

The Outer Circle

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

PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270

Volume 8, Issue 2

March - April 2014



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ISO Structure (ISO-S) Committee News

The two Bylaws amendments proposed by the ISO Structure Committee (ISO-S) and passed by the delegates in 2013 will come up for ratification at the annual meeting of the Conference this year.

The first would change the method of electing Board and LitCom members, so that all are elected by at-large election of the Conference. The second would change the composition of the Conference, converting it to a body made up of delegates elected by area assemblies. The area assemblies would be made up of Group Service Representatives (GSRs) elected by individual member groups.

The ISO-S is planning two tele-workshops – one in March and another in May – to give members of the fellowship the opportunity to ask questions or express concerns about these proposed changes.

Implementation of the Proposed Changes

This year, the ISO-S has been working on the details of how the Bylaws might be implemented. Recommendations on a nominating process for at-large Board and LitCom members have been forwarded to the new Conference Steering Committee (CSC), and a webinar was held in December to answer questions and receive feedback from the CSC.

The ISO-S is presently finalizing the details of recommendations on a process for transition from a Conference made up of delegates from member groups to an area-based Conference. These recommendations will be presented to the CSC as soon as they are complete.

It is anticipated that, if both of the Bylaws amendments are ratified, these recommendations will be presented for initial discussion by the delegates this year, and then referred to member groups throughout the fellowship for further discussion and feedback during the 2014-2015 service year.

Feedback from the Fellowship

Feedback received during the 2012 and 2013 Conferences and other comments received from the fellowship have been generally positive and have helped shape the continuing discussions this year. The ISO-S continues to welcome input from any member of the fellowship.

Questions and comments about the pending Bylaws amendments or about the nominating and area formation processes may be addressed directly to the ISO-S by email to info@saa-recovery.org with "ISO-S" in the subject line, or by postal mail to ISO, Attn: ISO-S, PO Box 70949, Houston, TX 77270.

ISO Structure Tele-workshops

Watch your email for the dates and times of the ISO-S tele-workshops. If you are not on the ISO mailing list and would like to be added, send an email to info@saa-recovery.org with your request.

Thank you,
—ISO Structure Committee

The ISO is pleased to announce the approval of our **newest** piece of SAA literature:

“Getting a Sponsor”

is now available online at the ISO website store:

www.saa-store.org

This pamphlet addresses many questions SAA members may have about sponsorship, including the importance of having a sponsor, how to find one, what to expect from a sponsor, and much more.

Thank you so much to all who put so much hard work into producing and approving this important new addition to our SAA Literature.

The ISO is pleased to announce the availability of:

“Sex Addicts Anonymous and the Lesbian / Gay / Bisexual / Transgender Sex Addict: A Message of Hope for Sex Addicts in the LGBT Communities”

which is now available online at the ISO website store:

www.saa-store.org

This new booklet has valuable recovery suggestions and insights that are useful for ***any recovering member or group***, regardless of sexual orientation.

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

Conference Charter Committee (CCC) News

The CCC is continuing to solicit and collect feedback on the draft Conference Charter in preparation for presenting the Charter for approval at the 2014 annual meeting of the ISO Conference.

Please read, share, and discuss the Charter with your local group. We encourage member groups to study the Charter and to elect a delegate to the Conference so that all member groups may contribute to the group conscience on the approval of the Charter.

Updates:

- **Tele-workshops.** The third tele-workshop on the draft Charter for this service year will take place on **Saturday, March 29, at 2:00 p.m. Central time.** Tele-workshops offer an opportunity to ask questions and share feedback. All SAA members are welcome. Please contact the ISO office at info@saa-recovery.org for call-in information; a flyer with call-in info will also be going out via the ISO News email list. An additional workshop will be scheduled for April 2014.
- **Draft Charter on the Service website.** The draft Charter is available to all SAA members in the Conference Charter area of the ISO service website at <http://www.saa-iso.org>. This site is password-protected. Please contact the ISO office at info@saa-recovery.org for the password information.
- **Draft Charter revisions.** The CCC Content Work Group is incorporating revisions to the Charter as feedback is received. As revisions are approved by the CCC, they will be posted to the service website. The latest Charter revision is dated Dec. 15, 2013, and the latest FAQ revision is dated Feb. 16, 2014.
- **CCC mailing list and meetings.** Contact the ISO office at info@saa-recovery.org if you would like to be added to the CCC mailing list and receive invitations to monthly CCC meetings. Meetings are held on the third Sunday of every month at 10:00 a.m. Central. All SAA members are welcome at the meetings and all current delegates may vote.
- **Feedback address.** Send feedback on the Charter to the CCC at ccc.feedback@saa-iso.org. Please send feedback as soon as possible so it can be considered before the Conference.

In grateful service,
Conference Charter Committee

CCC Mission Statement

The Conference Charter Committee (CCC) was established as a committee of the ISO Board of Trustees in 2007 and transferred to the ISO conference in 2010. The primary task was to research and draft a charter for the ISO conference. The CCC shall continue to solicit and collect feedback from the fellowship in order to prepare and present to the conference for adoption a final draft that reflects and incorporates our collective wisdom and can serve to guide the conference in the years ahead. In preparing this final draft, the CCC will work closely with other components of the ISO to ensure coordination of the charter with other foundational documents. Upon approval of the charter, the CCC will gratefully disband and pass oversight of the charter to the conference.

Electronic Formats Available!

