

THE OUTER CIRCLE

My Portable Program
How to take recovery tools with you
wherever you go



PLUS

The Sixth Step Web

Selfish vs. Service

Conference Wrap Up

The Newsletter of SAA's International Service Organization





International Service Organization of SAA, Inc.

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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.

November - December 2019

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FROM THE EDITOR

The Problem With 'Open' and 'Closed' Meetings

BY GARY T.

Rather than using 'open' or 'closed' we should all adopt the language the ISO uses.

The other day I was talking with someone about how our Portland fellowship designates “open” and “closed” meetings, and I realized what a barrier these definitions pose to newcomers. As our website explains: Open meetings mean anyone can attend regardless of whether they identify as a sex addict or not. Closed meetings mean only those who identify as sex addicts may attend.

A quick search shows that other fellowships use similar language. The problem is, this wording is unwelcoming and confusing to newcomers. To most people, the word “closed” means not open, as in you can't go in. So, a newcomer probably would only go to an open meeting. Trouble is, most meetings are closed. Additionally, many meetings are also labeled mixed gender, male only or female only, further complicating a newcomers ability to attend a meeting.

So why do we have open and closed meetings? Closed meetings are meant to be provide safety. But the answer, I suspect, goes back to the early days of SAA, when people were afraid of being “found out.” In other words, the concept is based in shame.

Rather than using “open” and “closed” meeting designations, I'm going to suggest that we adopt the language the ISO uses. Instead of saying “open,” the ISO website says meetings are “open to visitors: Open to all who want to learn more about SAA.” Instead of saying meetings are “closed,” the website says meetings are “only for those seeking help: Reserved for people who want to stop addictive sexual behaviors or believe they may be a sex addict.”

Some braver fellowships seem to have dropped the open and closed designations all together, but at the very least we should all adopt the ISO's language.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Conference Approves Area Map, 2020 Delegate Meeting

BY PAUL M.

Now we need Group Service Representatives for all registered meetings.

The ISO Conference was particularly good with about eighty delegates present.

The Area Alignment Draft Map was approved, so now we need Group Service Representatives (GSRs) for all registered meetings (about 1884). To see the final map, go to the service website (saa-iso.org). The motion to delay the 2020 Area Delegate meeting was not approved, so areas should start getting together in area assemblies this year. The ISO office is here to help. Please look at the Area Handbook on the service website for help. We are also looking at ways for other concerned GSRs to be able to attend.

The Valley of the Sun motion was approved. This consists of twenty-two meetings in Mesa, AZ, so it will be the smallest area we have. We hope they can grow to thirty meetings by 2025. The motion for Focus Grouped Areas was not approved. The motion to reconstitute the Conference Steering Committee was withdrawn.

The motion for electronic attendance to the Conference was not presented due to a lack of a champion. We may need to look at this in the future, and electronic voting will be available once the Area Delegate Conference meets and the ISO Bylaws are updated with the proviso. The motion to allow the ISO and Intergroups to publicly announce the location of the ISO Convention was not approved.

The other thing to announce is we met our goal to raise \$96,000 for a matching program for new or increased LifeLines. At a 12:1 match a \$10/month LifeLines would be \$120/year, so we would get \$120 of the \$96,000. This matching incentive should help us increase the monthly LifeLines from \$22,000 to \$30,000 (our current goal) to help us meet our monthly operating expenses.

DEAR GRACE

How Men Can Feel Safe in Mixed Meetings

BY WOMEN'S
OUTREACH COMMITTEE

For women to feel comfortable with men in an SAA meeting, men need to feel safe and comfortable themselves.

Dear Grace,

As a man, I am fearful of women attending my meetings.

Are there any tools/resources that can help men not only feel safe but also welcome women in SAA meetings?

Man Afraid of Women in Meetings

Dear Man Afraid of Women in Meetings,

It is interesting to hear that you are afraid of women attending your meetings. It is also wonderful to know that you not only want to be comfortable attending your meeting when a woman enters the rooms, but also want the other men to be comfortable too.

The Women's Outreach Committee (WOC), which is made up of both women and men, is grateful for the insight that in order for women to feel comfortable with men in an SAA meeting, the WOC needs to support the men in the fellowship to feel safe and comfortable themselves.

Fear is one of the strongest emotions we face not only outside the rooms, but also inside the rooms. As sex addicts, we come into the rooms looking for a safe place to seek hope and help. Face Everything And Recover (F.E.A.R) is one of the tools to help us overcome the obstacles that block us from serenity and sobriety.

Both men and women experience fear as well as shame, grace, happiness, joy, etc. Looking for common feelings instead of the differences is a helpful tool. By talking to other members and journaling we can learn to understand our fears.

It is important that the members of the meeting are encouraged to welcome every person who enters the room seeking help for sex addiction. Our Fifth Tradition states that our primary purpose is to carry the message of recovery to the sex addict who still suffers.

Welcoming all members, looking them in the eye, and respecting them as another precious human being is a powerful way of getting grounded in participating in the meeting as a sober member.

Safety guidelines for meetings include appropriate dress attire, non-graphic sharing, and asking before giving hugs or pats on the back. Meetings are not a place to seek potential sexual or romantic partners. If another member is disrespectful and tries to behave sexually with you, this is inappropriate. You may end the conversation/relationship immediately.

Realizing that there is a potential for both men and women to feel attracted to or triggered by another member of the group is a common fear for sex addicts in meetings. It may be very difficult to share and/or keep coming back to the particular meeting. Emulating how other men and women welcome new members by being non-specific about your acting-out behaviors will

not only help you but also all members of the group feel safe and sober.

