

# Out of the Fog

News, events, outreach, and support for the Bay Area Fellowship of SAA

A publication of the San Francisco Bay Area Intergroup



**THEME for this issue: “Retreat Reflections”**

The theme for this issue is ‘Retreat Reflections’ with the focus being the Bay Area SAA Annual Retreat held on March 15-17, 2019.

**Submissions Needed for Future Issues!!**

Consider contributing your stories of experience, strength, and hope, and by doing so benefit other sex addicts in the Bay Area.

Send queries or content to: [newsletter@bayareasaa.org](mailto:newsletter@bayareasaa.org).

***What is SAA?***

Sex Addicts Anonymous (SAA) is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength, and hope with each other so they may overcome their sexual addiction and help others recover from sexual addiction and dependency.

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**Outer Circle Events: Near and Far**

**CAMPING TRIP – September 7, 8, and 9, 2019**

Join in a weekend of fellowship in the beautiful Sierras and enjoy hiking in the forest, swimming, boating, etal. There will be workshops under the pines and SAA meetings around a large campfire. It’s a great opportunity to share recovery with others and develop new program friendships. Limited to 25 attendees.

Registaton opens July 29<sup>th</sup> at: <http://bit.ly/2019SAACamping>  
 Questions, please call Jim C. at (415) 269-2453

**Retreat in the Northwest – August 22 to 25th, 2019**

Traveling to the Northwest? The 30th Puget Sound Retreat, ***Serenity on the Sound***, will be held on the beautiful & tranquil Key Peninsula. For more info, see: [www.soundretreat.org](http://www.soundretreat.org)

*[Invite to this event courtesy of a Seattle area SAA member who attended our Bay Area SAA retreat in March.]*

## Strength In Numbers

*Full disclosure: This is NOT an article about the Golden State Warriors.*

It was very early in my recovery that I attended my first Bay Area SAA Annual Retreat. Coming soon after I had “hit bottom,” I was motivated to earnestly work the program and eager to immerse myself in all things SAA.

I remember very little about the retreat site in Santa Cruz. But indelibly etched in my mind are the feelings that swept over me during the first ‘all-hands-on-deck’ plenary session.

I was floored being in a room filled with over a hundred self-identified sex addicts, all there trying to better themselves. I drew strength from the realization that not only was I not alone, but there were a large number of others much like me.

Numbers were on my mind at this year’s SAA Retreat that took place in Petaluma in March:

244 – Number of attendees.

13 – Number of workshops.

3 – Number of SAA meetings (2 with special speakers).

6 – Number of group meals



10 + Opportunities for rewarding activities including: Yoga, Hiking, a Dance, Bonfires, Drum Circles, Board games, Ping Pong, Art, a Talent/No Talent Show, and more!

Personally, the most important number for my recovery these days is one: 1 day at a time; 1 right choice at a time; 1 year until the next SAA Bay Area Retreat.

--- Edwin F., Editor

## “What the \*bleep\* am I doing here?”

The introvert’s lament buzzes in my head as I unload my gear from Mike’s Chevy Bolt and survey the scene. I see people everywhere. People I know and people I don’t. People I think I know and people I want to know. People I probably don’t want to know and people who probably don’t want to know me. Lots and lots of people. I take a deep breath and line up to register. I make a mental note of the name of my assigned cabin. I immediately forget the name but find it anyway.

According to the website, the retreat site has 14 economy cabins that sleep up to 260. Inexplicably, they all seem to have been assigned to THIS one. My numerous lodge mates mill around in various stages of undress, perplexity, and body odor. We eye each other warily and angle for the prime spots. Mindful of my CPAP machine, I make an unsuccessful plea for a bottom bunk near the only electrical plug in the room. Turns out he has a CPAP, too. Extension cord in hand, I unsteadily summit the metal ladder to the top bunk—where is Tensing Norgay when you need him?—and flop onto my back. The ceiling is too close to my nose, the floor a very long way down. I glance at my watch: I’ve been here exactly one hour.

