

3rd EDITION 2008

NEWSLETTER



SURVIVORS OF INCEST ANONYMOUS
WORLD SERVICE OFFICE
P.O. Box 190
Benson, MD 21018
(410) 893-3322
www.siawso.org

MISSION STATEMENT:

We empower those who have survived child sexual abuse (who are not abusing any child), who want to become survivors and thrivers. Using our experience, strength and hope, we do this by:

- offering referrals to SIA, self-help, support groups
- providing information to start SIA groups, intergroups, and national service offices
- creating and distributing SIA information tools (literature, newsletter, electronic media)
- offering a speakers' bureau
- guiding SIA's public information efforts worldwide

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RECOVERY WORK

LINDA'S THOUGHTS

SPIRITUALITY PART 1

NOTE: At times I have referred to my loving Higher Power as God and as "he". I am fully aware that many view their loving Higher Power as female, or as nature, their group, "Good Orderly Direction", whatever lifts their spirit. So, please, mentally edit as necessary and as always, take what you like and leave the rest.

I've heard the whimsical explanation between religion and spirituality. Religion is for people who are afraid of going to hell, and spirituality is for those of us who have already been there. So, this is for the many who want a relationship with a loving higher power.

I want a relationship with a loving Higher Power. Yet, whatever relationship people had with parents, they project those feelings onto God. Since I was emotionally, sexually, and psychologically abused by Christine, my mother, and neglected by Sam, my father, this had devastating consequences to my spirituality. One of the greatest gifts this life has to offer was stolen. And I want it back.

ANGER and a LOVING HIGHER POWER

When I first started in 12 Step programs, this “God-thing” really made me angry! I felt God was punitive at worst, and a heavenly vending machine at best, where I stuck in a prayer and hoped to get something out. And I also thought my conscience was that sledgehammer that I felt whenever I made the slightest mistake. That sledgehammer isn’t a loving Higher Power’s voice, it’s Christine’s voice and it’s shame, SHAME. Most of us, including me, have felt enough shame for the most hardened criminal. I didn’t feel like I *made* mistakes, I felt like a mistake. Guilt can be healthy but shame is not healthy for anyone who can feel it! Guilt is the belief that I *did* something bad. Shame is the belief that I *am* bad.

I felt that God judged me harshly if I was angry, especially if it lasted for awhile. However, guilt and anger are interchangeable. I needed to get angry at *her* for a change. I hated me. As the guilt decreased, the anger increased. Yeah! The inappropriate guilt I carried needed to be refocused onto the real bad guys – Christine and Sam.

Anger is the backbone in recovery. It says, “I didn’t deserve this! Children are innocent. Period.” It’s good to be angry about child abuse. Anger is a secondary emotion, never the first thing we feel. Usually, we feel hurt and/or fear before anger. Shouldn’t we be angry about a child being hurt? How would we feel if our children or a beloved niece or nephew had been abused like us? I believe that a Loving Higher is past rage when thinking about child abuse, *past rage*.

I was angry at God. “Why didn’t you stop the abuse? Where were you? Why didn’t I get a miracle?” God can take our anger, our disappointment. If we need to be angry with God, so be it. As the Welcome states, we get angry at those we perceive to be powerless. God seemed powerless to me. I’d seen Christine’s wrath. I’d take my chances with God.

If we’re still so angry at God that we could spit nails, we could write a letter to God. Better yet, we could write a letter from God to us! What do we need to hear from moral authority? Or, we could

write a letter from an angry God to our perpetrators.

When I presented a workshop on Spirituality, one of the women reminded us of a familiar poem in which we learn that God doesn’t abandon us during our trials, instead He carries us through them.

We don’t have to deny OUR anger in order to be “spiritual.” Anger and spirituality are compatible, not exclusive. And we don’t have to appease God, bribe him with our good deeds. Stockholm syndrome explains our need to befriend our attacker. We’re looking for safety, a novel experience for many of us. If she liked me, maybe she wouldn’t hurt me. I tried to appease Christine first, then God. I hoped that perfection might equal safety. I am so grateful that my loving Higher Power doesn’t expect perfection nor need me to make Him happy.