SAA e-Book

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

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

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

mp3 Audio Downloads

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

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

Currently, the mp3 files are available for convention years 2004 through 2013, and can be purchased from the SAA store at www.saa-store.org/audio.

We will be uploading the remaining past convention years as we get them formatted.

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

The ISO Literature Committee welcomes submission of entries from the fellowship at large for possible inclusion in the SAA meditation book. The meditation book will consist of 366 entries, one for each day of the calendar year. To ensure consideration, submissions should follow these guidelines:

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

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

At the bottom of the page, a concise statement in the author's own words should summarize the main idea of the meditation or offer a poignant challenge or affirmation. **Each entry should be a maximum of 275 words including the quotation and the closing affirmation, so that each meditation will fit on a single page.** Multiple entries may address slightly different aspects of the same subject.

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

SAA Approved Literature

<i>Sex Addicts Anonymous (SAA Book)</i>	<i>Abstinence</i>
<i>Abstinence and Boundaries in SAA</i>	<i>The Bubble</i>
<i>First Step to Recovery</i>	<i>Writing to Prisoners</i>
<i>Getting Started in Sex Addicts Anonymous</i>	<i>Group Guide</i>
<i>Sex Addicts Anonymous (SAA Pamphlet)</i>	<i>Intergroup Guide</i>
<i>Sexual Sobriety and the Internet</i>	<i>Three Circles</i>
<i>A Special Welcome to the Woman Newcomer</i>	<i>Tools of Recovery</i>
<i>Recovery from Compulsive Sexual Avoidance</i>	<i>Getting a Sponsor</i>
<i>Safe & Sexually Sober Meetings</i>	
<i>SAA and the Lesbian / Gay / Bisexual / Transgender Sex Addict</i>	

Meditation Book Vision Statement

(approved by the Literature Committee)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Meditation Writing Tele-Workshops

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

All workshops are the **4th Sunday of each month**, at 5:00 p.m. central time, and last until 6:30 p.m.

March 23, 2014

April 27, 2014

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

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

Personal Story Submissions for *Sex Addicts Anonymous*:

Do you have a personal story to tell?

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

Guidelines for Submission of a Personal Story

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

IMPORTANT

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

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

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

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

Volunteer Services Needed

Want to be of service to the Fellowship that supports you?

Not sure where to get started?

Contact the ISO!

or go to www.saa-iso.org/

and select "Volunteer" to fill out a volunteer form.

ISO Income/Expense Summary as of January 31, 2014

	Jan 14
Income	
Sales	21,050.77
Shipping & Handling	2,281.05
Donations	39,567.14
Investment Income	19.24
Other Income	20.37
Total Income	62,938.57
Cost Of Goods Sold	7,917.96
Gross Profit	55,020.61
Expense	
Wages & Benefits	23,404.85
Payroll Taxes	2,737.54
Payroll Expenses	17.59
Financial Charges	1,378.20
Communications	540.08
Occupancy Expenses	1,832.64
Office Expenses	566.61
The Outer Circle	1,179.37
Professional Fees	473.00
Depreciation	175.00
Bad Debts/Refunds	217.21
Travel-Related Expenses	12,002.17
Board/Committee Expenses	819.08
Total Expense	45,343.34
Net Income	9,677.27

Financial Results for January 2014

In the month of January the budget showed a surplus of \$9,677.27. We had budgeted for a surplus of \$5,297.00. We exceeded the budget estimate by \$4,380.27. The additional surplus was due to increased sales and reduced expenses.

Our sales revenue for the SAA Green Book exceeded the estimate by \$42.15 for January.

Our pamphlet and booklet sales exceeded the estimate by \$2,049.87 for January. Our bronze medallion sales exceeded the estimate by \$991.90 in January. Our Chips sales exceeded the estimate by \$168.6 in January.

Our total sales for January exceeded the estimate by \$3,015.77.

Individual donations exceeded the estimate by \$2,062.52 for January. Group donations were below our estimate by \$1,945.36 in January.

Our product inventory is valued at \$43,359.02.

Our expenses were below our budgeted estimate by \$2,113.66 in January.

Our operational reserve is fully funded.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

In Your Service,
Joe H.

Executive Director
director@saa-iso.org

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

From the Editor

by Mike L.

My "From the Editor" piece in the last issue of The Outer Circle was relatively short. So I guess I am making up for it this time.

As I have previously mentioned, I am choosing articles from prior issues of the newsletter to appear in this service year's issue of *The Outer Circle*. The articles in this issue span the years 2002 to 2005. Choosing these articles was a particularly interesting experience, because it was at the 2002 conference in San Francisco that the Literature Committee recommended me to the Board to serve as the editor of the newsletter.

So, while going over the issues of the publication from these years, I had a chance to re-read some of the "From the Editor" pieces that I wrote back



The topic for the November/December issue ... is "My experiences getting and staying sober early on."



then. Many times I related personal experiences I had recently undergone. In some cases, the experiences were still with me. And in other cases, to use a phrase that has gained some currency on the Internet, not so much. In one issue I wrote about a film I had seen that made an impression on me at the time, and now I barely even remember it.

I had personal connections to some of the articles because I remembered talking with the authors either face-to-face or by e-mail about the topic of the article. In some cases, the people who wrote the articles were and remain long-time acquaintances, and in other cases, the authors are no longer active in the program. Remembering the latter caused me some sadness.