Next comes the name tag anxiety. When it comes to arts and crafts, I have the design sense of a food-flinging toddler and the fine-motor skills of a demented banana slug. Faking a James Dean look of disinterested boredom, I snip random pictures from National Geo, jostle others for the cool stickers, and curse the lack of certain alphabet letters—where are all the damned M’s? At last, I’m done. Tada! Michelangelo I’m not, but my amateurish work of art has its own flair, a certain je ne sais quoi. Things are looking up.

The rest of the evening is a blur of activity: loading up my cafeteria tray with way more food than needed—an unfortunate act to be repeated at every meal; finding an open spot at table with a soon-to-be

friend; letting my guard down over a cup of coffee; indulging in a yummy brownie (or two) and can-you-top-this storytelling; settling into an SAA meeting with a hundred or so of my closest friends to await the microphone and my 15 seconds of fame; swaying to the hypnotic rhythm of the djembes, congas, and bongos in the drum circle afterwards; marveling at the visual panoply of sparks ascending from the campfire.



There’s magic here. An SAA retreat is the program turbocharged, sobriety with a vengeance, recovery to the nth power, Higher Power on steroids. A feeling of peace permeates this time and place, filling the cracks in my wounded soul. Love is a tangible, benevolent presence, engulfing me like a watery membrane. Life is all of a sudden rife with incipient wonder, infinite possibilities, and immeasurable forgiveness.

Basking in the comfort of a full stomach and the goodwill of a beloved fellowship, I’m ready to call it a day. The cabin is dark and tranquil. Several people are already in bed—one snores softly, another reads by flashlight. Teeth brushed, face washed, clothes changed, pills taken, evening meditations read, I climb to my perch, adjust my CPAP mask, snuggle down into my sleeping bag, and begin to drift off. Weary but happy, I reflect on today and look forward to tomorrow. I feel loved, valued, and safe.

Suddenly, my eyes fly wide open. Dammit, I have to pee! Anxiously, I eye the ladder and dimly lit floor. God, grant me the serenity...

--- Ed M.



## The Retreat as a “Rat Park” – Creating Communities That Support Recovery

The SAA retreat was a time where the fellowship of Sex Addicts Anonymous was seen in its full splendor. Strangers greeted each other as brothers and sisters in recovery, there were sharing of stories, bonding over games, attending workshops together, etc. I was overwhelmed by how loving and healthy the environment was and could not even imagine how I could possibly act out if I were always in such an environment.

This brought to mind a series of scientific studies on addiction conducted by

Canadian researchers in the late 1970's that showed how healthy loving environments could serve as a deterrent to addiction. Called “Rat Park,” the experiment consisted of rats being placed in an environment containing plenty of space for moving about, equipment for recreation, a nice backdrop, and plenty of other elements for the rats to interact with in a positive way.

***“...creating an environment  
and community of strong  
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anywhere...”***

The researchers placed both a morphine-laced bottle and a regular water bottle in the environment. It was found that the rats seemed to prefer the regular water while the morphine laced bottle held very little attraction for them. In short, a healthy environment and community of other rats served to make these rats virtually immune to the draw and appeal of addictive substances.

Now coming back to the retreat, the love and fellowship experienced at this retreat was analogous to what the rat's experienced in Rat Park. From the daily group meetings, to the workshops, the drum circle, hikes, fellowship meals, the great environment in the valley, the SAA retreat was virtually a real Rat Park for sex addicts!

Now obviously sex addicts don't stay in such an environment forever. In fact, the retreat was only a weekend long. However, this brings us to the importance of local meetings and fellowships. The stronger they are, the more the Rat Park effect can be duplicated no matter where sex addicts are. Elements of strong meetings include: having some members with large amounts of sobriety that represent a pool of potential sponsors; opportunities for fellowship before or after meetings such as meals or hikes; members getting involved by providing service; etc.



