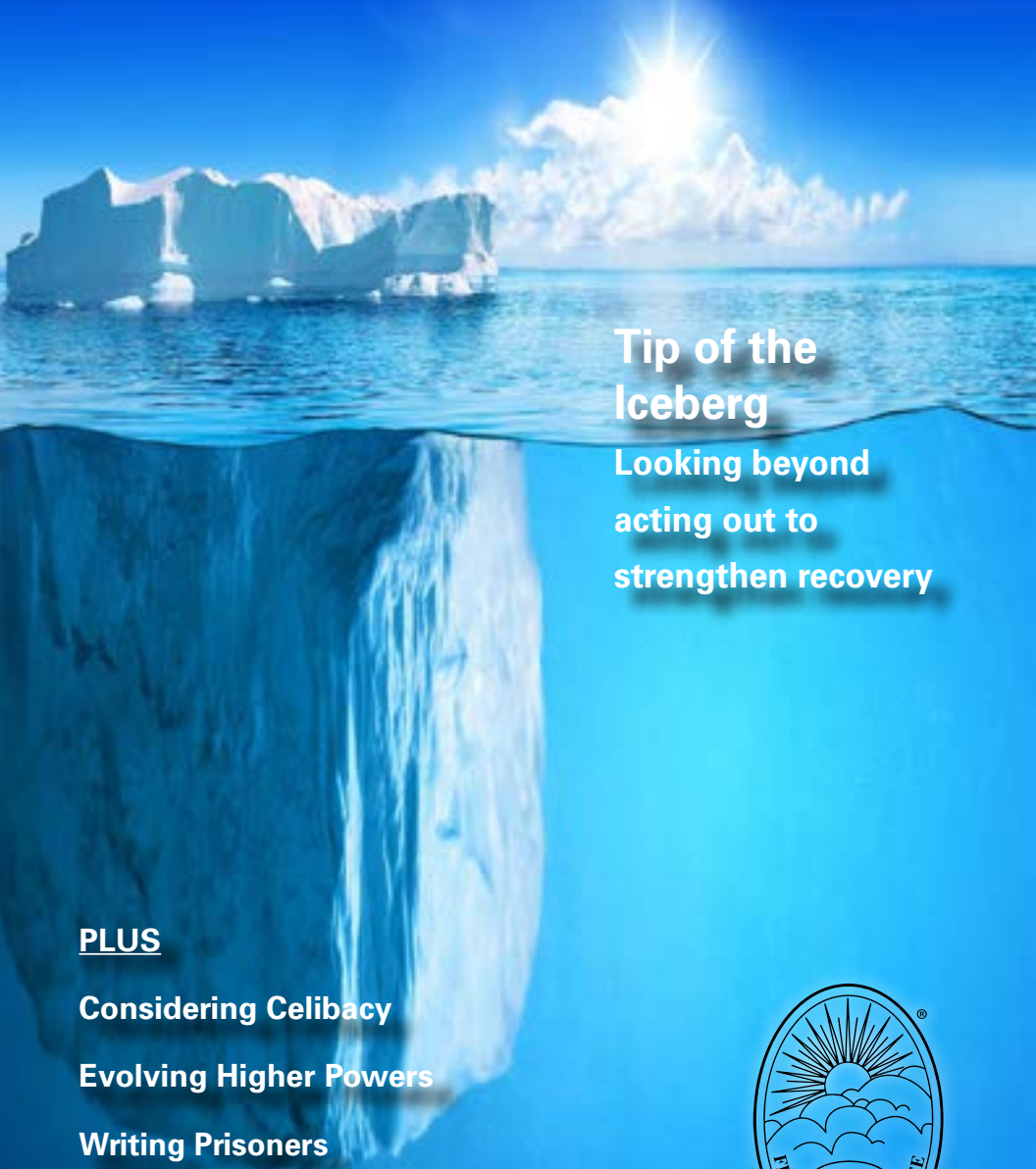


THE OUTER CIRCLE



Tip of the Iceberg

Looking beyond
acting out to
strengthen recovery

PLUS

Considering Celibacy

Evolving Higher Powers

Writing Prisoners





International Service Organization of SAA, Inc.

TOC articles contain the experiences and opinions of individual SAA members and do not represent the official views or positions of the ISO of SAA, Inc. or the SAA fellowship as a whole.

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The Outer Circle Mission

The mission of *The Outer Circle* is to provide information from the ISO and to share the experience, strength, and hope members have obtained from working the SAA program of recovery. As the first iteration put it in 1998, *The Outer Circle* newsletter “carries the message of hope to the sex addict who still suffers” — especially prisoners and others who don’t have the Internet.

Through *TOC*, SAA members contribute articles and poems that focus on working the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. It also communicates ISO news, regional activities, and other items of interest.

SAA meetings are encouraged to reproduce *TOC* at no charge and display it alongside other SAA literature. To keep costs down, please print out the online version.

If you have comments or suggestions, please see contact information on p. 30. To have an article considered for publication, see our Submission Guidelines on page 31.

To ensure that future issues can be offered without cost, please consider making a tax-deductible donation now to support publication of the newsletter.

March - April 2018

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FROM THE EDITOR

Uncovering SAA's Treasure Trove of Resources

BY GARY T.

Most of the requests for literature in a recent survey already exist.

Since becoming editor of *The Outer Circle* in 2013, I've continually been surprised by the number of people in our fellowship who don't know there's an SAA newsletter. So maybe it should come as no shock that the fellowship seems equally in the dark about the abundance of literature and materials available to support recovery.

The most recent evidence of that fact is a survey of the fellowship designed to assess literature needs. Turns out, most of the requests for literature already exist whether in the form of our Green Book or other literature that's been published in the past.

It's tempting to blame the fellowship for this lack of awareness. But to be honest, if I weren't *TOC* editor, and thus on the Literature Committee, I would probably be just as clueless.

That's why I've been advocating for what the Literature Committee is finally moving toward: an index of available literature based on need. For example, those needing help with the First Step could look under the index and discover *First Step to Intimacy* and *First Step to Recovery*. Other common needs would also be indexed such as shame, relapse, and circles.

And the index would include more than literature. Along with books and pamphlets, SAA has a treasure trove of recordings from past conventions that are full of amazing experience, strength, and hope. If you're surprised to learn that, you're not alone.

