

The Check IN

Volume XVII

“ . . . Spiritual Progress Not Spiritual Perfection . . . ”

Summer 2010

Giving Hope ~ Getting Serenity

IISAA's 2010 - 2011 Theme

The Twelfth Step of SAA states that: *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.*

In Chapter 3 of our basic text, *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, we learn: *For some of us, this awakening may be a sudden and dramatic gain in awareness. For others, it may be slow and gradual, and we may not even realize we've had one until we reflect upon the changes that have occurred.*

In Step Twelve we put our awakening into practice by serving others. With spiritual awareness comes the responsibility, the desire, and the need to help other suffering sex addicts, just as help was freely given to us. This impulse springs from selfless love and gratitude, it is also essential to our own sexual sobriety and spiritual growth. Carrying the message to our fellow addict is as important in maintaining our own recovery as it is in helping others find theirs.

In Step Twelve we put our awakening into practice by serving others.

When we carry the message directly to other sex addicts, we connect with them in a way that non-addicts cannot.

Any service we do that helps bring our message to other sex addicts is in the spirit of Step Twelve. There are always ways we can help, regardless of how much experience in recovery we have.

We carry the message to our fellow sex addicts with every act of encouragement, support and service.

However we do service, we receive much more than we give.

However we do service, we receive much more than we give. We grow as we practice generosity, empathy, and humility. We break out of the isolation and self-centeredness of our addiction. We forge new bonds with others that nourish and sustain us. And, we experience the joy and satisfaction of giving something of ourselves to a larger cause.

Opening these gifts brings about our spiritual awakening. Continuing to apply them on a daily basis keeps us spiritually fit and growing in recovery.

We realize that everything we have been through helps us to be of service to others. (Sex Addicts Anonymous, 2004, pp. 58-61.)

When we work the service aspect of Step 12, what we give the addict who still suffers—both among and apart from us—is **Hope**. What we get in return is the **Serenity** that the program promises.

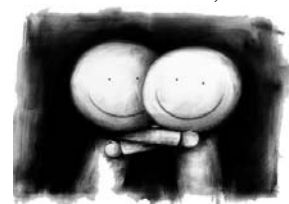
As we move through the IISAA fiscal year, we will explore the impact and importance that service work can play in our own recovery. The topic will form the basis for our discussions at the fall retreat, the spring workshop and in featured articles in *The Check-IN*.

The material quoted from our basic text would seem to make three things clear:

- ♥ Service is not an option in working a 12-Step program.
- ♥ Those who are served benefit greatly.
- ♥ Those who serve benefit even more.

IISAA Fall Retreat

October 22 – 24, 2010



See details on page 5.

From the Editor

Whose Message Are We Carrying?

Tradition Five states that: *Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the sex addict who still suffers.*

If the “group” identifies itself as an SAA group, the message that it carries should be the SAA message: *that freedom from addictive sexual behavior is possible through the Twelve Steps of SAA.*

While I do not take advantage of attending meetings other than my home meeting as often as I would like, I do get to several other meetings a year.

I have noticed that for the newcomer at some of these meetings it might be hard to discern exactly what the SAA message is.

Even though SAA has had our own basic text, *Sex Addicts Anonymous*, since 2005, many groups have not updated their statement of “How It Works”. They are still using the text from AA’s basic text, *Alcoholics Anonymous*.

At least one group I visited reads the Twelve Steps as they are listed in the book, *Hope and Recovery*. The official wording of the Twelve Steps of SAA is slightly different (see pp. 20 & 21 of our basic text).

At one meeting, the literature on the table included an AA Big Book and an NA book, but not a single piece of SAA literature.

Even the names of some groups could be confusing to someone new to SAA recovery.

Tradition Four states: *Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or S.A.A. as a whole.*

When I reflect upon Traditions Four and Five as they relate to my observations of current SAA group practices two questions come to my mind:

1. Do some of these practices dilute the SAA message and thereby our ability to attract suffering addicts to our program?
2. If we are not clearly and consistently carrying the SAA message, whose message are we carrying?