I also believe that God understands why we acted out as children, and as adults. He understands addictions, co-dependency, self-injury, depression etc. If you include child abuse in our backgrounds, our lives are predictable. God isn’t angry with us because we are angry with Him or confused or angry with a child molester.

I think God is thrilled that we are even trying to connect with Him! He knows how hard this is for a survivor.

CONTROL

Pain is easier if there is a divine reason. God and I can bring goodness out of ANYTHING but I must cooperate. God doesn’t waste anything. That doesn’t mean He WILLS it for us, or He NEEDS the bad in order to produce good.

I was raised on the idea that God is in control. Really? God is in control? I don’t think so. If He was in control, it wouldn’t have happened. This wasn’t God’s will, it was Christine and Sam’s will. They chose to do this. They were 100% responsible. They weren’t taking their 3rd Step, they weren’t asking for guidance from a loving Higher Power, or it *would not have happened*. Christine did what she wanted to do without concern for my well-being or what a loving Higher Power wanted her to do. God doesn’t command our parents to love us.

We’re either free-will agents or robots. I still believe that God is a gentleman, He doesn’t force himself on anyone, not even Christine. She could have chosen to follow the guidance of a loving Higher Power, or she could have chosen not to.

So, I don't blame God for choices Christine made. Most important, this means that God could love us even though this happened. Circumstances can't be the only sign that God loves us because He doesn't control choices evil people make.

Linda D.

PART 2 which will be in the next Newsletter, will include Forgiveness, Love, Gratitude, and Faith.

I hope to see you at the upcoming retreats.

* Linda's Keynote Speech can be purchased for \$20.00 + \$3.00 S/H

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SEVENTH STEP

In the seventh step, we read about humility. Many incest survivors begin their journeys with what I have described as "terminal pinhead." How can an ego swell when we hear the internalized voice of our perpetrator telling us that we're only good for sex? It takes a lot of work to push through the self-loathing and shame many of us carry. And there's the corollary: what if I become what I disdain? What if I become arrogant? Might I fall into the same behavior as my perpetrator? So we conspire to keep ourselves mired in self-reproach because we can't see what middle ground would look like. And, truth is, arrogance only looks different from self-hatred on the outside. Narcissistic people who hurt others intentionally often have extremely fragile egos under their thick crusts.

In SIA, with the help of the mirroring our co-survivors give us, we can begin to see what a confident, grounded, healthy self might look like. The trail has many twists and turns, and it certainly feels safer to retreat to pinhead some days. Mentally healthy people can have boundaries and set limits, asserting without controlling. We can believe in ourselves as adaptable, strong and living in our center. Our Higher Power made us to be who we are, and as we search for our truest self, we can see glimmers of our Higher Power's reflection in our souls.

Our program teaches us that we can only control ourselves (and often even that is a challenge). When we work toward a balance – banishing the pinhead without becoming the monster – we see the center widening in front of us. We find plenty of space to live in our true selves, as loving, joyous, self-aware and authentic beings.

Yours in recovery,
Sandra

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DO YOU HAVE TALENT?

The WSO is looking for poetry, artwork or recovery articles to include in the next Newsletter. Please send them to: SIA, PO Box 190, Benson, MD 21018 or email them to Linda.sia@verizon.net

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FIRST WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE!