What would you like to see in an index that would help you better utilize SAA's resources? Now is the time to let your Literature Committee know, because another thing you may not realize is that it's here to serve you!

FROM THE DIRECTOR

How Healthy is Your Group?

BY JOE H.

**A group inventory
helps your
meeting identify
where it is doing
a good job — and
where it may
need to improve.**

How do I stay sober? Is my recovery meeting healthy? Do I have service in my outer circle? What can I do to be of service to those around me?

As we move into 2018, I will be taking a personal inventory and asking my groups do a group inventory. If I don't identify how I am doing as an individual and how my groups are doing, I will miss opportunities to improve my recovery and the recovery of those in my meeting groups.

As a member of a meeting group I can ask for a group conscience to consider going through a group inventory which can be found in the *ISO Group Guide*. The group inventory *should* help your meeting identify where it is doing a good job — and where it may need to improve. The *Group Guide* can be downloaded at our website, at <https://saa-recovery.org/Meetings/GroupGuide/>.

Service is essential to my program and the *Group Guide* offers many ways to be of service. I only need to read the information on service in the group manual which begins on page 32 to find the many ways I can be of service. I hope you will take the time to review the information in the *Group Guide* to see how you can be of service.

I would like to thank all of our members who have provided service, especially those members who are sponsors. It is no secret that our fellowship has grown quickly and the need for sponsors is great. I know taking on a sponsee can be scary, but I must overcome my fears and give away what I have learned in my recovery. I must put the needs of others ahead of my own to receive the gifts of recovery.

DEAR GRACE

How to Deal with Inappropriate Behavior

BY WOMEN'S
OUTREACH COMMITTEE

It can be difficult to bring a situation like this to light, but it is very important that we do.

Dear Grace,

A newcomer confided in me that they were approached in an obviously sexual manner by a long-term SAA member. Whom do I report this to and what do I tell my friend?

Concerned

Dear Concerned:

I want first to acknowledge your own recovery. One of the signs of spiritual awakening is that we become trustworthy, the type of person in whom others can confide. Then, I acknowledge that it can be difficult to bring a situation like this (sometimes referred to as “13th-stepping”) to light, but it is very important that we do. Here are some suggestions that may turn the situation from a negative, damaging one to a positive, growing one. Throughout, it is worth keeping in mind that both parties are recovering sex addicts and may need help and guidance from their sponsor and/or experienced group members.

To your first question, there is no specific person or entity to whom we “report” bad behavior. SAA has no human governing authority. Our groups are autonomous and spiritual, led by our Higher Power (Tradition Two). We want to adhere to spiritual principles and avoid gossip, yet also help our fellowship be safe to all. You may wish to talk to a sober member of your group (perhaps the trusted servant) and your sponsor, and encourage the newcomer to talk to their sponsor, if they have one.

If your group has specific boundaries in their format, as many meetings do, about meetings not being a place to meet sexual partners, follow those



suggestions first. If not, the group might take a Group Conscience about adding them. Some groups have two sober members confront a person who has behaved inappropriately and / or discuss with the sponsor of the individual who behaved inappropriately. We can remind the SAA member that taking advantage of another group member is not conducive to our group's primary purpose. If we ignore it out of fear of offending a long term member, more newcomers may experience the same unhealthy behavior.

An experience like that can cause a number of mixed feelings, and the newcomer may need extra support as they work through it. If the newcomer feels unsafe in that particular meeting, you may offer to attend a different meeting with them. Perhaps you can sponsor them or help them find a sober sponsor. The newcomer will need to

work the steps around any fears or resentments that have resulted, and ultimately focus on their own program and not the other person's behavior.

For the group, this situation can be a good reminder of the importance of Tradition Five: "Each group has but one primary purpose - to carry the message to the sex addict who still suffers."

Blessings,

Grace

Footnote: Is there 13th-stepping within the SAA fellowship?

You can go to the store section of saa-recovery.org, 2009 mp3 recordings for "How to Recognize and Avoid Exploitation in our Fellowship" by Staci S.

LIVING IN SOBRIETY

Critical Moments in Recovery

BY ALLAN O.

A chain of events, which I believe were guided by my Higher Power, moved me from my active addiction to long-term recovery.

This spring my partner and I will celebrate our twenty-fifth anniversary. A few months later, God willing, I'll pick up my nine-year sobriety coin. The numbers marking these celebrations are different because I acted out sexually, betraying our understanding of monogamy, for sixteen-plus years. My secret life meant that I lied to my partner and, when he was out of town, my sexual behavior was unquestionably insane.

I had almost convinced myself that I wasn't really hurting our relationship because my acting out was about sex; never emotional involvement. Of course, I worried about contracting a disease, which I would pass on to him. I wasn't concerned about physical danger or arrest.

A chain of events, which I believe were guided by my Higher Power, moved me from my active addiction to long-term recovery in SAA.

The first step involved my son, who had reached a low point in his life fueled by alcohol. One of the most difficult things I've ever done was to drive him away from our house, cutting off financial support. Next, I started attending Al-Anon meetings while he began the process of getting sober in AA. My first experience with a twelve-step program was confusing, but it got me thinking about addiction.

Then came the moment of clarity when I realized I had my own addiction. I remember sitting in front of the computer and, instead of going to the usual hook-up sites, I looked for references to sex addiction. I quickly concluded that SAA was the meeting I needed to attend.

At first, I told my partner that my addiction was excessive use of pornography and masturbation and

he supported me in my desire to get help. It took a while to feel comfortable in the SAA rooms, but I made attending meetings a priority and got a sponsor.

Meeting the first time, he asked whether I would do anything necessary to get sober. I had to sort through conflicting motivations in order to say “yes.” I’d heard about making amends later in the steps and was terrified that I’d have to disclose my more extreme behavior to my partner. Fortunately, by then I’d developed a level of trust in the program and believed that I’d be able to handle everything in time.

The next time my partner left town for a weekend conference, I decided to stay abstinent and attend meetings instead of acting out. The first day of that weekend is my sobriety date. It wasn’t easy but I made it and felt grateful to be able to welcome him home without feelings of shame and guilt.

