

THE OUTER CIRCLE

Taking Care
Why sobriety and
self-care go hand-in-
hand

PLUS

Letters to God

Using the Middle Circle

The Responsibility of Service

The Newsletter of SAA's International Service Organization





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.

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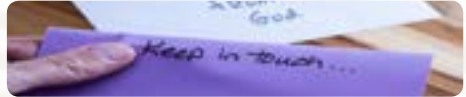
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FROM THE EDITOR

Rethinking Sponsorship Coordination

BY GARY T.

The principle of sponsorship must outweigh the personalities who provide that service.

My local Portland group relies on a core group of people for service, especially sponsorship. One of our members sponsors at least a dozen different fellows alone, though at this point no one is sure about the real number.

While that's an admirable act of service, it's not healthy for the fellowship, as we're learning all too well. Sadly, our sponsor warrior has fallen gravely ill, and it's put our fellowship in a bind. What will all of his sponsees do without him?

I suspect this scenario is familiar to other groups as well and it points to the need for SAA groups to take a more proactive role with sponsorship and other service activities.

Just recently, I learned that our parent Twelve-Step fellowship, AA, has long used sponsor coordinators to help newcomers find sponsors. At our group, sponsorship is not nearly so organized. Instead, at the close of the meeting, those willing to be a temporary sponsor are simply asked to raise their hands. Then it's up to newcomers or anyone else needing a sponsor to take action.

While that's worked well enough in the past, it clearly hasn't created a healthy sponsorship tree as our fellow's medical crisis is making all too clear. That's hard for me to admit, because I was one of the people against the idea of sponsorship coordination in the past.

I see now that not only is it a good idea, but it's also a way to work Tradition Twelve, which warns us to always "put principles before personalities." The principle of sponsorship must outweigh the personalities who provide that service. Otherwise, it's too easy for a fellowship to become too reliant on one personality.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Taking On the Responsibility of Service

BY JOE H.

Service is the single most important outer-circle activity in my recovery.

What is our primary mission? As defined in our Twelfth Step, my primary mission is to carry the SAA message to sex addicts inside and outside the rooms. How do I do this? Service. In early recovery I never heard about service in my group. My sponsor never asked me to consider service. But as I worked my program, I started to understand that I had to give away what I received. The best way to do that was being of service — to my individual members, group, fellowship, and community.

Since I began at the ISO in 2007, I've focused on reaching suffering addicts, making sure that, when they looked for help with sex addiction, they could find our fellowship. This was a way to be of service but it was also my job. As I began to consider my retirement, I pondered how to continue service and realized my local fellowship has not done outreach in a long time. I can be of service by implementing scheduled outreach activities within my community and involving group members in this effort.

During the recent convention I spoke with a member whose recovery was not going well. He had worked the steps and had recovery, but was not passing it on. I told him it was his responsibility to carry the message, start sponsoring, hold a group conscience, and hold his group accountable for local outreach. He promised he would. I did not think he would keep his word but, to my amazement, he emailed me to let me know our conversation had impacted him and he was following through on his promises. By talking with him, I gave away what I had learned in recovery, and I am so grateful I was able to make a difference in his life.

I hope you will consider making service a large part of your life in recovery. It is the single most important outer-circle activity in my recovery.

DEAR GRACE

Why Two Sponsors is Too Many

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,

I am not getting sober with my current sponsor, so I have asked another sponsor to take me through the steps, but I am keeping my current sponsor.

Is this okay?

Two-Sponsors

Dear Two-Sponsors:

The Green Book defines sponsorship as follows: “A sponsor is a person in the fellowship who acts as a guide to working the program of SAA — a fellow addict we can rely upon for support... We can learn from a sponsor’s experience, struggles, successes, and mistakes. Our sponsor can help explain program fundamentals, such as how to define our sexual sobriety. Most importantly, sponsors guide us through the Twelve Steps.”

A sponsor should take his or her sponsees through the Twelve Steps. If someone other than your sponsor is taking you through the steps then, by definition, that person is now your sponsor.

One of the principles of our program is honesty. It is very important that you be honest with your current sponsor about your desire to work the steps with someone else. On page 14, the Green Book clearly states that it’s okay to change sponsors. “Members are also free to change sponsors. The important thing is to have and use one, because we can’t keep trying to solve problems by ourselves.”

Another spiritual principle is faith. We learn through working the steps to have faith that



God will provide what we need, even another sponsor. Hanging onto two sponsors at the same time could be out of fear rather than faith. As you work the steps, you will have an opportunity to do an inventory of your fears in Step Four.

Two sponsors could also cause problems in that you might feel tempted to share only certain things with one and certain things with another and not get the help you need from working one-on-one with a sober person.