On the weekend of July 26, 2008, history was made as the first ever SIA World Service Conference came into being in Benson, MD. All SIA members were invited to attend. 22 of us came together from many different states. We had varied reasons for attending. Here is a sampling of some of those reasons:

- * to create support structures which allow SIA growth and outreach;
- * to help with literature;
- * to do service work;
- * to give hope to individuals who do need it;
- * to support to WSO;
- * to set structure in place based on the 12 Traditions;
- * to make sure that SIA continues for newcomer;
- * to strengthen and protect SIA Traditions for individual and groups;
- * to actively participate in service;

* to guarantee Tradition 9—groups should not be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

Much was accomplished in the short time we had. We all saw our higher powers working in the group conscience as we communally set a 7 item agenda for the conference and began working through those items one by one. With the gentle facilitation of Elias C., our chair, every voice felt heard and validated. Cathy R. was the recording secretary and recorded a wonderful set of minutes. No decisions will ever be made at the conference that affects SIA as a whole. Each group has the right to vote on anything that does affect SIA groups.

In the next Newsletter we will be sending out minutes from the conference that include any issues your group can way in on, as well as, service opportunities for all members.

We also set the date for our next conference: July 24-26, 2009.

The conference exceeded our wildest expectations. We survivors have the wonderful ability to hear and accept each other even though we may not agree. As always, in service, I received so much more than I gave.

Grateful recovering member of SIA,

Becky G.

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SIA-NYC # 1 Retreat Takes Healing to NJ!!!

The 1st Annual SIA-NYC retreat was held June 27-29 in Somerset New Jersey. Survivors gathered, worked on healing, and connected with others. I was part of the organizing committee, and the biggest pleasure and surprise for me was how easy the whole event came together. It's amazing how a little service goes a long way.

I've found so much healing at retreats over the last few years. I knew if we followed the basic format of those retreats, we could spread the healing message and show people a good time. NYC Intergroup voted their support, and a small group gathered weekly to divvy up the jobs that needed to get done. We were excited, afraid, and mostly confident that Higher Power would carry us over the rough spots.

The 1st task was finding a venue for holding the retreat and the internet was an invaluable tool. Our

main priority was to stay local and affordable. I sent emails to various hotels, outlined our requirements and requested their pricing: 20 hotel rooms, 2 meeting rooms, and a hospitality room. I received responses from about half, and followed up at those hotels with phone calls. We got it narrowed down to 3, and took a drive out to see which hotel might feel like home for a weekend. The Somerset Holiday Inn was the hands down winner.

We had a date and a place and now we needed people who were willing to run workshops. We reached out to survivor's who'd run workshops at other retreats, and asked for their support. Everyone we asked agreed to help! Those early YES's fed our confidence. We had a place, and workshops! All we had to do was add coffee and cookies and we had the makings of a great weekend.

We spread the word, printed our handouts, and drove out to NJ early that Friday morning. Survivor's filtered in. Everyone brought their love, and desires to create a healing experience. It was great! It was healing! As our flyer's proclaimed ...it was ABOUT COMMUNITY!

For those who might be thinking of hosting an event/retreat I am willing and proud to share my experience and offer support. You can write me at nysiaretreat@hotmail.com. Less than a year ago I would not have imagined that I could help put a retreat together. A little time, a little support and a little Higher Power showed me that I could. It still amazes me that while taking care of myself I was taking care of others. Service.... It's a good thing!

Joan, NY

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MARK YOUR CALENDARS

October 10-12, 2008
emPOWERed Intergroup for Western PA, OHIO
and WEST VIRGINIA
Presents

Sixth Biennial Spiritual Weekend Retreat in
Uniontown, Pennsylvania

See flyer for details or contact:
bunnys@atlanticbb.net

July 24-26, 2009
2nd World Service Conference
Harford County, Maryland
More info will follow.