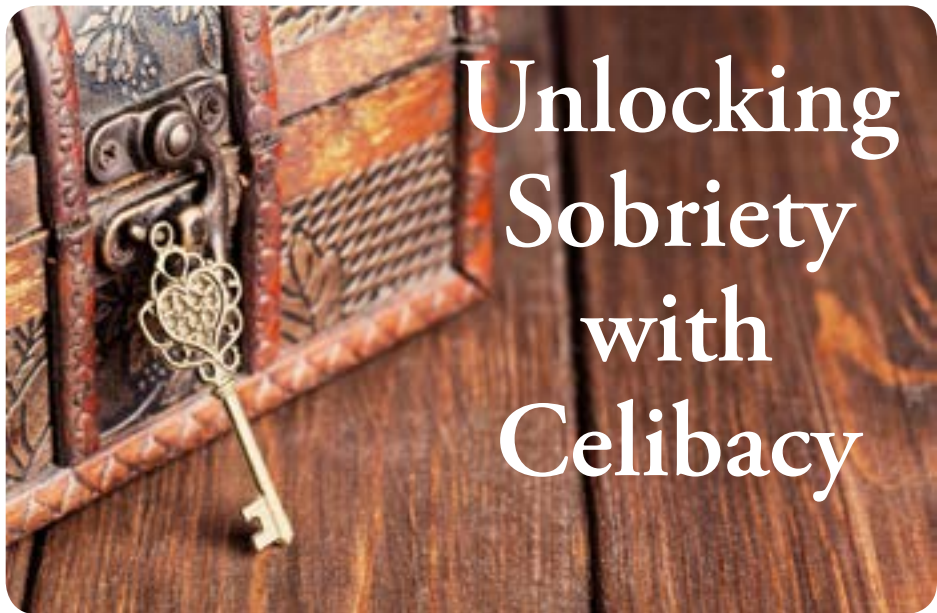
I read my first step to the group and felt identification and support from those in the room even though I’d been honest in dealing with my compulsive behaviors with other men. My sponsor guided me through the next two steps and met with me regularly as I worked through my fears and resentments and arrived at a list of my character defects. After making a commitment to change, the steps dealing with amends to those I’d harmed — number one being my partner — loomed before me.

Realizing that I couldn’t get through it alone, I sought support from my clergyman and from a therapist. Both of them were helpful, but it was more direct guidance from my Higher Power that made the critical difference.

Partners and spouses were invited to attend a special speaker meeting arranged by the fellowship. I don’t remember the topic; I only remember that part of the process was to have partners and spouses share about what they had learned. I heard my partner say that he had made the decision to stay with me long ago when I told him about an STD I had and that nothing else I could tell him would change his commitment. In fact he did not want a full disclosure of my past sexual behavior when I made amends to him.

Having that confidence and faith, I’ve continued to work my program - attending meetings, calling fellows, sponsoring, reading and praying. I’m grateful that, with support of my Higher Power, I can give myself completely to my partner. The other outcome I’m grateful for is that my son will have ten years of sobriety this year.

If you have five or more years of sobriety and would like to write a Living in Sobriety column, please contact toc@saa-recovery.org.



Unlocking Sobriety with Celibacy

How a bold decision led to longterm abstinence

BY A.W.

A

fter three years of daily step work, reflection, and involvement in my SAA fellowship, it became clear: I needed to quit masturbating. As a single twenty something year old male, I hardly believed it was possible. But today, I am eight and a half months sober from my inner circle, which includes porn and masturbation.

At this point, you might be thinking, “A period of indefinite celibacy? Why go on living?” Right? That’s what I thought, too. But the facts were the facts. Every time I worked with my sponsor to redefine the boundaries of what inner circle, middle circle, and outer circle masturbation looked like, I ended up being unable to adhere to the plan.

As I began life with masturbation strictly in the inner circle, I was “attempting” to stop masturbating altogether. Unsurprisingly, I kept failing to maintain my new definition of sobriety. Finally, the weakness of my “attempts” were so much so that my relapse led me to seek out pornography which was a behavior that I

had been removed from for more than three years. This was finally painful enough. I was no longer going to masturbate. Period.

There's no lying about it. This was a very difficult transition to make. I struggled to achieve the motivation of a desperate newcomer until I had the frightening relapse with porn. And without that desperation I wasn't strong enough to bear through the withdrawal.

Because of the porn incident, my withdrawals were extremely strong. It would have been much easier to have committed to my new sobriety before having that final relapse.

Of course, I threw myself deep into my recovery during this time. I went to an average of four meetings a week, made countless phone calls, took my step work very seriously, and meditated.

But working a rigorous program didn't guarantee a clear head. There were times I felt compelled to do things that were utterly insane. I tried to go for a jog in the evening and felt compelled to hide in the bushes on the side of the road and masturbate. I barely stayed sober through this by making a phone call to a friend in the fellowship.

I felt on alert twenty-four hours a day. I had a sense of panic around the fact that I was not in control of when I would get triggered. I was constant-

ly fielding extremely powerful impulses and had to chase away the hopeless thoughts that the rest of my life would be this exhausting and overwhelming.

Going to sleep was the hardest part of the day. It was aggravating to lie in bed and try to think about nothing until I fell asleep. I often had to make late night phone calls to some very accommodating people in the program. I would get up, put my shoes on, and walk laps around the block until I became exhausted and the trigger passed.

It took a while for my body to stabilize, but the ending of this story is hopeful. Today I just don't think of masturbation as an option anymore. I still find myself getting aroused and so a new challenge is to surrender my sexual thoughts immediately. I'm still working to make this change, but I'm definitely making progress. I have begun dating and my lack of means of personal sexual satisfaction has made it challenging to stay clear headed as I go through this process.

But it has not been impossible. I have stayed in contact with program fellows and sought their feedback to stay grounded and sane.

As far as a takeaway, I guess I want people to know that it is possible to go without any form of sexual activity for extended periods of time. I'm not a monk or a religious fanatic, I just couldn't handle masturbation as an option so I needed to surrender it. I look forward to having loving sex in a

committed relationship.

Until then, I am gaining invaluable experience with living life on life's terms. This addiction goes very deep and I am continuing to unravel it, four years into my recovery and eight months into my sobriety.

I feel that this break from masturbation has helped me to see clearly that even my thoughts about what I would consider to be healthy sex can be obsessive, consuming, and sometimes even dangerous.

I have never had to take too close a look at fantasy thoughts when I have been uncommitted to another person and allowed to masturbate. Those fantasy thoughts no longer have a place to go in my new situation. I've had to let go of them or act out. And because I've chosen to let go, I have come to be grateful for this challenge and opportunity.