Although the Green Book tells us that the sponsorship relationship is flexible, it also goes on to say: “We stay in regular contact with our sponsor, reaching out for support, guidance,

and encouragement. As we work the Twelve Steps of SAA, our sponsor acts as an ally in our recovery, sharing the experience and wisdom of the program with us.”

Blessings in your recovery,

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

Developing Trust in a Higher Power Made the Difference

BY DOUG S.

**I have learned to
trust God, do the
next right thing,
and leave the
outcome to him.**

I've been abstinent from my inner-circle behaviors for more than six years — the longest time I've been sexually sober since puberty. I was a respected man in my community, a valued employee, and a leader in my church. I was married, a father and grandfather.

But I lived two lives. In my other life I was addicted to pornography and anonymous sex. I kept that life secret, and for forty years I didn't get caught. Then early one morning a dozen armed police officers came to my house with a search warrant. I knew why they were there. My life was about to be completely different.

My career was gone, my reputation was shattered, and my marriage was in deep trouble. I was going to prison. I knew I had to change my life but didn't know how. My attorney suggested a residential treatment program where I went to my first SAA meeting. What a relief it was to be with men and women who knew the depth of my pain, who understood what it was like to be unable to stop acting in a way that was counter to my values.

For the first time I no longer had to keep my sexual behavior secret. I went to an SAA meeting every day for 200 days. I got a sponsor and tried my best to follow his suggestions. I began working the Steps.

Then I went to prison. In prison I went to meetings of other Twelve Step fellowships, because they were available. I read recovery literature. But eventually I got careless and stopped working my program. After four years of sobriety, I relapsed. I knew what I had to do. With the help of the ISO and the SAA prison outreach program, I organized an SAA group in federal prison. That wasn't easy, and there were a large number of obstacles to overcome. Inmates kept their sex crimes a secret and were afraid of

being “outed.” Prison rules did not allow “secret” organizations. Eventually we overcame the obstacles and successfully organized an SAA group. An SAA group from outside the prison even provided monthly speakers.

This time sobriety was different, real. With the help of sober inmates and the SAA letter writing program, I worked the steps thoroughly. For the first time, the obsessions began to go away. The Twelve Steps showed me how to develop a trusting, personal relationship with my Higher Power. I found a way to carry the message to other sex addicts and sponsored nine men in prison.

When I left prison after seven years, I knew where to go. I went to SAA. There I was welcomed and not judged. SAA is a place where everyone is valued for his or her contributions, not condemned for the past.

I found a sponsor who would hold my feet to the fire. I worked the steps again. For forty years, I built up a cache of selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear without dealing with it. I was inconsiderate and self-seeking. My self-will and pride failed me again and again, blocking my relationships with God and other people. I dealt with those failures of the past as I worked Steps One through Nine. I know that I am not cured of my addiction, that I must stay sober one day at a time. Now I work Steps Ten, Eleven, and

Twelve every day, so I don't let my defects of character build up again and lead me back into addiction. I take a daily personal inventory, in writing, and make amends promptly. I pray regularly in the morning and evening, and during the day whenever I am agitated or doubtful, I ask for the right thought or action. I wish I did this perfectly. I don't, but I do the best I can.

I served two years as secretary of our local groups, and represent them at the intergroup. I arrange weekly speakers for the SAA meeting at the treatment center where I was a patient. This year, for the first time, I attended the International SAA convention. What an exciting event!

After eleven years in recovery, I still go to four SAA meetings each week. I sponsor six men. I make and receive phone calls from other addicts. My life today is nothing like it was eleven years ago. My marriage (yes, I'm still married to the same wonderful woman) is honest and intimate. I have a great relationship with my children and grandchildren. I have learned to trust God, do the next right thing, and leave the outcome to him.

Thank you SAA!

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.



Powerful Words

A novel way to stay in conscious contact with your Higher Power

BY LISA B.

I believe God wants me to talk to him. (I think of my Higher Power as male, though gender is up to the individual.) He wants me to tell him what's on my mind, in my own words directed at him. He wants me to let him into my life by telling him what is going on, what I want, how I want to be of service. He wants to know my strengths, struggles, and victories. He wants me to open myself to asking for help and guidance.

Any relationship must be fostered with clear communication for it to grow and for intimacy and trust to develop. We share with each other to get to know each other better and in the case of our Higher Power, we do this through prayer and meditation.

Praying is an act of surrender. I am surrendering my thoughts and my concerns over to the care of God, as I understand God, as it says in Step Eleven. In my prayers, I often acknowledge life on life's terms, accepting reality and then turning it over. I often ask God to guide me to do his will, and not my own, because I want to be of service. I ask God for instruction on how to do more of this. I want

to be kept spiritually fit.