Still, there has been a lesson in all of this for me. I never know what life

has in store for me. Some things that seem important to me one day fade into obscurity the next. People who I think are going to be in my life long-term move on, or sometimes I am the one who moves on.

And yet, some of those people, be they twelve-step acquaintances or others, eventually return. I still don't know for certain what the message is for me there; I'm feeling grateful that a number of people I knew in the past have shown back up in my life recently. It would be too much to hope for all of these folks to come back around; at least I still have my fond memories of them.

Probably the most interesting experience I have had with reviewing the old articles comes from being reminded of what an impression some of them made on me. A good example is the article by Joel D., "Which Do I Celebrate?" that appeared way back in September/October 2002. I was surprised to see how long ago we ran that article. If somebody had shown the piece to me out of context and asked me if I could remember how long ago we printed it, I would have said, "Oh, two or three years ago." My remembering it so vividly after almost twelve years really speaks volumes to the quality of that article.

And, looking over all of those articles, I'm really happy to see that we have had quite a few good ones. I wish that I had time and space to reprint all of them, but that would take another twelve years, I suppose. Getting to review the articles submitted for publication over all these years has been almost like going to an extra couple of meetings. And it was fun seeing once again the illustrations that were a regular feature of the newsletter for a while.

There has been a recent upsurge in the number of articles submitted. I'm going to do my best to get as many of them in the next couple of issues as possible.

So now it is time to present the topic for the November/December issue. What I have come up with is "My experiences getting and staying sober early on." I actually came into the program twice; the difference between the first time, when things didn't really "take" for me, and the second time, is that I started doing some of the things that I never thought to do the first time around, or else that I didn't even know about that first time. For example, I didn't hear anything about the Three Circles my first time in the program; it took somebody who was almost as new as I am—another one of the folks who has since moved on and of whom I have only very fond memories—to tell me about them. So, what were some of the things, or that one big thing, that you did that helped you to stay sober?

Anyway, I think that is all for now. I hope you enjoy the issue and the next couple of months. Remember that the next convention is just around the corner!

Relationships and Tradition Five by Freeman P.

[Editor's Note: This is the fifth part of a twelve-part series called "Relationships and the Twelve Traditions."]

Tradition Five: Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the sex addict who still suffers. (Sex Addicts Anonymous, p. 84)

Tradition Five gives SAA groups a single mission. Our Green Book states, "[o]ur groups exist to help make recovery available to any sex addict seeking help. This purpose is critical to everything we do as a fellowship" (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, p. 85). At times I neglect to remember how all-inclusive this Tradition is. I forget that "old timers" who have been in recovery for years may still suffer. Do I carry the message to them? Do I, as an individual, do all I can to fulfill our fellowship's primary purpose? Or do I pick and choose which Traditions I will follow? Am I demanding from my fellow members more than recovery? More than sponsorship? Perhaps I ask for a loan, or to borrow another's car. Am I willing to explain the limitations to a newcomer, despite how he or she might react? Am I doing selfless service at my home group and doing twelfth-step calls without secretly desiring something more than recovery in return?

Turning again to our beloved Green Book, we learn that "the purpose or goal of our service is to carry the SAA message: that freedom . . . is possible through the Twelve Steps of SAA" (p. 84). Further, it states that "[e]very activity . . . is motivated by that one purpose" (p. 84). Only through our singleness of purpose do ". . . we keep both our recovery and our groups healthy" (p. 85). As I read our Green Book, I keep alert for where it is written "we . . ." or "if we . . .," because this alerts me to something "we" do or "we" don't do in our fellowship or recovery.

Tradition Five is no different. Page 85 of the Green Book has various important "we" expressions. "We make" recovery available, "we strive" to make a safe environment in which to recover, "we explore . . . new ways." We avoid confusion by staying focused on our primary purpose. "We guard against" setting any type of standard for membership (Tradition Three). "We rely on our Higher Power." From Traditions Two and Four we learned that each group chooses how to carry the message. Through practicing Tradition Five, the unity of SAA is built. We have learned that only by giving away what we have is our fellowship able to grow and continue to be strong.

Tradition Five (Relationship Form): Each of us has one primary purpose, to express our love and attitudes to one another. In and out of the relationship, we strive to love one another as an expression of God's love, to give to the relationship more than we receive.

The singleness of purpose helps guide me in my relationships because I realize I am not the boss. I am only responsible for my half. Here again, I recognize we both come prepackaged with parents. Together we strive to make our combined package (or baggage) work. In order for me to make our package work, I become an expression of God's love.

To ensure that my feelings are understood I become vulnerable by expressing my thoughts and feelings openly and honestly. Through opening up entirely I create the most intimate relationship possible, where I am deeply known and understood. At times I may choose to feel hurt. In those moments, it is imperative for me to focus on the relationship's primary purpose. In order for me to do that, I release judgment and forgive. If I fail to forgive, my lack of forgiveness will poison not just my primary relationship, but all my relationships. Lack of forgiveness is resentment. Only through forgiving do I heal my heart and that of the other person.

In all relationships I put my personal well-being first. Only by staying grounded in recovery will I be able to remain healthy and maintain healthy relationships on every level. As I remain centered, I am able to give the best of myself, all that I am, even when my personal suffering seems overwhelming. I continue to get outside of myself, give all my resources, and do whatever it takes.

In order for relationships to grow, I want to nurture them. Through my behaviors, others know who my friends are, as well as the fact that I am in a committed relationship. I abstain from sending mixed messages. To foster growth, I set aside time to revel in each friendship, always knowing my primary purpose is to express my love and attitudes, to be genuine. As an individual I continue to improve the talents I have been given. In my primary relationship I value all that I have and maintain myself so I am healthy and attractive. This way my spouse may take delight in me.