On top of it all, I don't have room for another relapse in my life. I make sure to take my program very seriously today because it is so much easier to maintain sobriety than to pull myself out of a relapse.

I make it to three meetings a week, do my daily step work, and stay connected with other program fellows, both new and old to keep my commitment fresh. I look forward to the long sober life I have ahead of me and show my gratitude for this possibility by working to stay in my outer circle today. ●

Sponsoring Long-Time Members

By Anonymous

Not all sponsees are newcomers.

There is a lot of information available for anyone who wants to become a sponsor. Most of that literature and most sponsorship training workshops assume that the only sponsors who require training are those who are welcoming new members to the fellowship.

But what about the challenge that occurs when a long-time member who has never had a sponsor decides he/she needs one, or determines that it is time to change sponsors?

Should a person who has been asked to work with a veteran member of the program even be called a "sponsor"? Most definitions of the term "sponsor" refer to a person who guides a newcomer through the Twelve Steps.

Obviously, if someone who has been in the program for five, ten, twenty or more years is seeking out guidance, it is not to do the initial Twelve-Step work. Rather, the person is probably looking for someone to review previous step work or to be an "accountability partner" to help the sponsee maintain his/her personal program of recovery.

With that in mind, would it be helpful to include a session on sponsoring mature members of the program at your next recovery workshop? ●

Adapted from The Check IN, the newsletter of the Indiana Intergroup

Finding a New Faith



For recovery to progress concepts of a Higher Power must evolve

BY RAYMOND W.

A

fter being in recovery for a few years, I found I had more and more trouble refining — sometimes even obtaining — a concept of my Higher Power. I had a basic concept of God, having grown up in one of the major Christian traditions. The God of that tradition made sense on some level, but truly was still the God of my parents.

With this God of my understanding, I was getting some early sobriety and work the Steps for the first time in about a year and a half from the time I started attending meetings. This parental-influenced version of God brought some much needed, short-term relief from my worst acting out behaviors. Thank heavens!

As I stayed in the program, I still believed in the God of my understanding, but my concept didn't evolve and my relationship to this Power did not deepen. I was still going to meetings, but after several years I started struggling with some chronic relapse. I realized part of the problem was that I had halted my spiritual growth — instead focusing on the me-

chanics of the program (meetings, phone calls, some service work).

Fortunately, the worst behaviors did not return (and have not returned); this was still a wake-up call, however. There were, as the SAA Green Book says, some “fundamental changes needed to [my] program of recovery.” This led to working the Steps a second time, which quickly led to reassessing who or what is my Higher Power.

The faith of my childhood was not enough anymore. I needed more than an abstract concept or some intellectual argument to really work Step Two.

What did I believe in my core? What would have to change after I discovered my authentic Higher Power, to first believe that it was sufficiently more powerful than myself so that I could turn my will and life over to it?

I first had to resolve my search for my Higher Power with my science background; fortunately, the two were not diametrically opposed. The main point I realized is that even though science can't describe something or have a formula for it, that thing can still be real. Consider how long until gravity came to be understood! From here, I came to believe in a universal root-force from which everything else came forth. It was one of my first steps in reaching out in faith.

I wasn't there yet, but I could accept that this force did have a direction. I then stepped out in faith again, that this “direction” applied not only to me and my physical world, but also to the direction I'm supposed to be taking in life: decisions, actions, approaches, mindsets, everything that makes up my will and my life. I had to step out a little further in faith, and believe that this power was a benevolent force, and that if I “went with the flow” then sanity would return and good things would happen. Could aligning with this force show me the path I'm supposed to walk in this life?

It took some faith again, but I defined the right answer here as “yes!” There is a direction that aligns me with this undefined yet present and permeating universal power. This force doesn't go away if I get off track, but gently pulls me back onto the path. I sought this power when I was struggling with addictive cravings. I let this force into my core being, to gain the strength not to act out. In this way I received the power to get through cravings successfully many times.

I only have to reflect on what the right path is, and pray for the power to walk it. Activities that fall by the wayside include acting out of course, but also other activities that I simply do not need. Letting

go of these things allows me to focus on those tasks and activities that are aligned with my Higher Power. That is a tremendous load off my shoulders.

Part of my path, is to help others find their Higher Power and find their own (recovery) path. This does not mean the course is always easy. Many times I want to go my direction, not the direction I feel my Higher Power is guiding me toward. In those times, the Power is still there kindly (if not always gently or subtly) guiding me back.

While I had no intention of digging deeply into what a Higher Power meant for me after the first year or two of recovery, I am glad I did. Now I have a concept of a Higher Power that moves me away from the faith of my youth to a more organic faith. The searching also helped me reconnect with other people (and myself). I suspect and hope my vision of my Higher Power will evolve again as I continue recovery.

For now, this “power greater than myself” is enough to keep me sober when I let it in and don’t regress into strong self-will. Much like gravity guides us all back to the ground, I have a force that guides me to serenity and recovery. I am grateful for this Higher Power, I’m just glad I took the time to look for it. ●

Positive Use of Procrastination

By Dan A.

As a practicing addict, procrastination played a harmful role in my life. I delayed taking many actions that would have been good for me. I put off scheduling needed doctor visits, having important conversations, writing letters, completing tasks, and missing many other opportunities for self-care.

In recovery, I can practice instead to put off things that are bad for me. I can use the “power of procrastination” to postpone harmful behavior, even if just for now. Being sober for another year, month, week can sometimes seem like too daunting of a commitment.

Rather than committing to never do the behavior again, I can simply say to myself, “Not right now.” Instead I can do something positive, like saying a prayer, calling a program fellow, or choosing to do something that I enjoy from my list of “outer circle” behaviors. Sometimes when the moment passes, so has the desire to act out.

Besides “procrastinating” inner circle behaviors, I can also put off doing other things that are harmful to me. I can avoid speaking angry words, starting an argument, or eating food that will make me feel worse. ●



Send it in a Letter

Take service to the next level with a prison letter writing program

“Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry the message to other sex addicts and to practice these principles in our lives.”

BY PAUL D.

The final step of our twelve-step journey of recovery in SAA is a call to service, to share with others what we have gained from this program. And, like the other twelve steps, it is a necessary part of our ongoing recovery from sex addiction. I know that has been the case of me as I continue serving as chair of my state Intergroup, as well as on the ISO Prisoner Outreach Committee representing the Northeast Region.