If something doesn't feel right, question it, and reach out for other members you feel safe with for support.

The phone list that gets passed around the room is optional and all members are encouraged to only take calls from members with whom they feel safe.

Adhering to boundaries ensures the safety of all members. Learning how to relate and show respect to others is key to forming positive and supportive friendships as part of recovery.

Trusting your higher power to keep you, the other person, and the group safe and sober is very powerful in building healthy relationships that may last a lifetime.

Blessings,

Grace

*Statement of Purpose for Dear Grace: to reach out to all women with a desire to stop addictive sexual behavior through this printed medium and share with the fellowship the types of questions the Grace e-mail (grace@saa-women.org) receives. *Names have been changed to protect anonymity.*

LIVING IN SOBRIETY

Reworking the Circles was Key

BY TRACY R.

**I have not
had a strong
compulsion to act
out in years.**

When I started my recovery in SAA, I attended some pretty strict accountability meetings. We shared our inner circle behaviors and length of sobriety from those behaviors at every meeting.

I did really well in this atmosphere — until I did not. I stayed sober for sixteen months. I completed the steps and I sponsored several women. But there was just this one thing. I had put sexual fantasy in my middle circle, and then, since it was not in my inner circle, I continued to engage in it. I took it right up to the edge of acting out, but I stayed out of my inner circle, so I thought I was sexually sober. Eventually, I very clearly acted out in my inner circle.

When I relapsed, I had to let go of all my sponsees and go back to being a beginner. I could not give away what I did not have. I started over. I was in a relapse cycle for a few months, bouncing in and out of sobriety like one of those balls on an elastic string attached to a paddle; I just could not get any traction. I kept coming back though, and in time, things started coming together for me.

As my sponsor and I worked through the questions in the Green Book's Withdrawal and Relapse section, we began to review my circles. As I traced the events leading up to my acting out, the role of fantasy became clear. In reality, I had relapsed long before I had relapsed. I had been staying high on my mind, high on my thoughts alone. Doing so, it was only a matter of time before I got really high with full-blown acting out.

With that realization, we moved intentional sexual fantasy into my inner circle. We also moved a few other things in there as well, things that were part of the sexual hit, such as searching for certain types

of web sites and setting up blind or acting out email accounts. I was honest and thorough — if I was getting a sexual high from a behavior, in it went.

This does not mean that I was denying my sexuality or choosing sexual avoidance. Healthier sexual behaviors went in my other circles. Masturbation, for example, was placed in all three: masturbation which is compulsive, dangerous, or for the purpose of changing the way I feel were (and are) all inner circle behaviors for me; masturbation when depressed went in my middle circle; healthy masturbation when spiritually fit (which means without fantasy among other things) became one of my outer circle behaviors.

Since restructuring my circles and reworking the steps, I have remained continuously sober for more than eleven years. I thought that adding those things to my inner circle would make it harder to stay sober, but the opposite has been true for me. It seems as though I have starved out my addiction. As long as I don't feed my disease, as long as I don't get even a little bit of a sexual high, it remains dormant. I have not had a strong compulsion to act out in years. I am rarely even a bit triggered.

One night, when I was working on my First Step, I was having a snack. As part of my healthier eating plan, I typically weighed and measured my food. I eyeballed a spoonful of peanut

butter and was thinking about having another when I hit upon my “peanut butter analogy.” I was calling that big spoonful of peanut butter two tablespoons because that's what I wanted it to be. But that didn't really matter. The truth was it was probably closer to four tablespoons. It simply made no difference what I called it or what I wanted it to be, reality dictated that it was four tablespoons. I was harming myself by trying to make it otherwise.

The same is true of my sex addiction. I can call my behavior anything I want. I can call a behavior middle or even outer circle, but if, in reality, it is an inner circle behavior, and if, in reality, it is an addictive sexual behavior, then any label I put on it, any circle I put it in, is a lie. It is a lie that I tell myself, a lie that has the power to absolutely destroy me. I have found that it is not my job to define my circles in a manner that pleases me or that I think I can live with, rather it is my job to discover my circles in a manner which is true to the exact nature of my addiction. Then, I can accept my newly found reality and walk sanely and soberly in it.

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.

Untangling the Web

Sketching out a 'graphic organizer' of character defects leads to an epiphany

BY DAVID S.

I am a grateful recovering sex addict in my fourth year of recovery. I attend meetings regularly, keep up my step work and sponsor several members. It is challenging to describe to those in early recovery how the larger arc of step work has given me serenity. So I will try to articulate how my recovery got traction, especially through Steps Four, Five, Six, and Seven.

During decades of hopeless acting out, I struggled to live with the shame and dissonance of my obsessive and compulsive sexual behavior. More and more, I reached for sex to soothe this painful conflict. At times I would try to lean into my religious tradition, and I often managed to get a month or two of hard-fought abstinence. But I really never got recovery, and I would have slip after slip. Most of the time, I was resigned to living in active addiction was the best I could do. I felt lost, confused and trapped, and I lived in fear that the worst would happen: public exposure of my addiction and the destruction of my marriage, family, and career.

The vicious circle seemed endless, and I was terminally trapped in my tortured double life. Then a new bottom led me to SAA. My initial months of abstinence were physical and psychological hell as withdrawal seemed to go on forever.

Fortunately, I connected with a great sponsor and even though we live 1,000 miles apart, he encouraged me daily with support and wisdom like the following:

- » “Living with your intense feeling is emotional sobriety, which is a necessary and an invaluable part of recovery.”
- » “You only have to stay sober today.”
- » “More will be revealed.”
- » “Work the steps. And soon you’ll be able to help others, because you have something to offer.”