Since I am a recovering sex addict, healthy sexuality is important. If need be, my spouse and I schedule time from our busy lives to be intimate together. In this way, we may express our love and attitudes to one another in a healthy manner and enhance all that we have and all that we are, fulfilling our primary purpose.

Dear Grace

Submitted by SAA Women's Outreach Subcommittee

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

Dear Grace,

I have got a lot of personal/outside issues going on in my life right now and do not have time to work the Steps. I am on Step Two. Should I keep coming to meetings? My sponsor says she can't work with me if I won't work my steps, but I need her to listen to my problems and help me solve them.

—Lost

Dear Lost,

I'm glad you wrote me. It sounds like you are in a tough spot. Here is what I can offer.

Let's review the basics. SAA is a Twelve-Step program, where members work together to achieve freedom from addictive sexual behavior. This occurs through "a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps" (Step Twelve). Let me repeat that because it's the key. In SAA, the spiritual awakening/freedom results from working the Twelve Steps.

Sometimes life happens, and for a while, we can't work the Steps. For example, you have a child. A family member dies. You get called to active military duty. If one of those applies to you, you and your sponsor could work out an arrangement with a timetable for restarting. Honestly, anything other than that is likely to be an excuse.

Step One shows us what a mess our lives are, as the result of our powerlessness over addictive sexual behavior. Step Two offers the hope that a Higher Power could restore us to sanity. It's a hope, and sometimes, it's a challenge. The first three steps require us to let go of our illusion of control. You may be simply caught in that struggle. Our SAA Green Book warns us to make recovery "our highest priority. We all have responsibilities and obligations. But if we allow ourselves to fall into our

addiction again, and not return to recovery, we jeopardize everything we have” (p 68).

A sponsor is here to help us with the Steps. If you can't work the Steps, it's important that you not tie up a sponsor's time and energy. That doesn't mean you can't call her to talk, but only as one member of your support system. It's not appropriate or fair to her and others she is sponsoring to use her as a counselor or therapist. If you need one of those, please find one.

As far as attending meetings, there is no “should” at work here. If you want to keep attending meetings, then do. As long as you have the desire to stop addictive sexual behavior, you belong (Tradition Three). Now, the same caution applies. Meetings are not group therapy. They are “forums for learning how to integrate the steps into our lives” (*Sex Addicts Anonymous*, page 20). The other members there will be working the Steps, and will probably urge you do so as well. That's because they want you to have the spiritual awakening that comes from working the Twelve Steps. That's why we meet, to carry that message to others, including you.

What we know, and share freely with you, is that you do not need to be “Lost.” Please join us,

—Grace

Disclaimer: We cannot guarantee that this advice will be equally applicable to every woman, although it is our hope that such will be the case.

—SAA Women's Outreach Subcommittee

Volunteer Services Needed

Want to be of service to the Fellowship that supports you?

Not sure where to get started?

Contact the ISO!

or go to www.saa-iso.org/

and select “Volunteer” to fill out a volunteer form.

No Short-Cuts: The Peacefulness of Recovery

by Barry M.

Being in addiction is a full-blown experience of driven-ness; often out of control, even while deceiving myself that I am in control (a little bit!). Being in recovery has become—sometimes at least—a welcome experience of being peacefully present. Present to this day, with all of its mixed emotions and up/down roller slides of hopes and fears. One of my favourite lines from the traditional Christmas carols is the one from the first verse of “O Little Town of Bethlehem” that professes that “the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee to-night.” They are missed, not met, if and to the extent that I am not living this day, as the day I am gifted with: today. Alas, easier said than done.

I find it important that many persons in recovery are retrieving from once-dismissed spiritual traditions the value and disciplines of meditation or contemplation. Both promise to bring a focused attention into and with one’s otherwise frantic and frenetic life. Both invite us to pay attention, or even, indeed, to show up so to be willing to pay attention. It is also helpful that spiritual teachers think of prayer as a willingness to show up: show up to the present day or set of continuous moments and flow of events, even if this is for more than a split-second moment: just for today, as this day comes. To be sure, I find that meditation and contemplative work in recovery necessarily includes bits of the past (regrets, unfinished business, neglected steps and conversations), and intimations of the future (fears or anxieties, pending obligations with sometimes conflicting schedules, a sheer lack of confidence).

This past New Year’s Eve is a regular case in point for me. On the one hand, I fear going into it alone out of realistic recalls of how I have mis-spent such past occasions, often slipping into acting-out behaviours at a nearby place I have come to call “Heartbreak Hotel” (an Elvis Presley song). On the other hand, this past 2013/14 transition evening, I spoke out loud, in the prior week’s SAA meetings, of precisely this anticipated fear of handling the evening badly—including, on the difficult Sunday between Christmas and New Year’s, some soul-sharing with eight others in a sharing circle that was twelve-step related. This contributed to a sober sanity (including prayers for serenity), along with having a reasonably paced game plan of some work, some meaningful conversations with a friend or two during the day, and viewing a delightful video into and through the changing of the hour from one year into the next, already upon us.