When I pray, it centers me. I am able to move in the direction of being focused despite whatever fear, stress, or anxiety happens to be at play. If it's the beginning of my day, it's a clean slate on which to open the door to God and let him in.

Praying becomes an accountability partnership with my creator. I ask for God's help, and then I take his guidance as it comes. This might be an intuitive thought, God working through other people, a conversation, or an inspiration. I partner up with God to help me do the next right thing. It's a program of action.

One special way I get closer to my Higher Power is through writing prayers. I start with a pen and a fresh piece of paper, then get silent. I breathe deep a few times, and then I start writing. Writing a prayer is a lot like writing a letter to God. It is friendly and conversational. I speak to God as if he were a close friend, because he actually is. I trust him. I pour out my desires, my hopes, my dreams, my concerns, my aspirations, and my desire to do God's will instead of my own. I place a lot of what I learned by working the Twelve Steps into my prayers.

After I'm done writing a prayer, I read it out loud in a silent place. This is me praying that written prayer — hearing it now with my physical voice being heard by my higher power.

Writing a prayer is a lot like writing a letter to God. I speak to him as if he were a close friend, because he actually is.

Saying my prayer out loud is very important. It consecrates it. Makes it concrete. Anoints it with my physical voice. I am talking to God.

It took some time getting used to being fluid and flowing with the conversations that I have with my Higher Power. But I remind myself that it is progress, not perfection. Our Higher Power appreciates our efforts to develop and grow our relationship with Him. We let people get to know us by talking to them, by telling them who we are and what is going on.

Another great act is to read or share my prayer with someone in the program or someone close to me or my sponsor. When someone reads it, or listens to me read it, I am letting them in to pray with me. They are reading the words that I have spoken to my Higher Power. These are sacred and it is a real grace and blessing to be the recipient of someone sharing their prayer. It creates intimacy. It is letting someone into my spirituality. It is an invitation for them to join me in prayer.

As I have kept praying, I have been amazed at the intimacy I get over time

with my Higher Power. Keeping the conversation flowing with God shows me that I'm not alone. Ever.

Some sample written prayers:

God,

May I respond quickly to your voice and guidance. Let me do your will. I want to always remember your presence and love with which you surround and fill me.

Comfort me in the times I feel triggered. Show me and direct me to be of service to others. I want to help people.

Quiet my mind. Teach me how to be disciplined in thinking what I want, rather than the opposite. Let me carry your vision in everything that I do. Show me your presence during my meeting with my sponsor. I want to be focused and receptive to follow direction and absorb and act on the awareness this meeting will bring. Take away all obsession and compulsion. I rest these at your feet. Do with me as thou wilt. I embrace this glorious day.

God,

Grant me the courage to change the things I can change. Place both of my feet into recovery, into the positive healing of the program.

I know you have great plans for me, God; grow my trust in you. Guide me to use the tools I have learned. Place me in a position of neutrality.

Help me fulfill my non-negotiables that keep me centered and happy and

more connected to you, God, so that I can better carry your message through inspiration and love. Work through me. Discipline my mind to live in the precious energy of the present.

Allow me time to revitalize through rest. I want to schedule in short naps throughout the week and to go to bed early. I intuitively want the gift of taking care of myself on every level. Place me in the position of helping others, to reach out my hands to embrace others spiritually, in honor of the way you hold my hands and talk to me throughout the day. Thank you for the capacity to hear you, to feel your sacred presence. Thy will, not mine, be done. Put me in alignment with your will. Love me to the end of time.

God,

Inspire me to place my will into your hands, into your loving care, into your best intentions. Give me freedom and joy as I open up to be of service in a multitude of ways. Let my love for others shine through everything that I do. Inspire me to do the very best that I can. Speak to me clearly so I can hear you and take in all that you want me to know. I want to be your student. I know you are the author of harmony, not confusion. Guide me into this harmony you constantly create. Thy will, not mine, be done. Help me use the tools of recovery. I love you, God. Let me absorb your equanimity and show me peace in the present where I will reside.

Amen. ●

Speaking Up

Why staying silent
to avoid conflict
jeopardizes recovery



BY RAYMOND W.

I have been in the program for several years and have more than four years of abstinence from the core of my inner circle — those activities either involving others or taking place in public venues. On other parts of my inner circle — those involving pornography use in private settings (my home), the last few years have been up and down. I felt I was working a solid program — I had a sponsor, was going to meetings, and doing a “second round” through the steps. I had success vs. porn in the beginning, gaining more than eighteen months of continuous sobriety.