I developed an intense recovery plan including an extended period of total sexual abstinence, several weekly in-person meetings (a six-hour round-trip commute), daily SAA tele-meetings, guided meditations, counseling, and thorough step work. My withdrawal finally began to subside and hope crept over the horizon.

Steps Four and Five were a huge challenge, but like all my steps, I followed my sponsor’s guidance and faced the step work head on. As I enter a specific step the work seems daunting, but as I finish the step, my recovery gets a big boost. Step Six and then Seven offered

me an amazing insight into why sex has had such a grip on my life.

During Step Six, I sketched a “graphic organizer” of my character defects. In one area was a tangle of self-seeking traits. Among them were my compulsive sexual behaviors. In another area was the shame I have carried since childhood. Lastly, was a confusing snarl of fears. I even added a mess of interconnected cause-and-effect arrows throughout the web.

One day, I got up the courage to show my web to a trusted counselor who has thorough twelve-step knowledge. As she scanned this chart of my messy inner life, I blurted out, “But I don’t know what’s in the empty space in the center!”

Her eyes widened and she said, “Really?” She then asked if she could add a suggestion. In the empty center she wrote “spirit”; she explained that it was the pure core of who I was before someone crossed my personal sexual boundaries when I was a child.

My tears began to flow I have been attending church and praying for decades and I was ignorant that at my core was a pure, innocent Dave. I now refer to this core as a “spark of the creator” — my Higher Power.

That young child had no one to help him understand what was happening during the abuse, and he had lived in shame over the experience. In my early teens, when I discovered erotic material

and masturbation, I was overwhelmed with its power, i.e., I was powerless. I understood little about my earlier sexual abuse and my ever-present secret shame swelled as I started self-soothing with sex. Little did I know that in some strange way, sex was trying to protect my inner spirit. Porn and masturbation soon became compulsive and that further enlarged my shame. Simultaneously, a host of other defects developed to help me survive.

For decades, I experienced my obsessive and compulsive sexual behavior as “cunning and baffling.” Now, in times of trial and temptation, I know that my defects are only trying to protect that inner child, my spirit.

Before this step-work breakthrough, I was totally ignorant why sex had so much power over me. I now have many recovery tools to care for myself. The largest is a caring Higher Power active through my SAA community. Even with this amazing insight, I remain a sex addict. Decades of slips and relapses have made it clear I am powerless, and my life becomes unmanageable once I resume my inner-circle behaviors.

Recently, I came up with the following analogy to summarize this breakthrough: in my addiction, I developed the pattern of soothing pain with sex, which furthered my fear and shame. They were trying to protect me, but this was very costly, both emotionally and morally. So I stuffed all these painful contradictions into my “closet.” In

Step Four, I cautiously began to empty the entire closet. In Step Five, I shared this newly revealed mess with my sponsor and my Higher Power.

Then in Steps Six and Seven, I went back to work on my closet. I installed new shelves and good lighting. I took off the door and returned my mess onto neatly organized shelves. Some shelves hold my fears, others hold my self-seeking traits and yet other shelves hold my shame. There was also a small section for my assets. Finally, in Step Seven, I asked my Higher Power to remove these defects of character.

I think of this as my psycho-spiritual recovery. The steps have given me insight into my addiction, and this insight integrates with my Step Twelve spiritual awakening. In a sense it has been a “spirit-awakening.” By becoming alert and caring for my spirit, I am able to connect to my Higher Power.

I believe I will always be a sex addict, but having experienced this epiphany of insight, my obsession and compulsions have fallen away considerably, and my serenity has grown. When my addictive thinking does rear up, I know I can go to my closet for some insight as to which defects are trying to protect me. Then I can reach for my tools of recovery to better care for my spirit.

As my recovery grows, I have serenity knowing I can face life one day at a time. And I’ve noticed that as my defects shelves become less crowded, my assets shelves are filling. ●



Balancing selfishness with service is the key to recovery

W

BY MARTIN J.

e all work the steps and we work all the steps! I never understood what this meant until I found SAA on June 17, 2019. I was discovered acting out earlier in the month, and to save my family, I found SAA and committed to attending meetings.

As I delved into my recovery, I started to think of recovery as an inherently selfish place. At the same time, I came to learn that the addict “in me” was selfish. In fact, my selfish, narcissistic, self-centered behavior had a lot to do with my isolation and secrecy, which fed the addiction, and led me to a place from which I could not escape on my own.

These two different “selfishnesses” began to confuse me because I hadn’t yet connected recovery to service. Until that point, as I learned to turn things over to a Higher Power and accept recovery, I had started to confuse my recovery with my selfishness. “My meetings,” “my addiction,” “my needs” were words I used a lot.

I started to ask myself, “How many times do I use the word ‘I’?” It was “a lot.” Yet, because I was in recovery, everyone accepted my commitment to my recovery as “good” and “healthy” and “showing I was committed to not engaging in acting-out.”

But was I still being selfish? As an addict, I was good at examining myself and the effect of the addiction on my behavior and recovery. However, I am not so good at taking a look at recovery from others’ perspectives, especially those I’ve betrayed.

Sex addiction destroys relationships. The betrayed don’t ask to be privy to recovery. The betrayed never thought their safety nets would be destroyed. The betrayed never asked to not only support an addict in recovery, but also be in recovery themselves!