I came to lean into a line by Rilke that I read in a meditation book: “in the difficult are the friendly forces; the hands that work on us.” In short, while I

needed some solitude, I did not welcome nor need a sustained bout of self-pitying loneliness. In the end, thanks to the varied and paced “work” of the week, I found myself not alone. Such prior work of having shown up to meetings, to conversations, even to journal entries of brief length, and to some important readings about socially important issues came to encourage me to stay present to the end of the day and, hence, to the end of 2013—that is, present to the care of God in and for this day, in and for this new year and gratefully not alone.

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The ISO is pleased to announce the availability of:

“Sex Addicts Anonymous and the Lesbian / Gay / Bisexual / Transgender Sex Addict: A Message of Hope for Sex Addicts in the LGBT Communities”

which is now available online at the ISO website store:

www.saa-store.org

This new booklet has valuable recovery suggestions and insights that are useful for ***any recovering member or group***, regardless of sexual orientation.

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

Living in Two Worlds

by Jason H.

I have been told over and over again by my grandmother that the road to hell is paved with good intentions, and I did my own paving by trying to live in two worlds at one time. As an addict, I attempted to do this for thirty-one years and it has cost me a pretty penny.

I had been in the system for a short period of time when I found myself torn between two worlds. On the one hand, I was in the prison world, which has its own cultures within it, and then I had the free world, where my family resides. If it is the plan of my Higher Power the Great Spirit, I will return to it. I found and still today find myself at times contemplating which world I adapt to. Do I abandon my morals, values, and beliefs that were instilled in me, or do I stay steadfast and find comfort in knowing that I will not allow myself to develop what is known as the prison mentality?

As I was tossing around these thoughts, both in my head and through the SAA prison pen pals program (which I encourage those who are incarcerated and those in the free world to get involved in), I began to come to the realization that this struggle to live in two different worlds was not a new one for me. In fact, it has been a theme in my life since I started in school, and it became more intense as my battle with my sex addiction and the other self-medicating addictions increased.

When I was most active in my addiction, which was prior to my arrest and confinement in prison, I was quickly closing out the "normee world," as I like to call it, the world in which I made everything appear to be okay. I had a place to live, two sons, a nice job, and on the outside we appeared to be happy. As I was spiraling out of control, this world was slowly disappearing and another world was taking its place: the world of seeking sexual encounters, grooming through manipulation, justification, and rationalization, chasing highs, and then waking up in sheer panic at the thought of what I had just done. Then I would further muddy the waters by self-medicating with pain pills and alcohol that panic of being caught and the truth coming out. It became a vicious, self-perpetuating cycle of acting out sexually, panic/remorse, and self-medicating behavior.

As time went on, and I spent more and more time acting out, the cycle became tighter and tighter until I became homicidal and suicidal. Eventually, the cycle collapsed upon itself and my worst fear became reality: I was arrested and taken to jail. Looking back at this period of time when I was arrested, I can see that it was the Great Spirit that intervened in my life and in the life of a potential victim. He was doing for me and for others what we could not do for ourselves.

I was finally able to see that all my life I have been struggling to live in two worlds. I always wanted to fit in, to belong, and to be loved. I have come to the conclusion that I do not have to struggle to live in two worlds. The true Jason can just exist in the "normee" world and he has the right to be loved and accepted. As far as the struggle between the prison world and the free world, I too accepted the fact that I can stay in the free world where I am more productive and where I can be of assistance to my family and to my community. If I totally incorporate the prison mentality, I will be lost to that world in which I found myself prior to my incarceration. That would be a waste of time and energy that I have placed into my program of recovery.

The solution to my problem is balance. I cannot ignore the fact that the two worlds do exist and that I have to accept that they are polar opposites. I have to accept that in the prison world it is a survival of the fittest, and that the strong-minded will overcome. I do not believe in this prison mentality but it exists here all the same. This is just reality, especially for me since I battle a sexual addiction. As one who battles sexual addiction, I have a choice; either I can choose to live in a sober world, free of sexual addiction, or I can live in an addictive world. I get to make the choice each and every day.

In conclusion, I found it beneficial, when I was new to the SAA program and found myself engulfed in the world of addiction as I have described in this article, to reach out to someone at a meeting and to hang onto those who had a solid foundation in the SAA program until I was able to develop my own solid foundation. I found a sponsor and started working the Steps and rested in the fact that two things were certain: (1) no matter what happens to me, I do not have to act out in my sexual addiction just for today, and sometimes I have to break that down even further during a crisis (just for this hour, just for this minute, just for this now), and (2) that there is healing power in the Twelve Steps, and if I just do the work, I will be healed spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and physically. This is what I have done while in prison, although it was through another twelve-step program, because we do not have SAA meetings.

I did exactly what I described above to help me end the destructive path of my addictions to sex and other behaviors. I held on to my other recovering brothers "in white." They were my life and I was able to rest assured that I would find the same in any area where I might be, be it in the free world or in the prison world. I will send out positive healing prayers that you also find the inner peace that I desire to have.

Surrender

by Paul P.

Surrender my way
Admit I need a hand
Tough minded I am
Draw the line in the sand!

Temptation sneaking in,
Voices I do hear,
Surrender this time
Eliminate doubts and fear.

Thoughts of past prevail,
Will power may not be enough,
Try something else,
Even though it's tough.

Giving up not giving in,
Grow stronger with a try,
Practicing a new-found way,
I'll soon find out why.

Time is my teacher,
Learning from old mistakes,
One more push forward,
Is all that it takes.

Reason and intuition,
Not enough to stop,
Surrendering in the moment
Puts us back on top.