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WE CONTINUE TO GROW

We would like to welcome the following new groups to our SIA family:

ON-LINE: Female only, day-chats from 7-8 pm eastern standard time, primarily gays/lesbians, contact: <http://groups.myspace.com/SIAMIA> ONL-006

PHONE MEETING: Women only, Sun 7:00, 218.936.7979, access code 319835

CONNECTICUT: Norwich, Women only, Main office of Bethsada Community, Inc. 225 Main Street, First Thurs of each month, 5:30. CT-027

LOUISIANA: Gretna, Female only, Sat. 6:30, River Oaks Office Park, 1799 Stumpf Blvd., Bldg. 7 Ste 5-B, contact: Rhonda 504-912-4376, raucoin@yahoo.com LA-001

MASSACHUSETTS Hyannis, Women only, no past perpetrators, , bi-monthly on Sat. 3:30, Federal Church of Hyannis, 320 Main St. contact: Pamela, 508-778-9398, pamclute@verizon.net MA-054

MEXICO: Hermosillo, Sonora: Wed. 20:30, contact: Maria 662-212-0272 MX-001

MICHIGAN: Warren, no past perpetrators, Thurs. 7:30, warrensia730@hotmail.com MI-054

MINNESOTA: Richfield (Twin Cities Area), Thurs. 7:00, Woodlake Lutheran Church, 7525 Oliver Ave South MN-022

NEW YORK: Hunter, Tues. 6:00 pm, 7982 Main Street, contact Jeanne 518.263.5090 or <http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/siahunter> NY-158

NEW YORK: No past perpetrators, Sun. 7:00, Latham, Newtonville United Methodist Church, 568 New Loudon Rd, , Alan 518.458.8364 NY-159

NORTH CAROLINA: Roanoke Rapids, Thurs. 7:30, kimclck2005@netzero.com NC-026

PENNSYLVANIA: Meadville, No perpetrators, no perfumes, Sat., U.U. Church, , contact: Rose pasa1027@yahoo.com PA-060

VIRGINIA: Salem "Out of Darkness", No past perpetrators, Wed. 7:00, contact: colleen-ray@comcast.net,

SPAIN: Marbella, Malaga, email for information siaorg@yahoo.com SP-001

SWEDEN: Gothenburg, Djurgardsgatan 17-19, Mon 6:00 SWE-002

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FROM THE TREASURER

Please consider supporting your World Service Office! Your group could **pass the basket a second time** or have a **special container** for donations to the WSO.

SPECIAL THANKS to the following groups that have donated in the past 3 months:

TUESDAY PHONE MEETING: 4 individual donations

CALIFORNIA: **San Joe CA-087***, Santa Cruz Sun. 7:30

MASSACHUSETTS: Brookline Fri. night

MARYLAND: Fallston Thurs.; Pikesville, Columbia

ILLINOIS: Chicago Wed. Mens

INDIANA: Lake Station

NEW JERSEY: * Fontana

NEW YORK: *****SIA NY 1ST Annual Retreat**, New York Special Event; New York Special Event, Rochester, Thurs. 5:30; NYC Tues. Women's Group

PENNSYLVANIA: ** **Amber/Horsham Wed night**; Philadelphia Tuesday night

TEXAS: Huffman; Corsicana; Phoenix Group Houston Sun 3:00 pm

* **\$100 or more**

** **\$200 or more**

*** **\$300 or more +19.35**

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**MATCHING GIFT?
AUTOMATIC DEDUCTION?
DONATION FOR YOUR TIME?**

Does your employer have a matching gift policy? When you send in \$50.00, your employer will match it. So, **your \$50.00 donation becomes \$100.00!** Please check it out.

Does your employer have automatic deductions for non-profits? If so, please consider **designating SIA World Service Office as the beneficiary.**

Some organizations will contribute to a non-profit of your choice, if you donate your time to their organization. Call the World Service Office if you'd live more information.

☺**Thank you** for anything you can do to help!

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WWW.FLYINGCART.COM

Many thanks go out to a dedicated, anonymous survivor who has spent countless hours creating <http://siawso.flyingcart.com> – an SIA on-line store. We are all grateful for her insight, effort and brains! See enclosed flyer for more details on <http://siawso.flyingcart.com>

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VOLUNTEERS – MOST APPRECIATED

We love volunteers at the World Service Office. General office work is needed. If you can get to Exit 74 off of I-95, we would love to have you help out. **If you can volunteer once**, we can use the help! Please call 410.893.3322 and leave a message for Linda or email her at Linda.sia@verizon.net . (The # button by-passes the long answering machine message.)