Still, I was not experiencing the benefits as I had earlier in the program. Was I not admitting powerlessness? Was I regressing into some “tourist” behaviors and attitudes? Perhaps. But after working through the Fourth Step again, I rediscovered one of my major character defects — avoiding conflict and people pleasing — was still alive and well. This was driving several resentments that showed up on the inventory that I was not addressing.

In particular, I was avoiding certain discussions with my intimate partner of six years. She recently had an exciting promotion, which brought much more responsibility for her, and much more stress to the relationship. In a misguided act of support, I chose to avoid certain topics.

Over time, I became angry over small things, was discontent, and stopped bring-

ing my full self to the relationship. This was despite her requests to be open and honest, speak my mind, and take alone-time if needed. Needless to say, sobriety became a struggle: one week here, three weeks there, maybe sixty days once a year. Despite these setbacks, I continued to believe I could work a solid program, keep the relationship, and most importantly keep the peace. While a thorough daily Tenth Step would have identified this, I was not practicing that step at the time.

I was forced to confront the issue once my internet viewing had jumped to a new and more troubling level. I had been “holding steady” with occasional porn use (a delusion in and of itself), but all of sudden my use went downhill and started gaining speed. That was scary; while some porn does not violate my core moral values, this new type did. I was powerless to slow it down or steer away. I then realized, my recovery had to come first or disaster would ensue. I couldn’t afford to nurse certain character defects for whatever reason.

At this point, I took a deep breath and brought up concerns and discontents that I knew my partner would not want to hear. It was tough, but what made it tougher is that my partner felt blindsided. I had brought up similar issues in the past, but not with the same urgency. I would usually back down quickly when a crucial conversation was starting.

Now the concerns were out in the open. While that was difficult, I felt some relief at going to a new level of honesty. Throughout, I realized that if I had brought all this up sooner, the conversation might have been very different and the relationship would still have a good chance of lasting.

I suggested we separate, and with new time for reflection, I realized that I had secretly placed my relationship on a par with my own recovery. I wanted them both, and was willing to put up with weak sobriety to do it. My ego did not want my acting-out to cost me the relationship. Ironically, my attempts to preserve the relationship doomed it. By the time certain issues were addressed, the resentment had built up to the point where I just wanted out. It was a combination of an unchecked character defect combined with grandiosity.

Since getting honest, I’m happy to say that my abstinence from porn has greatly improved. I am at three months of clean time, an improvement over the recent past. By clean, I mean that I’ve abstained from middle-circle internet browsing as well — something lacking before. I’ve had time and energy to read more recovery literature, exercise more, pursue some individual hobbies and take “down time” that I knew I needed but didn’t want to assert in the past. Not asserting legitimate needs to keep the peace or control another’s behavior or reaction is another form of dishonesty for me.

This was not the original plan for my life or relationship, but I am enjoying more sober time than I have in almost two years. I've added a few more meetings to my weekly routine. I've also regained momentum on my step work, which had stalled before we parted. I look forward to making the changes I need to make in myself, before jumping into another relationship.

While I still care for my partner tremendously, I feel relieved that I brought up the tough topics that had to be discussed. I also feel relieved that I asserted the need to not be in relationship at this time: partly to fix my program, which was lacking, partly because I needed to resolve some larger life-issues.

Finally, I learned that when I keep anything ahead of or equal with recovery, I'll lose both. I'm not doing anyone any favors by putting sobriety at risk, indulging in character defects to keep the peace, or placate my own ego.

The last three months have been a tough lesson in honesty, but one that helped me shake off continual relapse. I've been able to cultivate some spirituality with the newfound solitude, work through some of my own issues, buckle down on the Steps and rediscover (with help from my Higher Power) my way in recovery. I feel I'm at least headed in the right direction. ●

Going from Shame to Grace

By Nancy F.

I was filled with shame. My sponsor had explained the difference between guilt and shame.

Guilt was believing I had made a mistake, whereas, shame was believing I was a mistake. That was me. I was a mistake —evil, crazy, perverted, and dirty.

Then came the Ninth Step and a miracle happened.

I felt called to make an amends to those who had sexually abused me as a small child. My sponsor said we don't make amends to those who abused us as children — you had no part.

But I understood I did have a part. I had held a resentment for forty-plus years. Then with my sponsor's support, I made amends to my abusers.

As I forgave them I understood something. They were sex addicts just like me. And as I forgave them I could then forgive myself.

That day I went from shame to grace — the promise of this program. ●

The Gradual Approach

Using the middle circle leads to abstinence — and sobriety



BY IAN S.

M

y sponsor told me that he took me on as a sponsee because he could tell “my hair was on fire.” It’s true. I had hit a definitive bottom and had to change but I had no clue about how abstinence, sobriety, or healthy sexuality worked. The problem I faced that first day in SAA was defining what, for me, was healthy sexuality.