Struggling “With Fake It Till You Make It”

by Chris S.

One of the tools of recovery talks about “faking it till you make it.” I used to hate that term. It grated against me because of the phrase “fake it.” I had spent the majority of my life faking everything about myself. So here I was, thinking I was doing the same thing. If I fake it, isn't it just like I have always done, living one big lie? I realized, however, that there was a huge difference. When I was living my life as an active addict, I was faking it. I denied to myself and others that I was living a lie. On top of that, I didn't want to change. That was the huge difference: before I didn't want to change, and now I do. Today when I fake it, it is because I want to change.

I was recently listening to a talk where the guy mentioned we all have it backwards. We all seem to think we first need to change the way we feel and, once we do that, our actions will then come into accordance with our feelings. I could relate to that! Having specifically lived my life thinking I was generally a good person with these grandiose plans on how I was going to do a ton of great things in my life, then only to continue to be a selfish addict. The speaker went on to say, “If you really want to become compassionate, then start visiting the hospitals regularly. If you want to become a giving person, start donating your money regularly to good causes. If you start behaving as if, you will find your feelings start to change to match your behaviors. So instead of changing your feelings first and getting everything perfect, instead start behaving as if you believed those things already. You will be surprised to find over time that you do feel that way.” It dawned on me that he was referencing what our program calls “fake it till you make it.” I think the big difference is the willingness to change. If I have the willingness and am open to God's will for me, I will be surprised that change occurs after I take action (steps to reach it).

There is research out there that tells me that, by simply making myself smile more during the day, my attitude improves and my feelings are more joyful, simply by smiling even when I don't necessarily feel that way. So here is my challenge to myself, starting today. I will smile way more than I normally do. I will continue this over the next few days. This is what I plan to do for myself, and I hope to see if, as a result, I will start to feel more cheerful, grateful, and so forth, as well.

Working the Third Step with a Sponsee Is Fun by Rich B.

Yesterday, over the phone, I was working with a new person, taking him through Step Three. He was in New Jersey and I was in Montana. Suddenly he said, “uh oh. A cop car is driving into the park. . . . Oh, hello, officer, I am on the phone. . . . Oh, okay, the park is closed. Well, then, I’ll be on my way. Thank you, officer.”

I could hear him start his car and drive off. He found a quiet spot in a nearby residential neighborhood.

I asked, “How come you were in a park?” He said, “I have a wife and three kids. If I go home, my kids will be all over me. I have no privacy.”

Minutes later, we reached the Third Step prayer. I said, “My first sponsor had me kneel down with him to say this prayer together. So, I’m going to ask you to do the same, if you can.” He slid to the passenger side of the front seat, twisted around and pulled himself up so that he was kneeling on the front seat looking out the back window, his head touching the ceiling. I heard grunting, followed by an out-of-breath voice: “Okay, whew . . . I’m . . . whew . . . ready.”

I said, “You are looking out your back window?” He said, “Yes, I am.” I said, “Is the coast clear?” He laughed, and said, “Yes, Rich, the coast is clear.”

I said, “When I said the Third Step prayer with my sponsor, we were sitting at a picnic table in a public park in downtown Helena, Montana. My sponsor said, ‘When the traffic dies down, let’s kneel down and say the prayer together.’ That’s what we did and I will never forget it.”

He chuckled and said, “Well, I’ll tell you one thing, Rich, I won’t forget this.”

Working the Third Step with a sponsee is fun.

The Pause Between Steps 3 and 4

by Rich B.

How much of a pause should there be between working Step Three and Step Four?

As a sex addict recovered but never ever cured, I have a daily reprieve based on the maintenance and growth of my spiritual condition.

I found one way that worked for me. I worked the Steps with an SAA sponsor who used the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous.

The precise clear-cut instructions for working the Steps are contained in a blue book entitled *Alcoholics Anonymous*.

No matter what the addiction may be, this book gives the purest and most undiluted directions on how the original one hundred alcoholics got sober, and how, if applied to any addiction, addicts of any kind can get sober, which includes us sex addicts. That's why, in 1977, the founders of our program got permission from AA to adapt the Twelve Steps to our addiction changing the First Step to "addictive sexual behavior" and the Twelfth Step to "to other sex addicts."

It says on page 64, "our liquor was but a symptom." We had to get down to the causes of our addiction to selfish sex. This means that the causes of alcoholism and the causes of addictive selfish sex are the same: resentments, fears, guilt, remorse over people we have harmed—the things that block us from gaining access to our Higher Power who will take away our mental obsession.

It also says on page 64: "Though our decision [in Step Three] was a vital and crucial step, it could have little permanent effect unless *at once* (emphasis added) followed by a strenuous effort to face, and to be rid of, the things in ourselves which had been blocking us."

Many people think they have taken Step Three and they conclude they "have turned it over to God." No they haven't. They made a decision to do so. This means they must immediately start working Steps Four, Five, Six, Seven, Eight, and Nine. Why is this important? Because the spiritual program of action does not begin until we take some action.

Thus, there should be no pause between working Step Three and Step Four.

Which Do I Celebrate?

by Joel D.

[Editor's Note: The following article originally appeared in the September/October 2002 issue of the SAA newsletter, which was then called The Plain Brown Rapper]

Over five years ago when I began working the Steps with my sponsor after months of being in Sex Addicts Anonymous, I asked him, "Which do I celebrate, time in the program or time in sobriety?" Recently the question came up again at a retreat that I attended, and there were various opinions on both sides. The discussion was interesting, to say the least, and it left me wondering which of the two *do* I focus my own celebration on. My wondering prompted me to write this article of my own experience, strength, and hope.