The betrayed may be resentful that the addict (though in recovery) once again is putting him or herself first. The needs of the addict in recovery, after all, are “important.” A significant other who already feels slighted may now feel that the addict is using recovery to escape facing the harsh reality of the damage the acting out did to the relationship. I certainly faced this issue in my recovery.

But the paradox of recovery is that I have to work recovery hard for my own well-being. Yet part of recovery means doing for others on their terms, not mine. In other words, being of service. That’s how selfishness gets

transformed into selflessness.

Step Twelve emphasizes service: finding ways to give back to other sex addicts. The Green Book offers numerous suggestions on how to engage in service while even a newcomer to recovery: read literature at meetings, moderate meetings, offer check-in support, be an accountability partner.

On day twenty-eight of my recovery, I got a glimpse of what it means to be of service — and how it differs from selfishness. I found myself in an SAA tele-meeting. The moderator was late. No one had the script. There was confusion. Luckily, I had downloaded the script to familiarize myself with the routine so that I could meaningfully participate. I pulled the script up and began moderating the tele-meeting.

“Hi, I’m Martin, and I’ll be your trusted servant for this meeting....” I followed the script, and I used the best of the things that I had heard other moderators do. I welcomed people, used their name, used wait time, followed the script. At the conclusion of the meeting, I was told, “Wow for someone at less than thirty days, you did a great job with the meeting. Thanks so much!”

As I learn more about myself and delve deeper into who my Higher Power wants me to be, “service” is something I know is crucial for continued growth. Some say, “I’m only on Step One,” or “Step Three” or “Step Eight,” suggesting that “I really can’t

serve until I get to Step Twelve.”

I've found otherwise. Service takes many forms and can happen no matter what step an addict in recovery is actively working on. Listening is service. Sharing succinctly is service. Following group conscience is service. Moderating. Fellowship. Setting up the meeting. Giving. Answering phone messages. Writing for *The Outer Circle*.

Giving back is something I can do every day. My whole life it's been about me, me, me. Take, take, take. My, my, my. Service is about “you.” What are things “I” can do that make “your” life easier? At home, washing the dishes cheerfully without grumbling. At work, greeting people by name and smiling. In the community, holding doors open for strangers or allowing them to go first in a check-out lane.

The truth is, recovery is not selfish. While my recovery is my recovery, the less I think about me, and the more I think about my connection to others, the more changes and miracles occur around me and those I love. Recovery is self-less, and being self-less is free. The more I focus on others, the deeper my connection to my Higher Power becomes, and the clearer the principles of each step become.

What small things can I do today to make others' lives better? It has become that simple. Even though I may not be at Step Twelve, I'm ready to serve. ●

Object Not Affection

By Jerry J.

*It may come as a surprise to some,
That views of people can be undone,
Their human forms are stripped
away,
Just the shell remains for play.*

*This denigration of a person's soul,
Converting them to something low,
Twists our minds and warps our
control,
We now are left with empty holes.*

*When did we turn to view our
friends,
As just a meaning to our ends,
Using when needed, then thrown
away,
A moment of pleasure that never
stays.*

*Returning to the world to see,
That every person has the right to be,
Respected, acknowledged, and treated
with care,
Not to be used in our moment of
despair.*

The Right Fit



A willingness to try different meetings leads to hope — and recovery

BY ANDREW L.

I had been unfaithful my entire marriage. Then, last year, upon being discovered, I made the decision to leave my wife and three children for a 29-year-old sex worker I was acting out with. For close to twelve-months, I let go of everything that was important in my life to escape my responsibility and engage in a fantasy that would ultimately bring me to my knees.

I could not have been more irresponsible or caused more pain to my wife and children. Taking my acting out partner on trips with me, helping her move her to Brooklyn, spending money I didn't have and putting my family at risk. My life had become unmanageable.

When she finally moved to Brooklyn, twenty miles from my home, it all became too real. The fantasy was over, and I quickly realized I was no better equipped for this relationship than I was with my wife. I became scared, asking myself, "What had I done?" Looking back at all of the people I had hurt and the friends I had lost along the way, I was unable to sleep, and contemplated if life were worth living. Each morning became harder to face.

Then, after a long walk one morning, I called a friend who had been in AA for more than twenty years. I explained my situation and how I was feeling. We discussed my behavior, the lies, the secrets, the debt, everything. He told me the twelve steps had saved his life and recommended I go to a meeting.

Of course, I was hesitant at first, but later in the day, desperate, I found myself looking for a meeting. Since I hadn't been drinking or doing drugs for months, I chose SAA, knowing deep down that sex was the real culprit. The first meeting was forty minutes away and honestly, it was not great. After hearing the newcomer's reading, I felt certain I was an addict and that whoever wrote that passage had been living my life. However, unable to relate to the others in the room, I left uncertain I would return.

I decided to attend another meeting closer to my house. This one was better, but I was still not convinced I could spend my evenings or weekends sharing my deepest secrets with these individuals. I remembered the words "come to six meetings before making any decisions." Then a few days later, the meeting closest to my house took place. This meeting felt welcoming: the room, the people, it was different. I sensed a camaraderie, a purpose, that I had not felt before. It had a sense of hope.

At the end of my third meeting, I was certain that I was an addict, but more importantly, I had found a group of individuals that could help me. Over the next few weeks I cut off all contact with my acting-out partner, identified and enrolled in a two week intensive program, and began my road to recovery. I found a sponsor and a therapist. I presented my first step but my addict was still in full form. I was determined to knock this thing out.

Just 100 days into the program, I am happy to say that I am feeling better than I have in months.

As many before me already know, recovery is a lifelong journey, and my journey had just begun.