The advice my sponsor gave me during our first meeting was to put anything that is illegal or that did harm to others immediately in the inner circle on day one. I did not understand why I should not put all my unhealthy behaviors in the inner circle, but I was desperate enough to take his advice.

I see now that, rather than give me a free pass to act out, his guidance assisted me — a scared, inexperienced newcomer — to build a program structure that would not set me up to fail. It was the basic structure I needed as I learned to practice self-discipline in my sexuality.

My sponsor knew that I would set myself up to fail by piling my whole lifetime of acting out behaviors into my inner circle. He had seen many newcomers enter into a failure spiral of acting out on pernicious behaviors, taking white chips,

white knuckling their abstinence, only to act-out again. In doing so they were not giving themselves the space and time necessary to learn new, healthier behaviors. He knew it took both time and the working of the steps to develop the willingness and faith in a power other than ourselves to let go the most deeply rooted habits.

As I worked on “healthier sexuality,” my sponsor asked me to place behaviors harmful only to myself in the middle circle. He asked me to call him if I found myself regularly engaging in middle circle behaviors. It was difficult at first to live with my imperfections and call my sponsor when I fell into troubling behaviors. But I see now that my willingness to call him and be honest was a key to success in the program.

I worked the steps. As months passed, I managed to abstain from my inner circle illegal and harmful activities. I began to question for myself how other illicit behaviors, like voyeurism in public places or the viewing of provocative online media, were holding me back from good health. In time, I was ready to look at other troubling behaviors that were getting in the way of my expression of healthier sexuality.

The opportunity for further growth came when my first sponsor passed away shortly after we finished working the Twelve Steps. My grand-sponsor agreed to become my sponsor. A few months into his tenure, I decided that

I needed to stop these last illicit uses of the internet to view pictures and videos for masturbation.

This was a big step, and to help with it, I began to use a specific online monitoring tool my sponsor and other trusted fellows used to provide a report of weekly online activities on their computers and cell phones. This willingness to be accountable for my viewing habits and let go of my online “hunting” for sexual images was another huge step toward healthier sexuality.

I still want to “hunt” at times. It’s not a healthy behavior. It’s my oldest behavioral defect and the only one I am loath to give up. However, I am able to be honest with myself and others and seek to get out of the bad “head spaces” and back on a healthy beam when I’m scared and seek escape into images or fantasies.

That’s the key for me to healthier sexuality: Acceptance that I am an addict — that I’m powerless over my addictive sexual behavior, as Step One tells me — and will, at times, be drawn to unhealthy behavior. By working the steps and applying them to my daily life, I’ve learned to have the willingness to ask for help from others and accept with humility and grace the help that is offered. I cannot stay absent without working my program and staying in touch with my peers in recovery. But with honesty, steady work, and willingness I can remain abstinent one day at a time. ●



Take Care

Why sobriety and self-care go hand-in-hand

BY JACK G.

W

Whenever I find myself in my addiction or falling back into addictive thinking, my self-care is the first thing that goes out the window. In fact, I would say that self-care is the key aspect of my recovery that has helped me get sober and stay sober. You see, as a sex addict in

recovery, there is one thing I have the capacity to do and that is to take care of my own needs. It's also the one thing I have control over, and it's my choice to implement it into my life.

In recovery, the focus is on taking care of my own needs, which is paramount because my sanity depends on it. Whenever I fall off the beam of self care, I have learned simple techniques to help gain balance and stay sane.

It starts with looking at my needs. Neglecting my personal needs makes me vulnerable to getting triggered. To restore balance in my life, I need to get back to the basics: get up at reasonable time, have a shower, and do chores. These actions are all part of a self-care program I can practice every day.

For example, I am amazed how relieved and uncluttered my mind feels after I have done the dishes. But when I was lost in my addiction, it was easy to forget to take time to meet my own needs.

Sometimes, meeting those needs means asking some basic questions. Have I forgotten to eat three healthy meals each day? Don't I deserve to have a good time without feeling guilty, like watching a movie, playing a sport, or taking a walk in the woods? Have I done a regular exercise routine during the day to not only help me get through each day, but also to help me get a good night's sleep? Am I going to bed at a reasonable time and not staying up late so I can better deal with life the following day?

Self-care also extends to spiritual actions I can take around rest, relaxation, prayer, or meditation. Meditation not only helps me to relax and help my mind recalibrate to a healthier mental state, but it also helps me to reconnect with my Higher Power — the source of all that is good in my life.

In addition, praying regularly helps frame my life's concerns into manageable parts. Just asking for help from my Higher Power invites healing and blessings, which builds up my faith in the genuine love and care of my Higher Power. With that faith, I can truly turn my will and life over as I'm directed in Step Three.

