



WELCOME!

INTRODUCTION

If you are reading this “welcome letter”, then you have attended at least one SAA meeting and have hopefully gone through a newcomers welcoming meeting. We want to applaud you for your courage to step through these doors and inform you that you are on the right path to recovery from addiction. We also want to encourage you to keep coming back!

Most of us have come through these doors in a mixture of shame, fear and seeking hope. Know that you are not alone! We can assure you, if you work this program, then you will not only find a new found hope but find that the “Promises” will come true for you as they have for many of us in this program.

The contents of this packet include many of the basic elements of the Charlotte SAA program and SAA as a whole, the nature of our disease, and the solution to our problems.

There is much more but start slowly. Recovery can seem overwhelming in the beginning, and there are many of those recovering that are happy to help along the way with any questions or concerns! Attend meetings, build friendships with others in the program, and quickly find a sponsor who can guide you through each of the twelve steps.

Keep coming back because you are worth it!

FROM SHAME TO GRACE

“Shame is a common experience for sex addicts. It is the feeling that we are never good enough, that there is something wrong with us, that we are “bad” people. Shame played a part in the addictive cycle, undermining our resistance to acting out. To the extent that we felt that we were unworthy people, it didn’t seem to matter if we acted out or not. Acting out helped us to escape or hide from our shame. Sometimes shame became part of the addictive high itself, so that we’d actually get a sexual thrill from being “bad”. Shame also caused us to hide and isolate from others so that we did not seek the help we needed.” -Sex Addicts Anonymous – (Green Book) pg.8

Our sexual behaviors frequently damaged peoples’ trust in us. Our families, friends, employers, and significant others have suffered tremendous pain and shame from our addictive sexual behavior. We were made painfully aware of the damage we caused by our repeated lies and failures to be present for our relationships and responsibilities. Feelings like loneliness, anger, sadness, and confusion were expressed to us from people in our lives. We have heard, “Why am I not good enough?” or, “If you loved me, you would stop,” or, “Am I not sexy enough?” or “What is really going on?” Our sex addiction was not about whether or not our loved ones were attractive, loving, good sexual partners, or engaged frequently enough in sexual activity with us. Nothing others said or did (or didn’t do) justified our behavior.

Our lives became unmanageable. We did not want to destroy our lives or careers or lose our families and friends, yet that is exactly what happened with some of us before we “hit bottom.

Eventually we did hit bottom. We had finally had enough. The consequences were so severe that we became desperate enough to reach out for help. When we did, SAA was there. In our despair, we finally realized that we needed help from someone or something more powerful than us, a Higher Power if you will. By surrendering our addiction to a Higher Power and working the Steps of Sex Addicts Anonymous, we received the priceless gifts of recovery and abstinence from our addictive sexual behaviors *one day at a time*.

The program of Sex Addicts Anonymous offers acceptance by fellow addicts and some combination of regular practices such as meetings, prayer, meditation, conversations with fellow recovering addicts, service to others, and working with a sponsor who guides us through the Twelve Steps of SAA. We engage in these kinds of activities within a framework of honesty, openness, and willingness, all of which leads to a changed life. Many have achieved lasting

freedom from sexual compulsions in this manner. Because we see the ongoing benefits in every area in our lives, we continue to work the program of SAA.

SPIRITUALITY

The Twelve Steps of SAA are the heart of our program. They contain a depth that we could hardly have guessed when we started. Over time, we establish a relationship with a Power greater than ourselves, each of us coming to an understanding of a Higher Power that is personal for us. Although the steps and meetings use the word “God” to indicate this Power, SAA is not affiliated with any religion, creed, or dogma. It is up to the individual to interpret what their “Higher Power” is. The program offers a spiritual solution to our addiction, without requiring adherence to any specific set of beliefs or practices.

The Twelve Steps are more than a series of exercises. They provide basic principles for living. Most of us find opportunities on a daily basis to apply one or more of the steps to some challenge in our life. Over time, the spiritual principles in the steps become integrated into our thoughts, feelings, and behavior. We find that we are not only working the steps – we are living them.

We dedicate ourselves to an increasing spiritual awareness and a greater connection with our Higher Power. We seek to improve our conscious contact with this Power, so that our spiritual connection will become not only the means by which we recover from our sex addiction, but our daily source of guidance and strength.

Our message is simple and profound: that recovery from sex addiction ***is possible*** through working the Twelve Steps of SAA, and that following this program results in a spiritual awakening.

Through the process of the Twelve Steps, we let go of ways of thinking and acting that are based on fear, shame and isolation and we learn to rely on the guidance and care of a Higher Power. When we first came to the fellowship of Sex Addicts Anonymous, we may have sought only to stop acting out. But every step of the program contributes to a fundamental change in our outlook, from self-obsession and control to surrender and acceptance. Our sexual sobriety goes hand in hand with our spiritual growth.

The Steps are an expression of spiritual principles that can be practiced in all aspects of life. Honesty, willingness, courage, humility, forgiveness, responsibility, gratitude and faith are

just some of the names we give to the spiritual principles that gradually come to guide us in our lives.

Continuing to apply these Steps on a daily basis keeps us spiritually fit and growing in recovery. Practicing these principles in our lives means applying program principles at home, at work and wherever else we gather with others for a common purpose. We find that spiritual principles can guide us in the everyday challenges of life, and they can help us face even loss, grief and death with fortitude and grace. What we gain in the program is a blueprint for full and successful living, whatever may come.