Peace.

Mike C.

Bylaws Amended

Two individuals recently made donations of \$500 each to IISAA.

It was pointed out that these gifts violated our bylaws which limit such personal gifts to \$200.

Intergroup voted to correct this oversight by returning \$300 to each donor.

Following much discussion of this point and in a subsequent group conscience vote, it was decided to amend the Bylaws of IISAA to increase the maximum amount of personal donations to \$500 per year.

A second proposed amendment

would have placed a limit on the amount of money that a member could bequeath to the Intergroup. That amendment did not pass.

Carrying the Message into Prison


In a novel way of reaching out to the addict who still suffers, **Keith P.** distributed two pieces of recovery literature, the *Sex Addicts Anonymous* pamphlet published by SAA and *A Letter to the Sex Offender Newcomer in SAA*, a draft publication of IISAA, to inmates at the New Castle Correctional Center.


The opportunity for this outreach was the result of a program by Jesus House, a local prison ministry and re-entry program.

Permission was granted to allow direct inmate contact by the Jesus House staff and representatives from agencies and groups that offer offenders programs that provide them with the resources to avoid re-offending and subsequent re-incarceration.

If this inaugural two-day event proves successful, it may open the door to similar events at other prisons within the Indiana Department of Corrections.

Keith has been asked to write about his experience for the fall issue of *The Check-IN*.

The Check  N is the newsletter of the Indiana Intergroup of Sex Addicts Anonymous (IISAA) and is published quarterly.

The Check  N is provided free of charge to SAA members and others upon request.

Material for inclusion in the newsletter, permission to copy all or part of the newsletter, or comments for improving this publication may be addressed to:

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Phone: (317) 784-2180

Webmaster Relocating

Mike M, the creator of the IISAA webpage and the only webmaster we have ever had, has notified Intergroup that he is moving out of state and that we need to find someone to replace him as webmaster.

Mike has been a faithful and generous servant leader for IISAA for many years. Not only has he maintained our site, he has underwritten the cost of the website since its inception.

IISAA is indebted to Mike for his contributions to Indiana's SAA fellowship as its webmaster, as a presenter at workshops and retreats and for his thoughtful and well-reasoned input to Intergroup. We offer Mike our gratitude and best wishes as he begins the next leg of his life's journey.

... the single most important outreach tool that we have is our website.

Webmaster Sought

In the early days of the SAA fellowship in Indiana about the only ways to find us were to know someone who attended meetings or through an informed therapist or clergy member.

Before long, we established the IISAA telephone information line. For many years the first contact most new comers had with SAA was via the phone.

In recent years, however, the first contact most people have had with SAA has been through our website. As the site has

developed, more and more general information, meeting schedules, and links to additional recovery resources have been added.

Today, the single most important outreach tool that we have is our website. With the announcement that our webmaster is moving out of state, it is critical that IISAA find a volunteer to fill this position.

Our website is up and running and has been redesigned recently. Intergroup is committed to underwriting the cost of the site. An ad hoc committee is in place to review the content and presentation of the site.

What is needed at this point is for someone to step forward who has a background in managing an Internet site.

If you are qualified and willing to accept this position; or, if you would like more information about this service position, please contact Intergroup directly or through your meeting's Intergroup Representative.

Carmel Workshop Is Coming

Beginning Tuesday, August 3, in The Barn at Northview Christian Life Center (131st & Hazel Dell) a new Step Workshop will get underway.

The group will meet from 7:30 to 8:30 p.m. each Tuesday until they cover the entire 12 Steps.

The meeting will remain open to newcomers until the group has completed the first Step. It is estimated that completing Step One will take three or four weeks.







For more information, contact either **John J.** (317) 753-9490 or **Dan F.** (317) 403-9648.

Autobiography of a Recovering Addict








A poem by Portia Nelson











Chapter One:

-  I walk down the street.
-  There is a deep hole in the sidewalk
-  I fall in.
-  I am lost — I am helpless.
-  It isn't my fault.
-  It takes forever to find a way out.