For example, I believe it's God's will that I spend time with friends

in the program and talk to my sponsor to develop intimacy with healthier people and learn to be honest. After all, honesty is the key to intimacy with myself and my friends.

Recently, I found a throw pillow at a local thrift shop which says, "Learn to be happy!" That's a reminder to me that, despite being a sex addict, I can be happy. I brought the pillow home to remind me that I am responsible for my own happiness.

My sex addiction took a toll on my sanity, I still struggle sometimes over thoughts of using of pornography. In addiction my life was so miserable, desperate, and painful that I became willing to seek help. I found the solution in the Twelve Step Program of SAA — and the program of self-care that working the steps taught me.

I may be powerless over addictive sexual behavior, but I am not helpless to meet my own needs. In applying the Twelve Steps of SAA, I find freedom, happiness, serenity and healthier intimacy — if I take care of myself! Integrating self-care into my recovery requires a consistent daily practice, so it is a priority. Self-care is the most loving thing I can do for myself. And self-love is the cornerstone of my recovery. ●

DEAR WILL

Is Introducing Ourselves as Sex Addicts Shaming?

BY WILL

There is a real sense of solidarity in admitting exactly who I am in front of people who admit the exact same thing.

Dear Will,

I am bothered by the way that people introduce themselves at the beginning of meetings. All this talk of “I’m So-and-So and I’m a sex addict” makes the whole thing seem as though we are focusing on the negative. Wouldn’t it be so much better to say something like “I’m So-and-So and I’m in recovery”? After all, that is what the meetings are about. Your thoughts?

Proud to Be in Recovery

Dear PTBIR,

I honestly never gave the matter much thought. Maybe that is because I have seen so many parodies of Twelve-Step programs on television and in movies where somebody says at a Twelve-Step meeting, “Hi, I’m So-and-So and I’m a[n] _____” that it seems more than normal to me to hear those words. Since each SAA group is autonomous, you could ask your group(s) to change the meeting format. But let’s consider the phrase as it stands now.

I personally like “I’m a sex addict.” While I will never stand in the middle of Grand Central Station and shout this phrase (not that anyone could hear me there anyway), there are many reasons why I am happy to be a (nonpracticing) sex addict. I can boil them all down to: today I’m doing things with my life that would have been impossible for me if I had not recovered from chasing down the next acting-out experience. Many nights I drive home feeling satisfaction and joy over how wonderful my life is now, rather than feeling shame over that same life. I still go to work a bit sleepy now and again because I

imprudently stayed up too late the night before, but at least I no longer feel the fear that the cops may be waiting for me at home because of what I was doing while up so late, in addition to that sense of sleepiness.

Also, there is a real sense of solidarity in admitting exactly who I am in front of people who admit the exact same thing. The phrase “a part of, not apart from” comes to mind. I acknowledge that a phrase like “I’m in recovery from sex addiction” comes close to creating that same sense of solidarity, certainly much more than other more creative individual statements I have heard, which I won’t discuss so as not to give anyone ideas, but which fail to acknowledge any sort of sex addiction. But what about the person who comes from meetings where “I am a sex addict” is standard and goes into a meeting where the phrase is “I’m in recovery from sex addiction”? I think that person could be forgiven for thinking that these folks might consider themselves just a little bit different (better?) than the ones who are mere sex addicts.

I like your point about focusing too much on the problem. And I certainly don’t care for meetings where those in attendance are spending all of their



time on the problem. I like it much better when the focus is on the solution, and what different folks, with the help of their respective Higher Powers, are doing to make their lives better. However, I certainly don’t mind being reminded of the problem for a couple of minutes at the beginning of each meeting.

Anyway, PTBIR, these are my random thoughts in response to your question. I would say if it is still bothering you after a few more months, go ahead and call that group conscience. If nothing else you’ll get to hear some more pros and cons about the current phrase.

Will

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

STORIES OF SERVICE

Building Self-Esteem with Esteeming Acts

BY SIMONE T.

I was amazed at how simple acts of service could make me feel so good.

Early in recovery, my sponsor encouraged me to take on service positions — and it's made all the difference. I remember my first set up service position. Preparing the meeting gave me a sense of purpose and accountability. Later, I heard the saying, "If you want to build self-esteem, do esteeming things," and it made so much sense.

My next service position was meeting secretary. With this position, I hesitated, because I didn't think I was worthy of so much responsibility. Fortunately, others in the program assured me otherwise. And once again, I was amazed at how such a simple act of service could make me feel so good.

So when my first sponsee approached me, you might think I was ready. But once again, I balked. Certainly, I wasn't prepared for such a massive undertaking! I was still working on my Second and Third steps. What could I offer another addict?