Two years ago, before the Christmas holiday, I felt compelled to attend midnight mass. I do not practice any religion, but I felt moved at that time to attend church. I checked in with my sponsor about this and told him that I felt like I needed to reconcile with the church in some way. He suggested that, when I attended, I set aside my ego, bring my Higher Power along, and listen for the message. "Listening for the message," for me, means relating the message to my own recovery.

Before attending midnight mass, I realized that I didn't need to reconcile with the church, but that I needed to reconcile with myself. With this insight, I attended midnight mass with my ego set aside and my Higher Power at my side.

What I heard that evening surprised and delighted me. The priest said, "Christmas is not the most important event on the Christian calendar." That certainly got my attention. "The most important event on the calendar," the priest explained, "is Easter, the Resurrection." How does this relate to the question of whether to celebrate time in the program or time in sobriety? Setting my ego aside and hearing it in terms of recovery, I heard that it is wonderful to celebrate when I first came into the doors of Sex Addicts Anonymous, but the important thing to celebrate is that I can recover from sex addiction, one day at a time.

I can, and I have. My own life has been transformed from working the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of SAA. I've been sexually sober from my inner circle boundaries for over five years. I'm back in school pursuing my heart's desire. My partner and I are coming up on our sixteenth anniversary. I sponsor a lot of people, as does my own sponsor, who

happens to be a priest!

So what was my sponsor's response to me when I asked the question, "Which do I celebrate: time in program or time in sobriety?" He told me, "Celebrate time in sobriety because *it will mean more to you.*" And it has. This is what my sponsees hear from me and this is what I share at meetings. This is how I practice our Fifth Tradition of "carrying the message" that this spiritual program does work. Just like the story in Tradition Five of *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*: "My sponsor sold me one idea, and that was sobriety. At the time, I couldn't have bought anything else" (p. 154).

Sex Addicts Anonymous is a life-transforming process or, rather, a life-transforming progress. This has been my experience in working this spiritual program one day at a time. In other words, "we were reborn," as it is simply stated on page 63 of *Alcoholics Anonymous*.

There is a saying sometimes heard at SAA meetings or perhaps in another twelve-step fellowship. "First I came. Then I came to. Then I came to believe." What does celebrating time in sobriety do for me? It reminds me that I came to believe that a power greater can, *and does*, restore me to sanity. The fact that it *does* is why I focus my celebration on time in sobriety.

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

Euphoric Recall

by Craig R.

[Editor's Note: The following article originally appeared in the July/August 2003 issue of The Plain Brown Rapper]

How do I deal with euphoric recall? Well, it can vary. I use the analogy of an illness to help understand what it's about. An illness has symptoms: the symptoms tell the doctor what is going on in the body. And even then, half the time the doctor is just guessing, so he or she looks for more symptoms with tests, etc.

The same goes for the addictive thinking of euphoric recall. I know that it works both as a part of my illness and as a symptom of a greater illness.

First, as a part of my illness, euphoric recall has symptoms that can tell me when it is coming. I consider euphoric recall to be acting out in my addiction because it can quickly lead to masturbation. When I'm in the process of acting out, or even after I'm finished, I inventory all the stuff that led up to the episode. Was the workplace a bad experience? Did I have a fight at home? Were my expectations of a clean house not met? Why the heck didn't I get that pizza I wanted?

Looking at the stuff that leads up to my acting out can result in two benefits: (1) I may recognize the symptoms leading to my euphoric recall before they result in acting out the next time; (2) in recognizing them, I can then choose to address the problem issues directly. Rather than choosing to act out anyhow and deal later with those issues, I can instead find something healthy to do with my discomfort.

Second, as a symptom of my illness, euphoric recall indicates I'm not happy about something. I'm using my disease to medicate my discomfort.

Now, how do I deal with it? That's the sticker. I see this in two parts. Again, that illness analogy creeps in. First, the doctor identifies the symptoms, isolates the cause, and then treats the problem, thereby curing the symptoms as well.

We have a good start in understanding what the problem is, using the symptom/question approach. The next step is to develop an action plan to cure the problem. This is where the cure quickly becomes lost in the myriad of personal experiences. Everyone finds the same recovery from sexual addiction, but they usually get there walking different paths. I found a few ideas helpful.

1. I list the other things I can do with my time to distract from that unhealthy thinking. Then I do them when I recognize a symptom. These could be that program phone call, a meeting, posting online, journaling my thoughts, doing hobbies I enjoy, listening to my favorite music, or reading a book.

2. I change my thinking around the euphoric recall. I become positive with my thinking, e.g., I no longer need sexual thoughts to feel good about myself. Believe it or not, the positive self-messages work wonders. I've used those messages many times along with the acceptance that what I do today does not have to remain with me for the rest of my life. I can change. I am willing to change. I am becoming a better person because of that change.

I believe that euphoric recall is a symptom of the poor programming I received when growing up. And if a computer is programmed poorly, it doesn't work. So I change the program to make it do what I want. The brain works in the same way: garbage in = garbage out. The challenge is to change the programming to get the results from the brain that I want.