Chapter Two:

-  I walk down the same street.
-  There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
-  I pretend I don't see it.
-  I fall in again.
-  I can't believe I'm in the same place.
-  But it isn't my fault.
-  It still takes a long time to get out.

Chapter Three:

-  I walk down the same street.
-  There is a deep hole in the sidewalk
-  I see it is there.
-  I still fall in — it's a habit
-  My eyes are open
-  I know where I am
-  It is MY fault.
-  I get out immediately.

Chapter Four:

-  I walk down the same street.
-  There is a deep hole in the sidewalk
-  I walk around it.

Chapter Five:

-  I walk down a **different** street.

Service Work And Recovery How Do They Work Hand-In-Hand?

Richard S.

In SAA, personal recovery should always come first. However, there is a part of recovery that gets very little recognition, and that is service work.

What is service work? Service work can be as simple as chairing a meeting or becoming the Intergroup representative for your meeting.

When does service work become a viable part of the recovery process? Service work is the opportunity for recovery to become more than just about one's self. It provides the opportunity to take those things that we learn as recovering addicts and move further away from the isolation of the addiction and become involved with helping others in the program. Some call it *paying it forward*; others just call it service work. Whatever the title, it is giving back to the program that has literally saved our lives; saved relationships with other people, and has allowed us to become productive individuals--some for the first time.

The Twelve Promises tell us that we will gain interest in our fellow addicts and that self-seeking will slip away. This is an important part of the transition to service work. Finally, it becomes more important to take what we have learned from the program and to begin to give back.

*The Higher Power does
not call the qualified.*

*The Higher Power
qualifies those who are
called.*

*Am I listening for the
Higher Power's call?*

Like all things in recovery it is important to establish boundaries around service work. We shouldn't become so involved in helping others and acting as trusted servants in the pursuit of service work that it begins to adversely affect our personal recovery. But, neither should one use the excuse, "I just don't have time to do service work"; or, "I'm concerned about how I will perform the service work" to justify not becoming involved in helping others in the program.

Sponsors, if they are doing *their* service work properly should be mentoring their sponsees to become involved in service work. Service is how the program continues to reinforce personal recovery for each one of us. And your sponsor can help you establish your boundaries. If there is a will to serve, there is a way for it to be achieved. It only requires someone to make it a priority in their personal recovery. If your sponsor hasn't talked about it, then question him/her about how you can improve your recovery experience and give back to the program.

Basically, it's about priorities. A person can choose to watch TV, spend time on the computer or take a little extra time to become involved in service work. As recovery has taught me, it's all about the decisions I make and how they affect my recovery experience. Service work provides a person an opportunity to feel good about how they are conducting their recovery program, it indicates a level of positive growth in the recovery experience and it is an important asset to recovery.

*A life well-lived is a
life that touches and
helps others.*

Indianapolis Star columnist Bob Kravitz
in a tribute to Coach John Wooden



*God grant me
the serenity
to accept the people
I cannot change,
the courage
to change the one
I can, and
the wisdom
to know it's me.*

Workshop Overcomes Murphy's Law

Based upon the evaluations received, the 15th Annual IISAA Spring Workshop overcame a number of logistical problems to be one of the best ever.

Held for the first time in the comfortable setting of The Barn at Northview Christian Life Church, the workshop overcame an electrical outage, plumbing problems, a mix-up in table usage and several lost presenters.

Nonetheless, the essential purpose of the workshop, to offer members of our fellowship the opportunity to grow in recovery, was met by eight presenters who offered varying topics using a variety of approaches.

The gathering drew 51 members of the fellowship from Illinois, Indiana and Ohio.

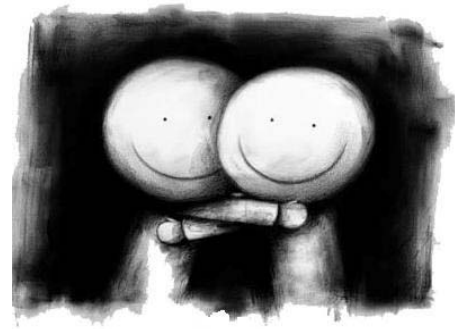
The evaluation of one of the participants did a good job of summing up the day, "The presenters were each unique and very good. The topics were wonderful. (There was) much more sharing from everyone than I had expected, which was very informative."