Thus, it should be no surprise that at my two week intensive, I had a complete breakdown as I realized the work it would take to get sober — meetings, fellowship, prayer, steps, meditation, circles, abstinence. Honestly, I was not sure I had what it would take to get sober. Not to mention, by this point, the withdrawal was causing pain throughout my body. It was pain unlike anything I had ever experienced before.

Thank God I chose to stay! Now just a little over 100 days into the program, I am happy to say that I am feeling better than I have in months. The SAA fellowship has not only helped me find my sobriety, but also the strength and courage to move home with my wife and children. Yes, my wife is amazing, and I am grateful everyday for her love and understanding.

However, without SAA and the support it has provided me throughout these very difficult times, there is no way I would be home today. And for this I will be forever grateful, whatever the outcome. ●

My Portable Program



How to take your recovery tools with you no matter where you go

BY PAUL P.

I have been in SAA for more than fourteen years, and I have learned to use many tools over the years to aid in my sobriety. One of the most beneficial tools I still use and recommend to newcomers at the meetings I attend is “the portable program.”

With my portable program, I have been able to rely on SAA meetings while on vacation, business trips, and even while sick in the hospital. What’s more, I have access to calling many fellows in the program when I am unable to attend a meeting due to travel, or times when I am unable to access a face-to-face meeting.

I have told members in my home group that I take my program wherever I go — “I have a portable program.” Some will look at me and wonder what I mean and how I can benefit from recovery while away.

The answer is simple. I have come to rely on several tools that always come to my rescue and ensure that I will maintain my sobriety while traveling.

One of the most important things I have done is that I always take a phone list for when I need to make a call. I have learned to call not only when I am in a dire situation, but also to check-in to help keep me in touch with fellow sex addicts.

I also research in advance what meetings may be in the area where I am visiting, and I make sure I have my Green Book, either a printed or electronic copy.

I also bookend — make a call before and after a potentially difficult situation — with others in my home group while traveling to report my feelings and triggering situations I may encounter. At the conclusion of my trip, I report how it went and that I was able to get through the challenging periods while away.

In addition to these tools, I access telemeetings while away. There are many telemeetings scheduled throughout the week. I can always get on a meeting and share about my feelings while connecting with others in the program.

My portable program has even saved me when I was recovering from surgery in the hospital. Recently, I was hospitalized for fourteen total days after two consecutive surgeries. I logged into a telemeeting and shared that I was calling from my hospital bed, and I felt so uplifted by connecting with members in the program!

I have lived by the motto of 'my portable program.' I have seen it work miracles in my life, and I continue to remind those I sponsor of the power of taking a program with you wherever you go.

With my faint voice, I mustered up the courage and strength to admit I was ill in the hospital but needed recovery to help me heal. I'll have to admit that it was difficult for me to make the call into the meeting, but I knew that it would bring me such relief.

I have lived by the motto of “my portable program.” I have seen it work miracles in my life, and I continue to remind those I am sponsoring of the power of taking a program with them wherever they go.

SAA has benefited me in so many ways, and I have seen incredible growth by adhering to this commitment I have made to my program.

I will always be indebted to our amazing fellowship for the many opportunities that are made available to carry this program with and maintain a “portable program.” ●

DEAR WILL

A Question of Circles and Sobriety

BY WILL

**Remember that in
SAA, each person
gets to decide
what his or her
sexual sobriety
looks like.**

Dear Will,

My sponsor and I have spent a lot of time putting together my three circles. While my sponsor seems basically satisfied with the circles as they are, he said something that has me a little worried. He said that there are one or two behaviors that I may want to look at more closely later on and see if I might want to move them from the middle circle to the inner circle. I don't think those behaviors are causing me any real harm, and I don't even want to consider the possibility of moving them. What do you think?

Happy with Things the Way They Are

Dear HTWTA,

First of all, this is a "one day at a time" program, and your sponsor has exemplified that by telling you that your circles are satisfactory for now. There is no more need for you to concern yourself with what he might tell you a year or two years or five years from now than there is for you to be worrying about how to go about doing this or that particular dreaded amends a year or longer down the road.

Also, remember that in SAA, each person gets to decide what his or her sexual sobriety looks like. So, ultimately, you get to make that decision, regardless of what your sponsor or anybody else says. Your sponsor is not going to follow you around insisting that you do or not do this or that.

Having said all that and even without having seen your circles, I agree with your sponsor that there are things that you may wish to examine at some point in the future. Some people in the program, even those with many years of sobriety, are constantly re-evaluating their program

as to what is good and healthy behavior toward themselves and toward others. Nobody's recovery is set in stone. That is part of the reason the Tenth Step begins with the words "Continued to take personal inventory."

A behavior that a person may have found minimally damaging at an early point in recovery, such as using swear words or gossiping, may look much more harmful a few years later, in no small part because of the effect it has on others.

And there are behaviors that you may decide later on are not helping your recovery or are even harmful to it. For example, now you may consider viewing pornography as relatively harmless or even a pleasant way to pass an evening, either by yourself or with a partner. However, you may reach a point where you feel a certain unpleasant way afterwards, the same way you might after spending time at post-meeting fellowship gossiping about a program member not present. At that point, you may decide that



the behavior is no longer beneficial.

And remember that modifying one's circles is not always a question of making them tighter. You even have the option of changing them back if you find that the changed circles have not really added anything to your recovery or sobriety.

But for now, HTWTA, I encourage you to accept your sponsor's words at face value. I encourage you to continue to work your program one day at a time. You may even surprise yourself by being the one to bring up the question of changing your circles with your sponsor.