While the retreat in many ways recreates the Rat Park effect, members of SAA should be very intentional on producing this effect through local fellowships and meetings for the betterment of all members. While there is nothing like the retreat, creating an environment and community of strong sobriety can be done anywhere and we should all strive to make Rat Park a reality at all our meetings.

Doubtless the retreat can be a great boost to members' recovery, however carrying over that growth to their regular lives and real worlds can be difficult. Let us intend to make our meetings as strong as possible and the bond of our fellowships the deepest they can be.

-- Aaron C.



## Workshops Held at the 2019 SAA Bay Area Annual Retreat

**“Using the 10th Step”** - Mining the daily 10th step inventory to strengthen character assets. Presenter: John P.

**“Recovering and Preserving Trust”** - This panel discussion will explore trust-in God, a sponsor and the steps-as a foundation of our recovery, and how to rebuild trust that was lost to our addiction. Presenter: Bill I.

**“A Practical Shortcut to the Heart of the Fourth Step”** - Support for fearlessly moving through your Fourth Step with deeper insight and ease. Presenter: Tom K.

**“You, too, can Meditate!”** - Foster your relationship to your Higher Power through meditation; we will explore the benefits and pitfalls of meditation practice as well as learn three meditation methods. Presenter: Harper P.

**“Sober Dating”** - This workshop will offer tips for those interested in Sober Dating, and for Sponsors that want tips on guiding Sponsees through dating and ultimately disclosure. Presenter: Chris R.

**“The Third Step: The Beginning of a Life Time Journey With A Higher Power”** - This panel discussion and writing workshop will explore the many ways the spiritual door of Step 3 can be opened, and how it can be a source of sobriety and tools for the rest of our lives. Presenter: David K.

**“Gratitude and Acceptance”** - Are you struggling to accept something you cannot change? Learn how the tool of gratitude can bring clarity and serenity to all avenues of your life. Presenter: Kristina N.

**“I’ve Got a Feeling”** - In our addiction we avoided our feelings; learn and take in the gifts of feeling our feelings. Presenter: Jason R.

**“Tools-Laid at Our Feet”** - Review the simple kit of spiritual tools of SAA Recovery. Presenter: Edward C.

**“Gratitude”** - This workshop will connect the 12 steps to the concept of gratitude and help us all foster an “Attitude of Gratitude” leading to our ultimate goal to have serenity and peace in our lives. Presenter: Chris L.

**“The Spiritual Practice of Living in your Outer Circle”** - Support your sobriety through an exploration of outer circle using meditation, prayer, writing and sharing. Presenter: Barbara V.

**“Everything You Wanted to Know about SAA (But were afraid to ask)”** - Interactive discussion about topics that usually do not get covered or talked about in our meetings or questions that you were just afraid to ask. Presenter: Jason T.

**“Sponsorship”** - Experienced sponsors guide those seeking support in becoming a sponsor and those who are sponsors seeking more depth in their program. Presenter: Bret B

The 2020 SAA Bay Area Retreat is tentatively scheduled for March 13, 14, & 15, 2020. Save those dates now and keep on the lookout for date confirmation and registration instructions at: <https://www.bayareasaa.org/events.php>.



**SF Bay Area Intergroup of SAA** – [www.bayareasaa.org](http://www.bayareasaa.org)  
 Bay Area SAA • P.O. Box 14754 • San Francisco, CA 94114 • (415) 456-1063  
 The SF Bay Area Intergroup of SAA (BAISAA) manages the business of SAA in the SF Bay Area. Each SAA group is encouraged to elect a representative to provide input to the Intergroup and relay relevant info back to their group.

### **Monthly Intergroup Meeting**

The Bay Area Intergroup Meeting is held on the second Saturday of each month from 11:15 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. at the Lutheran Church of the Cross located at: 1744 University Ave., Berkeley, upstairs in room 210.

### **DISCLAIMER**

The views and opinions contained in *Out of the Fog* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of Bay Area SAA or those of the International Service Org. [ISO]