FELLOWSHIP

Many of us first come to Sex Addicts Anonymous feeling deeply isolated and ashamed of our behaviors and past actions. We may believe that no one can understand us or relate to the things we had done or been through. Discovering that we are not alone is a liberating experience for us. It is a great comfort and relief to know that a fellowship of recovering sex addicts exists and that we have somewhere to turn to help us recover. Our diversity is governed by the notion that we meet as equals: sex addicts helping one another achieve sexual sobriety and to practice a new way of life.

Meetings are the heart of our fellowship. They give us a chance to talk about our lives and addiction with other people who have had similar experiences. Attending our first SAA meeting is a crucial step in moving away from isolation into fellowship, and ultimately into recovery. For many of us, our first meeting was a freeing experience.

An SAA meeting consists of two or more individuals who, using the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of SAA, share their experience, strength, and hope on recovery from sex addiction. We are equals: one sex addict helping another. We all contribute to making our meetings places that foster our recovery.

Most meetings (including this one) have a phone list that is shared after or during the meeting. We highly encourage members to pick up one of these phone lists in order to build friendships and especially to reach out in times of emotional distress or times when we feel like acting out. Remember, *the opposite of addiction (isolation) is connection!*

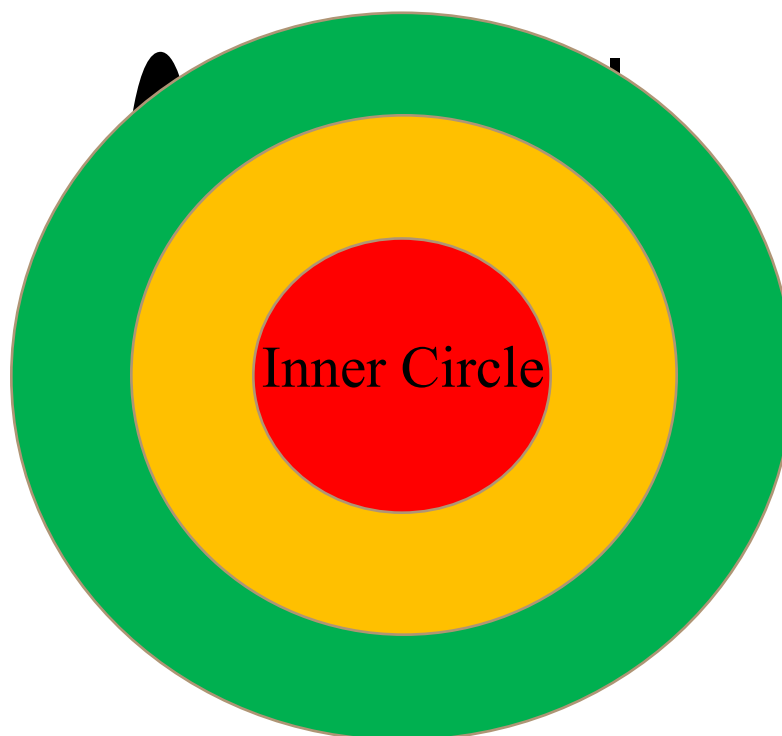
SOBRIETY

Our goal when entering the SAA program is abstinence from one or more specific sexual behaviors. But unlike programs for recovering alcoholics or drug addicts, Sex Addicts Anonymous does not have a universal definition of abstinence.

Most of us have no desire to stop being sexual altogether. It is not sex, in and of itself, that causes us problems, but the addiction to certain sexual behaviors. In SAA we will be better able to determine what behavior is addictive and what is healthy. However, the fellowship does not dictate to its members what is and isn't addictive sexual behavior. Instead we have found that it is necessary for each member to define his or her own abstinence.

To help us define our sexual sobriety, many of us use a tool developed within SAA called The Three Circles.

We draw three concentric circles, consisting of an inner, middle, and outer circle. With the help of our sponsor or others in recovery, we write down various behaviors in each of the three circles. In the inner circle we put the sexual behaviors we want to abstain from, the ones we consider "acting out." These are the behaviors that we identify, with our sponsor's guidance, as addictive, harmful, or unacceptable for us. In the middle circle we put behaviors that may lead to acting out, or that we are not sure about. In the outer circle we put healthy behaviors that enhance our life and our recovery.



RESOURCES AND MEETING INFORMATION

At this meeting, we use certain ISO (International Service Organization) approved literature:

Sex Addicts Anonymous - (SAA Green Book): (\$14) Male and female audio versions are currently available through Audiobooks.com, the Apple App Store, and the Google Play Store. The male voice is also available through Audible.

Voices of Recovery: (\$12) SAA Meditation Book, 366 daily meditations by SAA members.

Please speak with the literature coordinator after the meeting if you'd like to purchase either of these items. These items, and additional literature, can be found and purchased at <https://saa-recovery.org/literature>. A free version of "The Green Book" can be found at <https://saa-recovery.org/literature/sex-addicts-anonymous-green-book-saas-basic-text>.

- ❖ All the information used in this "Welcome Packet" can be found at <https://saa-recovery.org> and <https://charlottesaa.net>.
- ❖ There are some very helpful tools specifically for Newcomers at <https://charlottesaa.net/for-newcomers>.
- ❖ A list of all meetings in the Charlotte, NC area can be found at <https://charlottesaa.net/meetings>.
- ❖ Donations to the larger SAA organization can be made at <https://saa-store.org/7thTradition>.
- ❖ Information on the ISO can be found at <https://saa-recovery.org/iso>.

