty." My first layer of denial was shattered. I had not always been honest. I could remember a few white lies I had told my wife about where I had been. Still, I was nothing like those others in my group.

Over the next several months and even years I had new realizations and memories about my dishonesty. It was very much like the analogy of the onion. Layer by layer my denial was peeled away and underneath was the ugly truth about my lack of truth. It wasn't that I was pretending or hiding. I had hidden this character defect so deep within me, I just couldn't see it.

I remembered the many stories I had told to justify my numerous hours of cruising. I remembered all of the flat tires I had over the years—I've actually had only one in my entire life and my wife was with me that time. I had to help my friends jump start the car, put in their dock, give them a ride, paint their porch, etc., etc. The truth is that I had driven away my friends to make more time for my acting out. As my illness grew, my stories grew as well. They became large, detailed, and elaborate.

I lied to my employer to justify why I was away from work in the middle of the day; why I missed a meeting; why I couldn't remember the seminar they had sent me to. I lied to my kids why I was late picking them up; why I didn't have time to take them places; why they were left alone sleeping in the car in front of a bookstore. I lied to my friends, my co-workers, my

clergy, my counselor, perfect strangers, but mostly I lied to the person closest to me—my wife.

Some of the lies created other worries. Like the time I told my wife I had been working so hard I fell asleep at the wheel and put her car in a swamp on the way back to my motel room. The truth is I had been cruising all night long, put over five hundred miles on the car and fell asleep at the wheel at five-thirty in the morning. For years she worried herself sick whenever I was tired and had to drive somewhere.

Some of my lies were needed to cover up my other lies. As someone would find a flaw in story number one, I would look them in the eye and calmly explain story number two or three or four. Many times I never even had to use the lie, but, believe you me, I always had one prepared. I became very good at lying. It slowly took on a power of its own. Those closest to me never even suspected. I could tell a bold lie and preach the evils of dishonesty in the same conversation.

Was I scared of being found out? I was terrified. I lived my last few years before finding recovery in constant fear. I was afraid I would be discovered and lose my wife my kids, and my career. In the end, it was these constant fears that drugged me to the bottom and forced me into recovery.

Very slowly, in the safe arms of recovery, my dishonesty was made known to me. Little by little I was able to share with my sponsor and my group my lies and deceit. Because I had always held myself above reproach in the area of honesty, this process was particularly difficult and extremely painful. Down the road, as I began my amends, I told some of those closest to me about my dishonesty. I'll never forget the deep pain in my wife's eyes as I recounted many of the stories I had told and confessed that they were a fabrication. I still feel the hints of anger about all the needless worrying that she has done regarding my falling asleep at the wheel.

With many people in my life, and my wife in particular, the trust has come back ever so slowly. I've had to prove myself all over again. I've had to simply understand when there was doubt and mistrust. I've had to keep telling the truth and quickly confess during the times that I have been unable. The trust is slowly, ever so slowly, growing to be a part of our relationship again.

The stress level in my life today is only a fraction of what it was prior to my recovery. The primary reason is my newfound honesty. I no longer have to struggle to keep my private world from my everyday world. I no longer have to worry every time the phone rings. I no longer have to have a Story B and a Story C just in case Story A is found out. I no longer have that wrenching ache in my gut knowing that the words coming out of my mouth do not match the values within my soul.

Today I try to take the daily inventory suggested in Step Ten and when I

find I am dishonest promptly admit it. You know, I no longer drive across town to return the seventy-five cents or the store clerk's pen. I've realized that was a pious, self-righteous honesty. Today I have a real honesty. Not one I have to point out to other people, but rather one that I know about deep within my heart. I have been given many gifts in this program of recovery. None have been as profound as the gift of honesty.

E-mail Addresses

The following is a list of Board E-mail addresses and the LitCom e-mail addresses for the various regions, and the ISO staff E-mail addresses. The Board, LitCom, and the staff are always happy to hear from the fellowship.

The Chair of the Board of Trustees also receives a copy of e-mail to the service addresses of regional Board representatives.