Will

*If you have a question for Will,
please send an email to
Men4SAA@saa-recovery.org.*

STORIES OF SERVICE

Discovering a Different Kind of Power

BY NICK C.

**I'm determined
not to let that
sense of giving
to others
slip beneath
the waves of
distraction.**

When I first entered recovery I had done service work outside the program through volunteering, but it was never on an ongoing basis. I was content to make myself feel good by offering a few hours of charity here and there, but I never stuck to a non-profit for any length of time. Like so many other things, I was too consumed by my addiction to let the goodness of works of charity touch me in that way. It didn't give me quite that hit the rush of acting out did.

That started to change when I entered recovery and began giving up my addiction to my Higher Power and meeting others in fellowship. I began to slowly understand the true power of service to others and what that could mean for my own sobriety.

I spent more than a year as a secretary of a meeting, helping create an environment where others felt safe to share their accomplishments and setbacks, struggles and sorrows, and our shared addiction. That privileged position gave me a front row seat to the experiences of others — it showed me the true value of sticking with service as I made myself available to others in ways I never had before.

Today I am looking at new ways to do service in SAA. It has been tough with a busy work schedule, but I'm determined not to let that sense of giving slip beneath the waves of distraction. Service is a fundamental part of my program, and, I now realize, it always will be.

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

FROM THE BOARD

Area Formation Process Now Needs GSRs

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

**General Service
Representatives
(GSRs) meet
periodically and
elect a delegate
for the groups in
an area.**

The annual SAA conference has now come and gone. The Board, the Literature Committee, and the Conference Steering Committee each met for two full days, on Wednesday, October 9, and Thursday, October 10.

In the meantime, the delegates were arriving to the conference for another two days of meetings on Friday and Saturday, October 11 and 12, in which the Board, LitCom and CSC also participated. Finally, the three committees met for several hours on Sunday morning to conclude the conference.

The delegate meetings this year were essentially the same as they have been for many years: those groups who choose to do so elect a delegate to attend the annual delegate meeting.

This process normally results in a delegate meeting of a little over one hundred people, as well as the members of the Board and LitCom (also the CSC once that group was formed). Some of the delegates this year were serving as delegates for the first time and so were learning the process of the delegate meetings.

Some years ago, the delegates voted to change the structure so that areas would replace the prior structure, which was based on regions (South Central region, Southern Pacific region, and so forth).

But more than that, it was based on individual groups, meaning any SAA group could send a voting delegate. As the fellowship has grown, this structure has become increasingly unworkable as several hundred delegates attempt to vote on Conference motions.

In the new structure, only areas send delegates. An area, it was eventually determined, would essentially consist of about twenty to

thirty meetings. Because each area would elect one delegate, the result is a much smaller delegate conference, and hopefully also a delegate conference consisting of long-term members dedicated to service who would be familiar with the process, having served in a delegate capacity over a term of years.

The changeover would take place over several years, during which time the layout of the areas would be determined and other details worked out.

The delegates affirmed at this year's conference that they were ready to move on to the next step of setting up the areas and proceeding with the new service structure in time for next year's conference. So this new structure of the delegate meeting, involving one delegate to represent each area, will be implemented beginning with the 2020 delegate conference.

This process includes each meeting in an area electing what is known as a GSR (General Service Representative). These GSRs will meet periodically — some already have been doing so for a while now — and will elect an area delegate for the groups in the area. In this way, the groups are still represented.

We are still looking for GSRs for a number of the SAA groups. I'm writing to encourage you, if you are not already, to serve as a GSR for

one of the groups whose meetings you attend. I'm hoping you will step up to one of these positions.

Many members of our fellowship have found that doing service work has helped them in achieving sobriety and maintaining it over the long term. There are many ways of doing service work, such as chairing meetings or being a sponsor to one or more members of the fellowship.

One can also help the fellowship financially through donations at meetings or giving at larger events. Serving as a GSR has the additional advantage of being part of the decision-making and governing process on the business end of the fellowship.

Even if ultimately each GSR doesn't have the chance to make a direct vote at the delegate meeting, each one does have the opportunity to offer input to the delegate who is elected.

So I hope you will give some thought to serving as a GSR for one of your groups. The stepping up of GSRs in each group who can then come together to elect delegates to the conference is very important as part of the process that has been going on for some years now of changing over from regions to areas, which will in turn help streamline the governing process within the fellowship.

Conference Addresses Six Motions; Moves Forward With Areas

The 2019 annual meeting of the Conference tackled six business motions. Several motions were related to area formation; not all were brought by the ACC. This report describes the outcomes of the all of the business motions.

On motion 2019-D0002, approval of the area alignment, discussion ranged from whether or not an area-based structure of the ISO was a good idea at all, to whether or not the fellowship is ready. Some objections were raised about the specifics of the alignment, such as the fact that many areas outside of the U.S. had only one meeting. In the end, the vote was 64/22, overwhelmingly in favor of the alignment, so it passed on the first vote.

The second ACC motion was 2019-D0011, to delay the first all-area delegate Conference until 2021. Many of the same points were raised about this motion. An additional point was raised about the possible imbalance of power in the Conference, because the Board, the Literature Committee and the ISO office staff will be voting members and could outnumber the area delegates elected if participation is low. In the end, the vote was 40 in favor of delay, 46 against, so next year, only area delegates, along with Board and Literature Committee members and ISO Office staff will have their votes counted.