My sponsor helped me see this was an opportunity to truly work the Third Step — to turn my will and life over to the care of my Higher Power and trust that God would do for me what I couldn't do for myself. I still look back at that first sponsor/sponsee relationship with amazement at how much more I felt I was getting than giving.

From there, I never looked back. Today, I have multiple sponsees along with local and international service positions. Just as it was in the beginning, service continues to play a vital role in my ongoing recovery journey.

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

FROM THE BOARD

Fellowship Needs Help Telling SAA's History

**BY MIKE L., AT LARGE
BOARD MEMBER.**

**There are some
legendary stories
of the early years
of the fellowship
that deserve
preserving.**

The idea of SAA was first discussed in 1976 and the first meeting started in 1976 and grew in 1977. So, if we use 1977 as a base, that means we are now roughly 41 years old. By some calculations, that counts as a whole generation. In 1988, we reached the milestone of our first national convention.

Now our early years are on the brink of being forgotten. For example, at last year's convention in Orlando, for the first-time, I saw banners from the first two conventions. However, I discovered later that these banners were recreations. The first convention did not have a banner. The actual banner for the second, to the extent it existed, has disappeared.

In hopes of allowing current and future members a glimpse into SAA's past, the fellowship is in the process of putting together a history of the fellowship. There are some legendary stories of the early years of the fellowship that deserve preserving. Some are serious while others are more entertaining; some are a little of both.

My favorite tale is the story of our discovery, during one of the early conventions, that we didn't have the money to pay off the hotel. Various solutions to this problem were suggested. The happy ending to the story involved a Saturday night banquet, passing a hat (preserved at the ISO office), and some generous SAA members. This is just one of the SAA stories that deserves preservation, and all the better still if the telling of the story involves members of the fellowship who were actually there.

We do have sources for some of these early stories. Looking at the surviving audio recordings from earlier conventions, I see that the 1992 convention featured a keynote speaker whose talk was entitled, "First Woman in SAA." One way that members of the fellowship can help with this history is to listen to these early recordings and put together data based on them.

Of course, the best source of information is going to be the actual members themselves. The "First Woman" joined SAA in 1978 and has been interviewed. Some of our early members are still active. Having gotten a start in SAA while they were still young, they are still going to have many memories of those days.

However, as is the case with most Twelve-Step fellowships, membership can be something of a revolving door, because of a variety of reasons. I recall reading some years ago a story in the monthly publication of one of our sibling fellowships whose basic theme was "whatever happened to...?" The article pointed out that many older members were still sober and doing well; they were just out there living life and no longer regularly attending meetings.

I saw an old-timer come to a convention a few years ago, someone who had not been, to my knowledge, active in the fellowship for a while, but who showed up at one of the large meetings at this convention to deliver a message. I don't remember the message's content, only that I was happy to see this member and to know of the member's continuing sobriety.

Are you an early member of SAA, no longer active, but still receiving *The Outer Circle*? We can use your help in putting this history together. Are you communicating with any early SAA members? We can use your help in putting the history book committee in touch with them.

The Green Book was the first major piece of SAA literature. The meditation book will soon be the second major piece. The history book could easily be the third, reflecting the fact that SAA is now "coming of age." If you are one of the early members, if you can put us in touch with any of them, if you are interested in helping interview one or more of them, or if you have other skills that might be useful in this regard, we would like to hear from you. Please contact the ISO office and somebody will be back in touch with you.

NomCom Encourages Service Resume Participation

Have you considered serving our fellowship? The Nominating Committee invites you to fill out a service resume. This does not obligate you to any specific position. After you fill out and submit your resume The Conference Nominating Committee (NomCom) will work with you to find the right service position that fits your availability and skills.

If you don't have a specific position in mind, or aren't sure if you are ready to serve at the moment, but know that you want to serve at some point in the future, fill out a resume today. NomCom will review all of the resumes and nominate eligible candidates at the Annual ISO Conference in Houston. We are working to build a large and diverse pool of potential trusted servants, which can be used as a resource of nominees from year-to-year.

The service resume form may be found on the service website at <https://saa-iso.org/svc/>. You can enter your information directly into the Microsoft Word form (.docx) which can then be saved and emailed to the ISO office, or you may print the form and send to the office by postal mail. Information submitted on the service resume will be treated as strictly confidential. Completed service resumes should be emailed to info@saa-recovery.org or mailed to Nominating Committee, ISO, PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270.

You can use the QR code below for a direct link to the resume.