It is from the standpoint of that second area of service that I humbly suggest to you, reader and fellow SAA member, that prisoner outreach is a worthy and valuable way to serve. We can help the addict who still suffers, and whose suffering is added to by being behind bars.

One way to serve, and actually the simplest but still a very effective way, is as a prisoner letter writer. ISO receives many requests on a regular

basis from prisoners around the country for a letter writer who is a fellow sex addict and can share the benefits of the program with them.

With the lack of meetings in most of our penal institutions, this is likely the only opportunity for a prisoner to begin the work of recovery in a program we know has worked for us. I myself write to several prisoners, serving as a sponsor and helping them work the steps, and every one has been most grateful not only for the hope and healing this work brings, but also for the simple connection with someone on the outside as well as the friendship of someone who understands and accepts them.

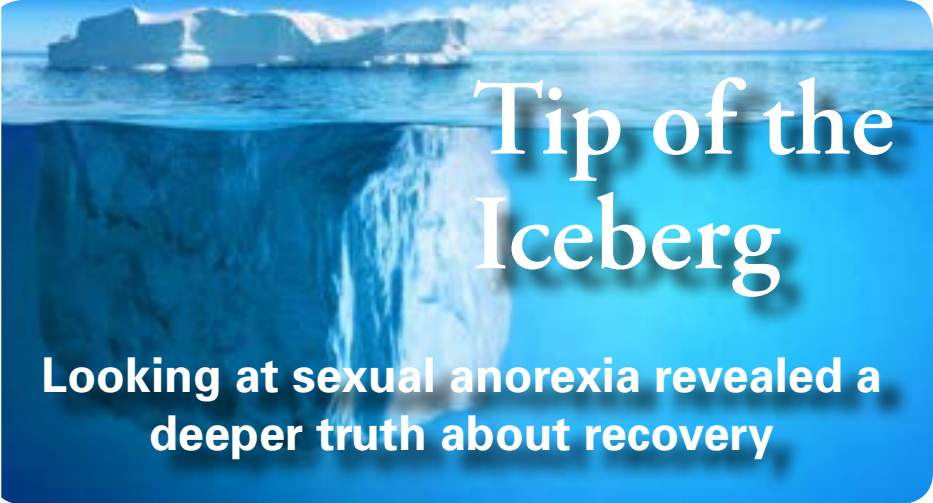
In our state, we have suggested a service position in each of our local groups charged with making available at each meeting literature and other information about the program. We also include a presentation on prisoner letter writing at each of our Spring retreats. These efforts have brought some good results, and I highly recommend them, as well as for each you to consider becoming a letter writer. The demand generally exceeds the supply, and it is really such an easy but so rewarding and invaluable a service. Please consider it!

Another way is to serve on the ISO Prisoner Outreach Commit-

tee. Here ideas and resources for better serving those in prison are shared. We hold monthly conference call meetings, and we can always use more representatives from each of the regions of our country. Besides letter writing, we also explore other ways of getting the message behind prison walls, either through meetings or any other means.

Here in my state, I was invited into the sex offender unit of one of our men's prisons to talk to the staff and about thirty inmates about sex addiction, the SAA program of recovery, and the possibilities of having regular SAA meetings within the prison, facilitated by myself and other local members, as well as providing the support of our local meetings when they get out. Their interest, questions, and enthusiasm were so powerful, and I know that as we proceed in this important work, the resources of SAA and the Prisoner Outreach Committee will be invaluable.

There are indeed a fair number of ways to be of service and to work the Twelfth Step. It is my hope that as a result of what I have shared here, you might consider service in either or both of these ways to those behind bars. It has been a vitally important and most rewarding form of service in my experience! ●



Tip of the Iceberg

Looking at sexual anorexia revealed a deeper truth about recovery

BY BILL W.

I recently read an SAA pamphlet called *First Step to Intimacy-A Guide For Working The First Step On Intimacy And Sexual Avoidance Or Sexual Anorexia*. I got a lot out of doing a First Step on this subject. Even before I got into recovery many years ago I knew that I had a hard time creating intimacy with other people. I turned to lust and fantasy to avoid intimacy with myself, other people and my Higher Power. These behaviors became a lifelong habit of acting out.

When I got into the program, I knew that I needed to stop acting out. This pamphlet showed me that these behaviors were like the tip of the iceberg, only what I could see above the waterline. Below the surface were more subtle forms of my addiction known as “acting-in”. Acting-in is any compulsive sexual behavior that serves to avoid or block sexual, emotional, or spiritual intimacy with others, ourselves, or our Higher Power.

I saw that I had sexual avoidance behaviors from an early age. I have a deep fear of hurting the other person, both physically and emotionally. I also had a deep fear of dominating or manipulating other people.

It was always puzzling to me why I was unable to establish a relationship until I was in my late twenties. As I recovered, I saw how my acting-out and acting-in behaviors combined to help me avoid intimacy.

Years ago I struggled with compulsive voyeurism. I would spend hours

looking into other people's windows in an attempt to get a glimpse of nudity. This allowed me to keep a wall of secrecy between me and those I was attracted to.

My compulsive use of computers to view pornography was another example of acting out while keeping a barrier between me and others to avoid intimacy.

Because I felt that sex was "wrong" I found behaviors that would help me avoid being intimate with others. My pattern was to isolate into my fantasy world.

I have a lot of shame about all the times I avoided or ignored potential relationships. I was afraid to open my heart and be intimate. Whether I was acting out or acting in, I remained alone and afraid. The bottom line was I was unavailable to be in a relationship.

I met my wife in 1987 and we fell deeply in love with each other. We got married in 1988. It is a miracle that I was able to overcome the worst of my deep fear of intimacy and create a loving relationship.

Like most sex addicts, I thought marriage would save me. It didn't. It soon became apparent that I needed to get into recovery. I got a sponsor and went to two to three meetings a week. For years I had trouble getting more than a month or two of sobriety. I went to 90

meetings in 90 days and worked the Steps; but, I still struggled.

I see now that my fear of intimacy played a role in my inability to get sober. I was unwilling to truly surrender to my sponsor and my Higher Power.

Through the grace of God and the fellowship of our program, I currently have over six months of sobriety.

My Inner Circle behaviors for sexual avoidance are: any sexual behavior that is shameful or isolates me from others and my Higher Power; feeling sex is wrong or dangerous; feeling guilty or ashamed about sex; and, preferring fantasy over sharing intimacy with my wife. I am very fortunate that we are still married; after all these years, we still love each other very much.