The next motion was 2019-D0005 (Valley of the Sun Area Appeal). This motion was brought by the groups in one location in Mesa, Arizona after their appeal to the ACC to form an area was denied. Per 2016-D0003, they appealed to the Conference. After much heated discussion, largely in favor of the appeal, the vote was 53 in favor of allowing the area to be part of the alignment, 27 against, so the area is included in the alignment of groups into areas.

After that was 2019-D0001, to allow specialty recovery focus areas. There was much discussion about unity, as well as discussion about how consequences of some addicts' addictive behaviors may impact their ability to participate in areas as they are currently structured. In the end, the vote was 17 in favor, 62 opposed. The motion failed.

2019-D0004 to allow electronic participation in Conference meetings died without being discussed. The motion's champion was not present, and the Chair ruled that no one could substitute for them.

The last motion considered was 2019-D0013, to allow the ISO and groups and intergroups to post the dates and locations of the Conventions on their respec-

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tive websites. The main reasons given to support the motion revolved around carrying the message to the sex addict who still suffers, and the impact on one's recovery of braving public scrutiny. The main objections to the motion revolved around the fear of exposure of attendees to unwanted public attention. It was also noted that the Conference or any other ISO body cannot dictate what groups and intergroups do, including what they publish on their websites. The motion failed 30/44.

LifeLine Matching Campaign Aims to Help Better Carry the Message

If you have ever considered enrolling as a monthly LifeLine Partner, now would be the time! Why?

Several anonymous members of our program have collectively pledged a total of \$96,000 to match new or increased LifeLine donations. This match challenge is part of the Giving Hope a Voice Campaign announced at the 2019 ISO Convention in Houston. The GHAV campaign is designed to accomplish two strategic funding goals. One is to raise \$400,000 to fund major upgrades to the ISO's ability to support groups to carry the message. The second is to increase monthly LifeLine revenue to provide the on-going funding of new and improved services.

Our donors want:

- » To use their gifts to encourage new, additional contributions
- » To avoid detracting from current contributions and fund raisers
- » The matching gift to go into the ISO general fund

Why do we need the Matching Gift Challenge?

We have made great progress in the past three years expanding our efforts to carry the message of recovery – our one primary purpose. We have reached more suffering addicts than ever in our history. Yet in the face of this progress SAA remains — after forty-two years of existence — a relatively unknown fellowship with limited ability to reach suffering sex addicts. Consider the following:

- » 80% of 600 therapists and counselors surveyed in March 2018 did not know about SAA.
- » Of this group, 50% were seeing clients presenting with issues of sex/porn addiction.
- » There are an estimated 7 to 18 million sex/porn addicts in North America alone.
- » SAA's global membership is estimated at 20,000 to 40,000.
- » SAA has one publication on public information; AA has more than thirty publications and videos.

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- » Most SAA groups still struggle to carry the message and are not actively educating the general public or professionals about SAA.
- » Less than 2% of SAA members (estimated) have personally participated in an activity to carry the message in the past year.

These findings reveal a serious deficit in our fellowship's knowledge and ability to reach suffering addicts.

The \$96,000 Matching Challenge is designed to provide our fellowship with the funding to address this deficit as quickly as possible by expanding current PI/CPC projects, implementing a new recovery website called SAA Connect, and upgrading the technology at the ISO office to prepare the staff to serve a growing fellowship.

Details about the match:

- » Starts October 1, 2019; Ends when the \$96,000 matching fund is depleted or May 31, 2020.
- » Only new or increased monthly LifeLine partner enrollments will qualify for the match
- » New LifeLines: the first monthly contribution will qualify for a match equal to the amount of the first year's total donation; twelve monthly contributions.
- » Example: A new LifeLine of \$20 per month. The first donation of \$20 will immediately qualify for a match of \$240. $\$20 \times 12$ (1yr) = \$240
- » Increased LifeLines: will be matched in the same manner as new LLs, except only the increased amount will be matched.
- » Example: A \$20 LifeLine is increased to \$30 per month. The increased amount of \$10 will immediately qualify for a match of \$120. $\$10 \times 12$ (1yr) = \$120
- » Donations will be used to support and increase the many efforts in place to help carry the message of recovery and all of the activities and services provided by the ISO.

How to Participate: Enroll as a new LifeLine Partner or increase your current LifeLine. You can enroll or increase online or by telephone. ONLINE: saa-recovery.org/LifeLinePartner/. Telephone: 800-477-8191

ISO Board Officially Defines 'Member Groups'

The ISO Board of Trustees took some important actions in recent months, including officially defining "member groups." Here's a look at all the Board actions.

July

- » Approved that the composition of the Prisoner Outreach Committee be changed be-

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ginning in October 2020 to members of the fellowship interested in prisoner outreach and that newly formed areas be encouraged to identify a member to serve as a primary contact within that area for matters relating to prisoner outreach.

August

- » Granted permission to print SAA logo on business card for Syracuse, NY SAA.

September

- » Approved funding for the Board's alternate to attend the face-to-face Board meeting in October.
- » Granted permission to print SAA logo on a business card for Ohio Valley/Columbus SAA.
- » Approved closing the business money market account and moving the funds into a new business premium money market account. Also take the operational reserve out of the new account and move it to another investment type with higher interest rate.

October

- » Approved the following policy interpretation of a member group: A member group is defined in the bylaws of ISO of SAA as: “. . . an SAA group that has registered itself with the International Service Organization of SAA and follows the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of SAA.” An SAA group is defined as two or more addicts meeting together regularly for the purposes of recovering from their sexual addiction and reaching out to others suffering from sexual addiction, who are self-supporting and have no other common affiliations. Article II, Sections 1a and 1b of the ISO of SAA, Inc. Bylaws. The ISO Board of Trustees interprets the foregoing definition of a “member group” to be a registered group that:

- >Is affiliated only with SAA.