I used a series of goals to help change my programming to healthier thinking. Today my goals are to be the best man I can be, the best father I can be, and the best spouse I can be. But they didn't start that way. Instead they started with looking around and seeing things in others that I admired and adding them to a list that I titled, "I wanna be like that!" Today the list continues to grow, and my three main goals are guided by it. Notice the open wording of the goals; they do not set any measures of what a good man, dad, or spouse is. I don't want to ignore anything that may help my recovery.

There you have it, my thoughts and responses to this particular hassle of recovery. But you don't have to take my word for it. This is the part where I invite everyone else who has found a response to chime in at your nearest meeting or with a letter. Take what you can use and leave the rest.

My Journey into the Middle Circle

by Rodrigo R.

[Editor's Note: The following article originally appeared in the January/February 2005 issue of The Plain Brown Rapper]

Hello! My name is Rodrigo and I am a recovering sex addict.

I started my journey in SAA sometime during December of 1999. Today my sobriety birthday is September 11, 2003. My bottom-line behaviors are around anonymous sex and sex outside my relationship with my partner. I am very clear about my definition of sex, and it includes touching and kissing someone else. It also includes exposing myself to the other person. I am very grateful for the middle circle because it teaches me about humility and about not being perfect in my recovery program. Today, I have gone into middle circle behavior by following a man into a public washroom after being triggered by him. I also acted out by myself while in the restroom. I didn't feel good about it.

This is how things would have happened in the past:

"Oh! I don't feel good about what I did. I am not good enough and I am always getting things wrong no matter what I do in my recovery. Other people are abstaining from acting out alone and/or living a celibate life, and there must be something wrong with me because my recovery program is different. I am a failure. I hate the middle circle. Maybe this was inner circle behavior. I might as well call this acting out in my bottom line. I might as well act out in my bottom line. I will go have anonymous sex and get this over with."

Instead, this is what I do today in my recovery:

"Thank GOD I called my sponsor and told him about what happened. Although I didn't have to add any more into my inner circle at this point, I made a commitment to share about what happened at a meeting and trust my sponsor with his guidance. I am grateful for my middle circle; it is teaching me that I am still a sex addict and that I will get triggered—no matter how much time I have away from my bottom line. I can even take the opportunity to write my story in the PBR! In the past, I would have gone into my addiction by having anonymous sex and unprotected sex on a multiple-time-per-day diet. Today, I am working on my recovery program instead by letting you know what happened. What a gift it is to have an opportunity to be honest with others and to be humbled by my experience."

Don't get me wrong. Most of my days are free from middle-circle behavior. But I choose to be honest about my middle circle when it happens. I am not perfect. My sponsor is not perfect. I am a sex addict and, as I understand it, I will not be cured any time soon. But I have faith that things do get better. I experience that in my life today. All I can do is be honest and continue to take action. It's painful ego deflation not to look good at times, but I am not perfect. My recovery is much richer today because I am able to accept and be honest about my imperfections with others in the program.

Thank you, GOD, for having changed me into the person I am today and I hope this story may be of service to a suffering addict out there. In *Alcoholics Anonymous*, it says that self-knowledge never got us sober. From my talking with other members in our fellowship as a whole, I now know that what does help with my sobriety is self-disclosure.

The ISO is pleased to announce the approval of our **newest** piece of SAA literature:

“Getting a Sponsor”

is now available online at the ISO website store:

www.saa-store.org

This pamphlet addresses many questions SAA members may have about sponsorship, including the importance of having a sponsor, how to find one, what to expect from a sponsor, and much more.

Thank you so much to all who put so much hard work into producing and approving this important new addition to our SAA Literature.

“One Day at a Time” Is All There Is

Jim L.

In keeping with the topic for this issue, I would suggest that all readers also check out the two-part article entitled, “Model for Living in the Present” that was published in the March-April and May-June issues of *The Outer Circle* last year.

When I look at what is reasonably possible, I have to concede that I can only live today. No amount of anger, resentment, or regrets about what happened in the past is going to change what, in fact, happened. Likewise, no amount of fear, worry, or anxiety is going to change what happens in the future.

What I have to live is the present. And what a blessing it has been to realize that I am only responsible for “one day at a time.”

Today is a palatable piece of life that I can reasonably take on at any one time.

Think about it!

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The Wall

by Mike L

[Editor's Note: The following article by Mike L—no relation—originally appeared in the May/June 2004 issue of The Plain Brown Rapper]

Ten months ago, a strong wind blew through my soul. The wind toppled the wall I had built to protect myself. It left me bare, exposed, and vulnerable. I fell down and clung to the few blocks left standing. I waited and prayed. Eventually the winds softened and I was able to stand again. I looked around and the ground was littered with the stones that had once protected me. I picked one up and read what was scratched into its side. It was "impatience." I felt uncomfortable just holding this stone and dropped it. Next I saw a stone that said "faith." I was drawn to it. I picked it up, set it on top of another stone in its rightful place of honor and moved on. Eventually, I had enough stones erected to feel somewhat protected again. I eventually realized I was able to pick and choose which stones I wanted to keep, and which ones were best left on the ground. It was then that I discovered I had built the first wall for survival. The new wall was being built for living. My name is Mike L and I am recovering from sex addiction with the help of SAA and the Twelve Steps.

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

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Sep-Oct 2014	July 5, 2014	Steps & Traditions 9 & 10, and “People, Places, and Things”
Nov-Dec 2014	Sep 5, 2014	Steps & Traditions 11 & 12, and “Experiences getting/staying sober early on”
Jan-Feb 2015	Nov 5, 2014	Steps & Traditions 1 & 2
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