I am learning to distinguish between the voice of my addict and the voice of my Higher Power. I trust that my Higher Power is restoring me to sanity.

My prayer and meditation practice is encouraging me to surrender my will to God more completely. Because I have fears about expressing my power, I am learning that, when I surrender to God, I don't have to worry about manipulating or dominating others. I believe that God only wants the greatest good for all concerned. ●

DEAR WILL

How to Avoid Service Burnout

BY WILL

**I don't
necessarily have
to volunteer just
because nobody
else has. I can
trust my Higher
Power that the
right person
eventually will
surface.**

Dear Will,

I have been in the program for a couple of years now. It seems like there is always more than enough volunteer-type stuff to do, and often I don't see enough people stepping up to do those tasks. So more often than not I end up raising my hand, and now I am starting to feel overwhelmed. How can I get others more involved and me less involved?

Still Enthusiastic But Inundated

Dear SEBI,

Wow. You tell me and we'll both know. As the old saying goes, "We trusted that God would not give us more than we could handle," an old saying that can actually be found on the fourth page of the pamphlet "Recovery from Compulsive Sexual Avoidance." Now there's some food for thought. But for now all we have to worry about is that it is easy enough for us to help God not give us more than we can handle, simply by having boundaries.

Anyway, SEBI, let's break this down a bit, starting with this thing of always raising one's hand. You are not alone. On many different SAA campuses, I notice the same faces showing up again and again for service work. That may be the reason the term "service junkie" was coined.

And there is definitely a downside to being a service junkie. More than once I have seen people take on one task after another, and then without warning there is that proverbial straw and the person drops all or most volunteer work and walks away. Burnout comes to mind.

Here's an example of a better response: where

I live, folks generally chair a meeting for a month, so four or five meetings. At the last meeting of the month, the chair will ask for a volunteer for the next month's meetings. It sometimes turns into one of those "don't everybody raise your hand at once" situations.



Wise leaders don't panic, maybe partly because they know that even if nobody volunteers, that doesn't obligate them to keep chairing the meeting. In most cases, somebody eventually will raise a hand. Sometimes the new volunteer will say he or she can't cover one particular meeting that month, and normally somebody else will offer to take that one meeting which clears the way for the person to take the meeting. Crisis averted.

So that is the first thing. When I'm tempted to take on yet another responsibility, I sometimes find that I can take better care of myself by waiting for another to step up.

As for getting more people involved in SAA volunteer work, it is like finding a sponsor. I can say at the end of a meeting that a certain task needs fulfilling and wait for somebody to come to me. Or I can look around to see if there is anybody I see who I think might be suited to a particular job. If so, I can approach that person directly,

which also gives me a chance to speak enthusiastically about the service work. Another similarity to looking for a sponsor is that the person approached is free to say no. In such cases, I can move on to a new prospect.

The bottom line, however, SEBI, is that I don't necessarily have to volunteer just because nobody else has stepped up for the job. I can trust my Higher Power that the right person eventually will surface; in the meantime I can just keep looking. Or not. I simply remind myself of another old saying that I don't think is in any SAA literature: "It's not about me."

Will

If you have a question for Will, please send an email to men4saa@saa-recovery.org.

STORIES OF SERVICE

Creating Powerful Connections

BY JIMMY M.

There is something that comes out of the most simple and mundane activities of service.

I began working the SAA program in earnest when my world came crashing down, but I didn't understand the true power of the program until I started doing service.

I had been acting out since a young age and, despite arrest and repeated STDs, I could not stop. That changed the day my wife informed me I had infected her with an STD. Today I identify that encounter as my rock bottom.

At that time I had been attending SAA meetings for four years, but had never strung together anything more than a month of not acting out.

Hitting bottom gave me the willingness I needed to completely surrender and finally admit I was totally powerless over my addiction. It also brought me to the point where I had the strength to go up to a fellow and ask him to sponsor me.

My sponsor has shown me through example and encouragement that service work is a foundational component to healthy recovery. He has also impressed upon me the true beneficiary of my service work is me.

I have a career and work obligations, so getting away during the day can be challenging. About a year ago a secretary position became available in my weekday noon SAA home group.

I had been in Twelve Step meetings for more than nine years and have never considered stepping up to be a secretary. On this occasion, however, the group needed a volunteer and my sponsor recommended I step up, so I did.



I can say without reservation that having the privilege of being a secretary has played an enormous role in my recovery.

There is something that comes out of the most simple and mundane activities, like setting up a room, making coffee and putting out literature that gives me a sense of involvement and belonging unlike what I get in other areas of my life.

My addiction wanted me isolated and alone. Service work connects me and helps put me in the middle of the program.

Being a meeting secretary is only one of the myriad of opportunities I see for service. I see service in the addict who is struggling and shares those struggles during a meeting. I see service in the fellow who stays after a meeting to talk to the newcomer. I see service in the fellow who attends meetings and is there to listen.

To me the key is connection with another addict, and that has made all the difference in my recovery. Service is a powerful way to make those connections.

Stories of Service are short articles between 100 words to 300 words that inspire others to be of service in the SAA fellowship. If you have a story of service to share, please send it to toc@saa-recovery.org.

FROM THE BOARD

Convention, Conference Split in 2018

BY MIKE L., AT LARGE
BOARD MEMBER.

**The convention
will continue to
take place over
Memorial Day
weekend and
the conference is
moving to second
week of October.**

In the spring an SAA member's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of the annual convention. Actually, and while still making my apologies to Alfred, Lord Tennyson, for that paraphrase, I'm here to tell you that the operative word in that sentence is "convention."

You may have heard people over the past few years saying the words "convention" and "conference," as though they were two different things, and wondered if indeed there was a distinction.

There have been SAA members who were not shy about telling me that it was a distinction without a difference. Well, in this year of 2018 the distinction is going to become more apparent than it has been in past years.

The "convention" is the annual get-together that takes place over Memorial Day weekend. It features workshops, speakers, banquets, and of course the Sunday afternoon opportunity to visit different parts of the host city. It is a chance for folks who have not seen each other since the last convention to just hang out and, as we say in the south, "visit." There are other standard events that always happen at conventions, such as the field trip, the talent show and the Sunday night memorial service.