- >Uses the Twelve Steps of SAA and the Twelve Traditions of SAA in meetings.

- >Carries the SAA message of recovery.

- >Provides access to the SAA Green Book and other SAA Literature in meetings.

- >Does not support, endorse, or oppose outside causes or issues.

Disclaimer: In accordance with the bylaws of SAA, the Board of Trustees retains the right to modify this interpretation in accordance with the bylaws and the Twelve Steps of SAA and the Twelve Traditions of SAA.

Individual Donations Lag, but Group Donations Show Uptick

In the month of September, we had a net income deficit of \$17,250.08. We had budgeted for a deficit of \$8,766.00. Our total income was \$6,689.97 lower than our budgeted income of \$64,558.00. Our gross profit (total income minus cost of goods) was \$9,139.92 lower than our budgeted amount of \$56,888.00. Our expenses were \$655.84 lower than our estimated expenses of \$65,654.00.

- » Our total SAA Green Book sales were above our estimate by \$3,070.29 in September. For the year we are at 139.87 percent of our estimated sales. Our Green Books sales from HCI are above the budgeted amount by \$1,734.68. Findaway audio sales were \$114.73 above our budget of \$200.
- » Our book *Voices of Recovery* sales for September were \$2,213.89. For the year we continue to be way over our estimated sales.
- » Our pamphlet and booklet sales were above our estimate by \$173.03 in September. For the year we are at 103.12 percent of our estimated sales.
- » Our plastic chips sales were above our estimate by \$15.75 in September. For the year we are at 100.88 percent of our estimated sales.
- » Our bronze medallion sales were below our estimate by \$642.31 in September. For the year we are at 77.06 percent of our estimated sales.
- » Our total sales for September exceeded our estimate by \$4,771.46 in September. For the year we are at 124.82 percent of our estimated sales. This was mainly from *Voices of Recovery* and increased Green Book sales.
- » Our product inventory is valued at \$75,292.09.
- » Our expenses exceeded our estimate of \$65,654.00 by \$655.84 in September. For the year we are at 99.0 percent of our estimated expenses.
- » Our operational reserve is fully funded at \$200,021.00.

Individual donations were below our estimate of \$30,563.00 by \$5,666.83 in September. For the year we are at 81.46 percent of our estimated individual donations. This is from both LifeLine Partners and general donations being lower than expected. Group donations were above our estimate \$12,200.00 by \$3,436.84 in September. For the year we are at 71.83 percent of our estimated group donations. This was mainly from our general donations being below our target.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

In Your Service, Paul M., Executive Director

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

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: board@saa-recovery.org

Board of Trustees and Literature Committee

Board

Bob L (Chair); Carl D (Vice Chair)
Bob H (Treasurer); Les J (Secretary)
Andy M; David H; Eddie N; Melissa W
Mike L; Mike S; Richard N; Richard S
Wayne B; Wayne K

Board: board@saa-recovery.org
CSC: csc@saa-recovery.org
LitCom: litcom@saa-recovery.org

Office Staff

Executive Director: Paul M.: director@saa-iso.net
Associate Director: Chris F.
Publications Manager: Cody S.
Public Information, Cooperation with the Professional Community, and 7th Tradition Manager: Phillip B.
Project Manager: Tracy R.
Information Technician and Prison Outreach Manager: Jonathan C.
Information Technician: DJ B.
Administrative Assistant: Jerry B.
Administrative Assistant: Evan E.
Administrative Assistant: Harvey A.

Literature Committee

Robbie H (Chair); Valerie G (2nd Chair)
Jim L (Secretary); Bruce M
Byard B; Carole D; Carol R; Charlie K
Deb W; Don R; Doug S; Gary T (TOC Editor)
Mike B; Neil W; Steven P

Calendar - All times are CST. To attend a meeting email info@saa-recovery.org or call the ISO

First Sunday of the month

CSC: Policy & Procedure: 2:00 p.m.
Intergroup Communications: 3:00 p.m.
LGBT Outreach: 5:00 p.m.

First Wednesday of the month

Prisoner Outreach: 7:00 p.m.

First Saturday of the month

Intimacy and Sexual Avoidance: 9 a.m.
Author's Group: 4:00 p.m.

Second Saturday of the month

Women's Outreach: 10 a.m.

Second Sunday of the month

Conference Committee Structure: 2:00 p.m.

Literature Committee: 4:00 p.m.

General Outreach: 6:30 p.m.

Second Thursday of the month

Seventh Tradition: 6:00 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

ISOP Committee: 2:00 p.m.

Fourth Saturday of the month

Area Handbook Workgroup: 11 a.m.

Fourth Sunday of the month

Conference Steering Committee: 2:00 p.m.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Get Your Story Published in *The Outer Circle*

The Outer Circle newsletter relies on submissions from the SAA fellowship. It's a great way to carry the message to other sex addicts in the spirit of Step Twelve — and be of service! Articles may be submitted to toc@saa-recovery.org or to the ISO office. Please submit articles via email in Microsoft Word format with the **RELEASE FORM** at the bottom of this page.

| 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 |

Here are some general writing guidelines:

Living in Sobriety: For those with five-plus years of sobriety. 750-900 words on how you got sober and what you're doing to stay sober.

Stories of Service: 300-500 words on why you do service and how it helps your recovery.

Feature articles: 650-1,200 words on any of the topics listed above. 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 in recovery as it relates to the steps or traditions.

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.