ISO NEWS

ISO Seeks Executive Director

The ISO of SAA, Inc., a non-profit organization, is seeking an executive director to replace the current executive director, who is retiring. The director oversees the general direction of the organization. The director is responsible for the daily operations of the organization, ensuring its viability and adherence to its mission and strategic plan. The director, in partnership with the Board of Trustees, is responsible for setting the strategic direction of the organization. The director is responsible for the overall technological needs and decisions of the organization. The director, in partnership with the Board of Trustees is primarily responsible for the financial health of the organization. The director also ensures adherence to the Twelve Traditions in all areas including; media, mental health professionals, social media, etc.

The position does require attendance at some evening and weekend committee meetings. The position also requires the flexibility to communicate with volunteers in the evening or on the weekend.

Key Roles and Responsibilities:

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

- » Leads the creation, implementation, and updating of strategic plans and operating plans.
- » Facilitates communication and effective teamwork among the board, staff, and committees.
- » Provides support for the Board of Trustees, the Executive Committee and other Board committees as needed.
- » Serves as chief spokesperson of the organization.
- » Attends all Board of Trustees meetings and other committee meetings as needed.

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

- » Maintains a climate which attracts, retains, and motivates quality people.
- » Oversees the recruitment and employment of office staff.
- » Ensures sound human resource practices are in place.
- » Responsible for information technology.
- » Maintains office policies and procedures.
- » Ensures maintenance and archiving of official ISO of SAA records.

ISO NEWS

FINANCIAL

- » Develops and manages the annual budget.
- » Reviews and analyzes monthly financial reports and bank reconciliations.
- » Oversees and manages all major vendor relationships.
- » Ensures the annual audit or financial review is completed using an outside independent firm.

FUNDRAISING

- » Works with the Board of Trustees and 7th Tradition Committee to ensure income goals are met.
- » Sets and meets fund-raising event goals with input from the Board's 7th Tradition committee chair.
- » Oversees fundraising events and special fundraising projects.

LEGAL

- » Ensures compliance with federal, state and local regulations.
- » Ensures insurance policies are current and adequate.

PREFERRED QUALIFICATIONS

- » BS or BA Degree in Management or similar field.
- » Ten years of experience working in a managerial capacity.
- » Three years in the SAA program with two years continuous sobriety.
- » Thorough knowledge and application of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of SAA.
- » Experience working with non-profit organizations and with boards is desirable.

SKILLS

- » Collaborative leadership skills.
- » Fundraising development.
- » Knowledge and experience in Human Resources, Finance, Technology, Logistics and Marketing.
- » Project Management.
- » Financial Analysis.
- » Ability to organize and prioritize a variety of activities and tasks.
- » Communicate well orally and in writing.

- » Interact with a wide variety of personalities and styles.
- » Motivate and supervise employees and volunteers.
- » Network with individuals and groups both within and outside the organization.
- » Work without direct supervision.

Application Deadline: August 1, 2018

To Apply: Please forward cover letter, resume, and salary requirements to info@saa-recovery.org or fax to 713-692-0105.

As an Equal Opportunity Employer, we are committed to a diverse workforce.
Equal Opportunity Employer M/F/V/D/

Any questions can be directed to Joe H. at director@saa-iso.net

Generous Donation Leads to Surprise Surplus for April

In the month of April we had a surplus of \$207.15. We had budgeted for a deficit of \$10,933. The difference of \$11,140.15 was due mostly to Houston Giving Thanks receiving a donation of \$10,294.97.

Our SAA Green Book sales were below our estimate by \$2,205.56 in April. For the year we are at 72.25 percent of our estimated SAA Green Book sales.

Our pamphlet and booklet sales were below our estimate by \$2,022.73 in April. For the year we are at 86.03 percent of our estimated pamphlet and booklet sales.

Our bronze medallion sales were below our estimate by \$495 in April. For the year we are at 95.14 percent of our estimated bronze medallion sales.

Our total sales for April were below our estimate by \$4,776.04 in April. For the year we are at 82.22 percent of our estimated sales. We expect our estimate to be closer to our budget once our audio Green Book and our Meditation Book are made available for sale later in the year.

Individual donations exceeded our estimate by \$7,289.88 in April. For the year we are at 101.72 percent of our estimated individual donations.

Group donations exceeded our estimate by \$3,584.61 in April. For the year we are at 116.27 percent of our estimated group donations.

Our product inventory is valued at \$60,928.14.

ISO NEWS

Our expenses were below our estimate by \$2,975.68 in April. For the year we are at 94.98 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

Editor: Gary T.: toc@saa-recovery.org

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Associate Director: Chris F.: chrisf@saa-iso.net
Information Technician, Prisoner Outreach: Jonathan C.: webmaster@saa-recovery.org; outreach@saa-recovery.org
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Program Manager of Public Information, Cooperation with the Professional Community, and 7th Tradition : Phillip B.: phillipb@saa-iso.net
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.