The "conference," at least up until 2017, has also taken place over Memorial Day weekend, with a different focus. It consists of Board meetings, Literature Committee meetings, and, in recent years as the structure of the fellowship has been changing, Conference Steering

Committee meetings. The weekend continues with delegate meetings, regional caucuses and focus groups, and ends with more meetings for the three aforementioned committees.

However, starting this year, things are going to be somewhat different. The convention will continue to take place over Memorial Day weekend, and the conference is moving to the second week of October. The convention will still begin on Friday evening and end on Monday noon; the conference will still begin on Friday morning and end on Saturday.

There will be several differences accompanying this change. One of them is that it will no longer be necessary for members of the fellowship to have to choose on Saturday morning between attending the delegate meetings and attending the workshops.

All of this being said, the fellowship still needs your support in all of the same ways that it has needed it in the past. That is to say, the convention is still looking for speakers and workshop presenters. It is still looking for volunteers to help with the hospitality suite and the bookstore, to name just two. The conference still needs delegates to attend and vote at the

delegate meetings and the regional caucuses.

With regard to the convention, the stated deadline for workshops and speakers is February 1, which by the time you read these words will be a date in the past.

However, if you have any interest in being a keynote speaker or presenting a workshop, you may still, if past experience is any indication, wish to check to make sure that all of the slots are filled, the workshop slots in particular. The convention program committee may still need presenters.

As for the conference, certain deadlines will be moved to later since the conference itself is now over four months later than it used to be. These include deadlines for presenting a convention bid and deadlines for submitting a delegate motion.

So, the details have changed but the general concept is still the same. The opportunities for fellowship and for service work continue.

I hope to see you at one or the other of this year's two big meetings of the fellowship. If I have the chance to see you at both the convention and the conference, so much the better.

ISO NEWS

Nominating Committee Invites Ongoing Participation

Any member of the fellowship who is interested or might be interested in serving at the ISO level is invited to complete and submit a service resume.

The Conference Nominating Committee (NomCom) is hoping to build a large pool of potential trusted servants, which can be used as a resource of potential nominees from year-to-year.

The service resume form may be found on the service website at www.saa-iso.org. Select “International Service” in the left-hand menu, then click on the figure.

Your information can be entered directly into the PDF form, which can then be saved and emailed to the ISO office. Or you may print the form and sent to the office by postal mail. Information submitted on the service resume will be treated as strictly confidential.

On the International Service page of the service website, there is also a link to the guidelines for service at the international level. In brief, the NomCom is seeking candidates with solid program experience, long-term sobriety, and an appreciation of the value of active service at all levels within our fellowship.

The NomCom is committed to nominating qualified candidates who reflect the broad geographical and personal diversity of our fellowship. This can be accomplished only if the pool of potential nominees reflects that diversity.

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

New or updated service resumes received by May 1 will be entered into a raffle. Two members will be drawn — one for free registration at the Oakland convention and one for a leather-bound first edition of *Sex Addicts Anonymous* published in 2005.

Long-Awaited SAA Meditation Book Could Go on Sale by May

After more than ten years of planning and effort, the SAA Meditation Book is expected to go on sale in May and be available at the 2018 convention.

ISO NEWS

Now poised for final proofing, book represents about 1,000 hours of ISO staff hours, not to mention thousands of hours of volunteer work.

By about 2006, the Conference (Indianapolis) made it clear it wanted a daily meditation book for our program. A subcommittee of the Literature Committee started meeting in 2007. A fund raiser was held in the 2008 convention in Seattle. Steps were taken to advertise for an editor.

I got involved by simply attending a workshop in the Oakland Convention of 2009. The workshop was an opportunity for attendees to write meditations. Many other workshops at annual conventions and local retreats would follow. To this would be added the product of monthly “tele-workshops.” In Albuquerque (2010) the Literature Committee determined the make-up of the book (percentages of the Steps, Traditions, and other topics). We finally hired a professional editor, Don S.

A procedure was devised to process and organize the raw meditations. The editor would perform various edits and deliver them — with the help of the ISO office — to the Meditation Book Subcommittee (of the Literature Committee). The subcommittee would review and suggest more edits using a function of the ISO service website called the “Wiki.”

The output of the subcommittee would go on to the full Literature Committee (some meditations were sent back to the editor for re-working). The Literature Committee would vote up or down on each.

Doing about eight to ten per month, we have managed to approve 369 meditations. The total number of meditations submitted was over 1400 (349 authors). The number of authors represented in the book is 149. Suffice it to say that some individuals gave a lot of themselves to this endeavor. I would especially like to thank Cecilia B. and Mike L. for input in writing this article.

In service,

Les J., Meditation Subcommittee Chair

ISO NEWS

Board Approves 2019 Convention Hotel, Elects New Treasurer

Here's a look at the Board's actions during December and January:

December

- » Authorized the North Central Region to hold a caucus in order to elect a representative and alternate to the Literature Committee from this region to complete the terms vacated by the previous representative and alternate.
- » Approved the hotel contract for the 2019 International Convention.

January

- » Elected Bob H as new Treasurer

Giving Event Misses Target, Reducing Budgeted Surplus

In the month of January, our net surplus was \$7,641.84. We had budgeted for a surplus of \$14,122. The reduction of \$6,480.16 in our budgeted surplus was due to the Houston Giving Thanks event not meeting its budget. There are always late donations that come in for the Houston Giving Thanks event so we do expect to receive more donations for this event in February.

Our SAA Green Book sales were below our estimate by \$1,917.86 in January. For the year we are at 79.2 percent of our estimated SAA Green Book sales. Our pamphlet and booklet sales exceeded our estimate by \$819.98 for January. For the year we are at 112 percent of our estimated pamphlet and booklet sales.

Our bronze medallion sales exceeded our estimate by \$570.00 in January. For the year we are at 121 percent of our estimate bronze medallion sales.

Our total sales for January were below our estimate by \$247.96. For the year we are at 98.8 percent of our estimated sales.

Individual donations were below our estimate by \$12,657.01 for January. The shortfall is due to the budget for Houston Giving Thanks not being met in January but we still expect to receive some additional donations for this event in February. For the year we are at 69.3 percent of our estimated group donations.

Group donations exceeded our estimate by \$3,208.14 in January. For the year we are at 129.4 percent of our estimated group donations.

Our product inventory is valued at \$63,571.86.

ISO NEWS

Our expenses were below our estimate by \$2,779.36 in January. For the year we are at 94.8 percent of our estimated expenses.