If you were unable to attend the workshop, you will have another chance for some in-depth recovery at the 16th annual IISAA fall retreat this October 22, 23, and 24. The retreat topic will be *Giving Hope ~ Getting Serenity* and will focus on Step 12.

Warm and Windy Picnic a Winner

The 2010 IISAA picnic was held at the Greenwood Knights of Columbus facility. The new location was easily accessible to fellowship members from the Indy area meetings and the Bloomington meetings, the two areas of the state that usually have the highest attendance. The site was slightly further for those traveling from the north. Nonetheless, the new setting proved to be ideal for an enjoyable day and the private site allowed all SAA members to attend.

The sun shone brightly on the bocce ball players while a steady breeze cooled those eating and visiting under the large picnic pavilion. For the 17 people who turned out for the event, it was a pleasant and enjoyable day in recovery. Thanks to **Phil B.** who planned the event and **Mike P.** our grill master.



16th Annual Fall Retreat Is Coming

Camp Pyoca has been reserved, the theme has been chosen, the menu is set and the excitement is building—all for the IISAA 2010 Fall Retreat, *Giving Hope ~ Getting Serenity*.

Registration forms for the October 22, 23, 24 retreat will be available following the August Intergroup meeting.

Presenters are now being sought to contribute their experience, strength and hope about working Step 12, the *service Step*, through which we give hope to those suffering from sexual addiction and receive serenity as a reward for our kindness.

Anyone in a 12 Step program who has ever given of him- or herself to others in the program has a story to share at the retreat.

You have supported others in the program just by showing up at meetings. **You** have been of service if you have ever arranged the meeting space, greeted a newcomer, made coffee, chaired a meeting, served as the group secretary, been the group's Intergroup Representative, sponsored another addict, written an article for *The Check-IN*, been a presenter at a workshop or retreat, attended the picnic or holiday party, or done any of hundreds of other outreach activities that made another addict feel welcome and safe in SAA.

No doubt, getting out of yourself and tending to the needs of others has left you feeling more worthwhile, useful, healthy, grateful and spiritually aware. These are the gifts of service that rebound to those who serve. These gifts can be summed up in the word *serenity*.

As you look forward to this year's retreat, be thinking about how you can be of additional service to the fellowship by becoming a presenter.

Que Vivan los Milagros

... a reflection on the 2010 ISO of SAA "Long Live the Miracles" International Conference.

Todd W., IISAA Delegate

My experience this past Memorial Day weekend continues to give me much to reflect on. My experience is not unique. I went both as a delegate for the Indiana Intergroup of SAA and as an attendee at the workshops. As a delegate, I have you to thank for supporting Intergroup and their commitment to serve the addict who still suffers. Part of my commitment is that I return something for the investment you made in my attendance. I am grateful to do so. It was my first such conference, I pray it won't be my last.

I gained an appreciation for those who are recovering in spite of their location. How blessed we are to have so many meetings in Indiana. I witnessed a tremendous volunteer effort being put forth to assist one another in recovery as over 100 members of the fellowship came as delegates and nearly 350 attended the workshops. I heard the call for more to be done as the "Help Wanted" sign was placed in the window of every committee. I was also struck by the international sense of this organization, seeing ones from "across the pond" attending this conference.

There are two primary parts to the conference; the first part is the delegate meeting. This is where we have our voice in asking the ISO of SAA to consider certain matters to support the groups in helping the addict who still suffers. This year 21 motions were made. The top five were voted on and sent to the

ISO for consideration. Here is a summary of them and the results:

1. Call for safety guidelines for underage members – Passed.
2. Rescind the decision to hold the 2012 conference in Vancouver – Failed.
3. Establish Conference Charter Committee to draft a conference charter – Passed.
4. Advise Literature Committee to submit the "Green Book" for conference approval – Failed.
5. Establish a nation-wide, toll-free hotline for Sex Addicts Anonymous – Passed.