Great Lakes Board Member and Alternate: BoardGL@saa-recovery.org
Intermountain Board Member and Alternate: BoardIM@saa-recovery.org
North Central Board Member and Alternate: BoardNC@saa-recovery.org
Northeast Board Member and Alternate: BoardNE@saa-recovery.org
North Pacific Board Member and Alternate: BoardNP@saa-recovery.org
South Central Board Member and Alternate: BoardSC@saa-recovery.org
Southeast Board Member and Alternate: BoardSE@saa-recovery.org
Southern Pacific Board Member and Alternate: BoardSP@saa-recovery.org
At Large Board Member: BoardAL@saa-recovery.org

Great Lakes LitCom Member and Alternate: LitComGL@saa-litcom.org
Intermountain LitCom Member and Alternate: LitComIM@saa-litcom.org
North Central LitCom Member and Alternate: LitComNC@saa-litcom.org
Northeast LitCom Member and Alternate: LitComNE@saa-litcom.org
North Pacific LitCom Member and Alternate: LitComNP@saa-litcom.org
South Central LitCom Member and Alternate: LitComSC@saa-litcom.org
Southeast LitCom Member and Alternate: LitComSE@saa-litcom.org
Southern Pacific LitCom Member and Alternate: LitComSP@saa-litcom.org
At Large LitCom Member: LitComAL@saa-litcom.org

The Outer Circle Editor: toc@saa-recovery.org

The ISO of SAA Board of Trustees has established an e-mail box which may be used to register comments, positive or negative, from the fellowship about the ISO staff: OOCChair@saa-recovery.org

ISO Office Location

3890-D North Freeway
Houston, TX 77022

Phone: (713) 869-4902

ISO Office Mailing Address

PO Box 70949
Houston, TX 77270

Toll Free: (800) 477-8191

Website: **www.saa-recovery.org**

Office e-mail: **info@saa-recovery.org**

The Outer Circle e-mail: **toc@saa-recovery.org**

Office Staff

Director of Operations: Joe H. **director@saa-iso.org**

Associate Director: Chris F. **chrisf@saa-iso.org**

Information Technician: Jonathan C. **webmaster@saa-recovery.org**

Information Technician: Daniel B. **djb@saa-iso.org**

Admin Assistant II: Tim D. **info@saa-recovery.org**

Outreach Specialist: Klaus P. **outreach@saa-recovery.org**

The Outer Circle Staff

Literature Editor: Mike L. **toc@saa-recovery.org**

ISO News Editor: Chris F. **business.assistant@saa-recovery.org**

Design & Layout : Chris F. **business.assistant@saa-recovery.org**

REGION REPRESENTED	BOARD MEMBER	BOARD ALTERNATE	LITERATURE COMMITTEE	LIT. COM. ALTERNATE
Great Lakes	Richard S.	Charles H.	Morris B.	Brooke Y.
Intermountain	Eric M. <i>Chair</i>	Kelley K.	Michael H.	Danny S.
North Central	Tim T.	Thea D.	Tom N.	<i>Vacant</i>
Northeast	Wayne K. <i>Treasurer</i>	Carl D.	Chris J.	Kevin C.
North Pacific	Bill I. <i>Vice-Chair</i>	Clif G.	Enoch D.	Sara B.
South Central	Byron W.	Andrew M.	Tracy R.	Dan C.
Southeast	Tom W.	Shira K.	John R. <i>Chair</i>	<i>Vacant</i>
Southern Pacific	Doug C. <i>Secretary</i>	Mike P.	Dejon M.	Mark W.
At Large			Cecilia P. <i>Secretary</i>	
At Large			Steven P.	
At Large			Steve W.	

How to Submit an Article to *The Outer Circle*

“Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to other sex addicts...” Step Twelve

First: Write from your experience, strength, and hope. Others may need to hear exactly what you have to say. Suggested Topics are listed below.

Second: Send your article: by e-mail to: toc@saa-recovery.org
 or mail to: ISO
 P. O. Box 70949
 Houston, TX 77270

Third: Send in the below **Release Form**. Download an extra from the SAA website if needed or feel free to make copies.

Submission Deadlines & Suggested Topics		
Next Issues	Deadline	Suggested Topics
Jul-Aug 2012	May 5, 2012	Steps & Traditions 7 & 8, and “ <i>Carrying the Message</i> ”
Sep-Oct 2012	July 5, 2012	Steps & Traditions 9 & 10, and “ <i>Working the SAA Program</i> ”
Nov-Dec 2012	Sep 5, 2012	Steps & Traditions 11 & 12, and “ <i>The Home Group</i> ”
Jan-Feb 2013	Nov 5, 2012	Steps & Traditions 1 & 2
Mar-Apr 2013	Jan 5, 2013	Steps & Traditions 3 & 4
May-Jun 2013	Mar 5, 2013	Steps & Traditions 5 & 6

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: _____

Witness: _____ Date: _____