Our operational reserve is \$186,536.00 and is fully funded.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

In Your Service,

Joe H.

Executive Director

Calendar — Here are tentative ISO outreach and committee meeting times for the next several months. Meetings times change often. All times are Central Standard Time. To attend a committee meeting, you must be a member or be invited. If you're interested in joining a committee, email info@saa-recovery.org or call the ISO office.

First Sunday of the month

CSC: Policy & Procedure: 2:00 p.m.

Audio Review (odd months): 2:30 p.m.

Intergroup Communications: 3:00 p.m.

LGBT Outreach: 5:00 p.m.

Prisoner Outreach: 8:00 p.m.

First Saturday of the month

Author's Group: 4:00 p.m.

Second Saturday of the month

Intimacy and Sexual Avoidance: 8 a.m.

Women's Outreach: 4:00 p.m.

Second Sunday of the month

CSC: Conference Committee Structure:
2:00 p.m.

Literature Committee: 4:00 p.m.

General Outreach: 6:30 p.m.

Second Tuesday of the month

Seventh Tradition: 6:00 p.m.

Third Tuesday of the month

Nominating Committee: 5:00 p.m.

Third Saturday of the month

Area Coordinating Committee: 4:00 p.m.

CSC: Twelve Concepts Work Group: 12:00 p.m.

Third Sunday of the month

CSC: Charter & Bylaws: 2:00 p.m.

Information Systems and Online Presence
Committee: 2:00 p.m.

SE Region: 6:00 p.m.

Fourth Sunday of the month

Conference Steering Committee: 2:00 p.m.

CONTACT THE ISO

Want to connect with the International Service Organization website, staff, board of trustees, trusted servants, or special workers? Here's the contact info you need:

Office

ISO Office Mailing Address:
PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270

Phone: 713-869-4902 -or- 800-477-8191
Fax: 713-692-0105

Office e-mail: info@saa-recovery.org
The Outer Circle e-mail: toc@saa-recovery.org
Website: www.saa-recovery.org

The Outer Circle

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Administrative Assistant : Jerry B.: jerry@saa-iso.net
Administrative Assistant: Harvey A. harveya@saa-iso.net
Publications Manager: Cody S. codys@saa-iso.net

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

Board of Trustees and Literature Committee

Great Lakes

LitCom: Cara A.; Alternate: Vacant
LitComGL@saa-litcom.org

Intermountain

Board: Bob H (treasurer).; Alternate: Vacant
BoardIM@saa-recovery.org
LitCom: Vacant.; Alternate: Vacant
LitComIM@saa-litcom.org

North Central

Board: Dawn S (vice secretary).; Alternate: Thea L.
BoardNC@saa-recovery.org
LitCom: Fred T.; Alternate: Vacant
LitComNC@saa-litcom.org

Northeast

Board: Tim A. (Secretary); Alternate: Carl D.
BoardNE@saa-recovery.org
LitCom: Don R.; Alternate: Valerie G. (secretary)
LitComNE@saa-litcom.org

North Pacific

Board: Cliff G.; Alternate: Vacant
BoardNP@saa-recovery.org
LitCom: Les J.; Alternate: Charlie K.
LitComNP@saa-litcom.org

South Central

Board: Paul M. (Chair); Alternate: Vacant.
BoardSC@saa-recovery.org
LitCom: Vacant.; Alternate: Vacant.
LitComSC@saa-litcom.org

Southeast

LitCom: Garrett I.; Alternate: Byard B.
LitComSE@saa-litcom.org

Southern Pacific

LitCom: Carole D.; Alternate: Dwight B.
LitComSP@saa-litcom.org

At Large

Board: Lisa S (vice chair).; Bob L.; Mike L.; Ray L.; Stephen N.
BoardAL@saa-recovery.org
LitCom: Doug S., Mike B. Robbie H. (2nd chair)
David M (chair); Steven P.; Gary T. (*The Outer Circle* editor)
LitComAL@saa-litcom.org

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Get Your Story Published in *The Outer Circle*

The Outer Circle newsletter relies on submissions from the Fellowship. It's a great way to carry the message to other sex addicts!

Deadlines for Submission and Topics

Jan/Feb:	"Taking Action"	Nov 5
Mar/Apr:	"Healthier Sexuality"	Jan 5
May/June:	"First Three Steps"	Mar 5
July/Aug:	"Prayer, Meditation"	May 5
Sept/Oct:	"Steps Six and Seven"	July 5
Nov/Dec:	"Giving Back"	Sept 5

Articles may be submitted by email to toc@saa-recovery.org or by mail to the ISO office. If possible, please submit articles via email in Microsoft Word format. All articles must be accompanied by the **RELEASE FORM** at the bottom of this page.

Here are some general writing guidelines:

Articles can be anywhere from 500-1,000 words. The main guideline is to share your experience, strength, and hope in the principle of Step Twelve. It may be helpful to think of your submission as a written form of a share you'd give in a meeting — something that's working for you or that you're struggling with.

Please don't worry about grammar and spelling. We'll clean that up for you.

General Release Form

In consideration of being reviewed for possible publication, I hereby transfer and release to the ISO of SAA, Inc (assignee) all legal rights to the publication of my submission(s) or any edited version thereof in any official ISO publication, including Sex Addicts Anonymous, The Outer Circle, the SAA meditation book, the SAA websites, or any other SAA program material, such as pamphlets, booklets and audio recordings.

With this submission, I transfer to the assignee without limitation the legal title and all literary rights, including copyright and/or trademark and the full right and license to reproduce, copy, edit for content, modify, distribute, and create derivatives from the submitted work. I understand that every effort will be made to safeguard my personal anonymity in the publication and distribution of this material. I also understand that I may or may not receive further communication regarding my submission prior to its publication.

I hereby further attest that I possess full legal capacity to exercise this authorization, and I hereby Release the assignee from any claim whatsoever by me or my successors.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Printed name: _____

Witness: _____ Date: _____

Printed name: _____

SAA TWELVE STEPS

- 1.** We admitted we were powerless over addictive sexual behavior - that our lives had become unmanageable.
- 2.** Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
- 3.** Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.
- 4.** Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
- 5.** Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
- 6.** Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
- 7.** Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.
- 8.** Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
- 9.** Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
- 10.** Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
- 11.** Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood God, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.
- 12.** Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other sex addicts and to practice these principles in our lives.