All of these motions create a need for volunteers and financial support. Perhaps each of us could include this in our prayers, thoughts and meditations. Then see where our Higher Power enables us to assist others, just as we have received help in recovery.

Part two of the conference is the workshops. I was told prior to attending that this was akin to attending our Fall Retreat. That was all I needed to hear to make my decision to attend. The fall retreat last October was pivotal to my sobriety. These workshops are fuel in the engine of my recovery. I can't stop sharing what I learned in them at the meetings I attend.

The four I chose to attend were as follows:

1. Moving from Discovery to Recovery – by *Santi L.* He discussed: the methodology of the 12 Steps: Uncover, Discover, Discard, and Recover. The formula for recovery: providential help accompanied by sustained effort; the restorative nature of the 12 Steps: 1-3 restore our relationship with God, 4-7

restore our relationship with ourselves, and 8-12 restore our relationship with mankind; and, the paradoxes of the steps: 1-3 Surrender to Win, 4-7 Suffer to Get Well, and 8-12 Die to be Reborn. What can I say - buy the CD from the ISO!

2. The Importance of the Maintenance Steps by *Santi L.* – Some things he pointed out were: what a **SLIP** is – Sobriety **Loses Its Importance**. How it happens and how continuing to work the maintenance steps results in an unshakable foundation for life.
3. Recovery of Intimacy by *Wharton S.* He used a less-is-more approach to effectively show what intimacy is: a mutual exploration of a shared safe place (e.g. mother and infant); that abuse is anything that destroys the safe place; how addictions are what we do to feel good about ourselves when we have no safe place; and, how shame is a driving force in our addiction.
4. Ready Set . . . Do NOT Go! Discussing the dignified and stately manner in which Step 9 should be carried out.

I encourage all to visit the SAA website, www.SAA-recovery.org, and order these and other CDs when they become available. Too, consider attending the 2011 SAA Conference in Houston next Memorial Day weekend where you can, as one attendee stated, 'Broaden your recovery circles'. You won't be disappointed.

"Everything that I have kept is lost forever and everything that I have given away is mine for eternity."

The Meaning of Our 2010 IISAA Theme

As is often the case, there is a wealth of recovery information in the publications of recovery groups other than our own. The following items are adapted from *Hope For Today*, an Al-Anon publication. The first is found on page 366; the second is from page 360.

What is Hope?

At my first 12-Step meeting, I felt like a parched person drinking cold, refreshing water. With gratitude I took in the words of *How It Works in SAA*. Every time I went to a meeting I'd close my eyes and let those precious words refresh me.

Years later I realized I was listening to SAA's words of hope—hope I could claim as my own, if I was willing to work the Steps.

- When I felt boxed in by despair, you assured me that no situation is really hopeless and I could find contentment, and even happiness, despite my sexual addiction.
- When I felt worn out from replaying awful scenarios in my mind, you told me I could put my problems in their true perspective and they would lose their power to dominate.
- When I felt alone, you reminded me I wasn't.
- You pointed out my choices when all I knew were rules and appearances.
- I didn't have to agree to belong. I could take what I liked and leave the rest.
- You even claimed that you already loved me in a special way, even though I hated myself, and that I would learn to love you, too.
- You offered me sponsorship, hugs, and phone numbers even when I hadn't "earned" them.
- I didn't know what a loving interchange was, and you took the time to show me.

Thanks, SAA, for the persistent repetition of these hope-filled words and actions. Gradually they came true for me. Now when I share them with others, I have the joy of seeing them come alive again.



Hope is finding the ladder that allows me to climb out of the abyss.

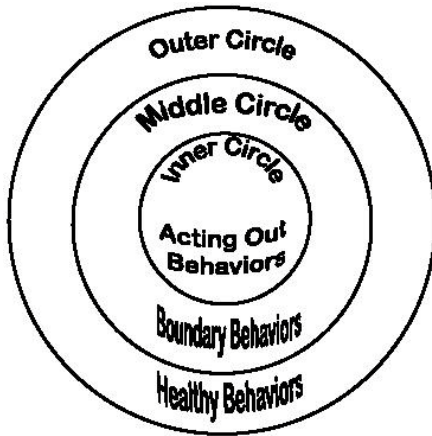
What is Serenity?

Serenity is . . .

- A way of life absorbed slowly and practiced one day at a time
- Perspective
- Becoming aware of and accepting my many characteristics and not judging what's "bad" or "good" but what's useful to keep and what to release
- A spiritual journey without a destination
- The space between the impulse and the action
- Accepting what is
- Honoring my feelings without aiming them at someone else or letting them run my life
- A gift I choose to give to myself
- Knowing that what works for someone else may not necessarily work for me
- Knowing that what works for me may change from moment to moment
- Understanding I may be powerless, but I'm not helpless
- Realizing my Higher Power does for me what I cannot do for myself
- Minding my own business
- The comfort of knowing I can hold my own hand
- Balance and relief from black-and-white thinking
- Understanding that reacting to life and responding to life are not the same thing
- Deliberate realignment with my Higher Power
- Feeling at peace with my past
- A matter of internal stability
- Becoming a complete being with my body and mind in one place at the same time
- Becoming one with my Higher Power

Our Three Circles Experience

Bob B. and Chris C.



The following observations recount the experience, strength and hope that we have received in defining abstinence and using the “Three Circles” while on our journeys in recovery. Since we have found that many addicts like ourselves struggle with this topic, which has been discussed lately at our meetings, we felt inspired and compelled to write our first article for *The Check-IN*. We would love to hear back from you regarding your experience, strength, and hope in using these tools.

Two key questions we have found helpful in defining abstinence are:

1. Have I done the “Three Circle” exercise (pp. 14-19 from the ‘Green Book’)?
2. When was the last time I updated my “Three Circles” with my sponsor?

We both feel that completing a personal “Three Circles” diagram is very important in understanding our addiction and as a building block for working a recovery

program with the help of our sponsors. It does not have to be perfect the first time.

Bob’s addiction manifests itself in voyeurism, public nudity, masturbation, objectification of women, and some porn. Bob has been free from all inner circle behaviors – voyeurism, public nudity – for seven plus years. He still struggles with objectification (middle circle). Porn is all but non-existent in his life. He still struggles with occasional masturbation. Chris has used his three circle diagram to successfully deal with his manifestations. Both of us find that recording and keeping track of our sobriety dates has been helpful in maintaining our recovery programs.

Updating the “Three Circles” with your sponsor is just as important as having done the exercise initially. Chris did his first update shortly after completing his original three circles diagram four years ago. He discovered that this cunning, baffling and powerful addiction continues to tempt him. As he has learned more about his addiction over time, he has re-evaluated the behaviors listed in each circle. He has added more behaviors to all three circles and moved behaviors from one circle to another.

Each of us continues to use his three circles diagram and to revise it whenever the need becomes apparent to us or our sponsors.

We would like to recognize and thank our wives, families, higher powers, sponsors, and step workshop leaders for their support on our journeys. We are also

grateful to the members of our Wednesday and Thursday night SAA groups for their inspiration and being there for us. We will be forever grateful.



One Step at a Time

When the road ahead of you
seems to have no end,
And when it's rough and rocky at
every turn and bend,
When you're tired and weary, and
feel you've lost your way,
When you face new roadblocks
each and every day,
When just getting started requires
an uphill climb,
Do not be discouraged-- take One
Step at a Time.
Then just keep on going every
single day,
For no one ever walked a mile
any other way.

--Rita S. Beer

2010 Calendar

July

10 IISAA Meeting, 4 p.m.

August

14 IISAA Meeting, 4 p.m.

September

11 IISAA Meeting, 4 p.m.

30 Check **IN** Deadline

October

9 IISAA booth at AIDS Walk

9 IISAA Meeting, 4 p.m.

22-24 IISAA Fall Retreat

Giving Hope ~ Getting Serenity