Thank you!

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**HAS YOUR MEETING INFO CHANGED?
DO YOU WANT TO REGISTER A NEW GROUP?**

You can add or make changes yourself on the SIA website: www.siawso.org Only what your group wishes to display is displayed, and can be changed at any time. If you need help, contact Jeff at: jeffrey.siamd@yahoo.com

Thanks Jeff!

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Looking for Help Chairing a Meeting?

Why not use SIA literature to start the meeting? There's a wealth of wonderful, healing information in our literature.

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Get this Newsletter Free via Email Soon

Send your email address to Linda.sia@verizon.net and you'll get it free four times per year.

4th 2008

If we have your email address, you will begin receiving the Newsletter via email very soon.

Would you like to receive announcements of SIA retreats, events, and news by email? To be added to SIA's mailing list, please send an email to siawso+subscribe@googlegroups.com. Your email address will be kept strictly confidential and you can unsubscribe at any time.

SIA needs to have an email mailing list. We desperately need to be able to reach people via this medium. For example, how are people supposed to find out about their retreat? There's the paper newsletter and the events page on the website. But many people don't receive the newsletter or visit the website. Many meetings don't have flyers.

When people join the list, we will make clear:

- 1 - They will ONLY receive SIA-related announcements, and the volume will be very low.
 - 2 - We will not share their address and will keep it strictly confidential.
 - 3 - They can subscribe or unsubscribe at any time.
- The email addresses will be kept confidential, and only the list administrator will be able to send out an email to the group.

Here are the kinds of things that I believe should be sent out over this list:

- * Announcements -- e.g. retreats, WS conference, launching an online store, possibly announcing new meetings (that are open to online listing), announcing new literature items, announcing items on sale, etc.
- * The quarterly newsletter, eventually -- it is easy to convert the paper version to digital.
- * Requests for donations
- * Requests for service, e.g. literature submissions

I think that doing this will accomplish a few things:

- 1) Connect people more to SIA
- 2) Enable people to participate who otherwise would not have -- e.g. people who would never have heard of the retreat, because they are not connected enough to the fellowship, can learn more about it

3) Enable us to communicate better as a fellowship

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Spell check

PART 2

FORGIVENESS

We're told that we have to forgive ourselves for our "part" of the abuse! Forgiveness implies wrongdoing. We were innocent victims not willing participants. This was done TO us not WITH us. It doesn't matter if it felt good, if it went on for 40 years, if we enjoyed special privileges, or if you literally remember "asking for it." We don't require forgiveness. Would we say the same thing to someone who survived a horrific car accident? Even this is a poor analogy.

I'm not saying forgiveness is a bad thing. It hurts me to hate. *When we're ready, if we're ever ready, we'll know it.* Forgiveness is a bonus I give myself. But for those who swear that they'll never forgive, there is someone who swears that they forgave too soon. *Anger needs its day in the sun.*

Forgiveness isn't absolution, it was still wrong. It doesn't mean I must maintain a relationship, relinquish all anger, or minimize it. And it is often a process.

We need to be very careful here because forgiveness serves the perpetrators especially in churches where some stress forgiveness and never accountability. And just because Dad goes to church now, that doesn't mean he isn't still a pedophile. He's a pedophile in a church.

LOVE

Incest taught me what love is NOT, my loving Higher Power taught me what it is. I love my biological children; I do what's in their best interest. God's love is better than mine. He is smarter than me and I believe that He wants only what's in my best interest. That's why the 3rd Step, "Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of a loving Higher Power as we understood Her/Him." isn't frightening, it's a relief! In His will is

our PEACE. Wow. If a loving Higher Power only wants my peace, I want to do what I need to do to get it. When I DO good, I FEEL good. It's just that simple. That means that if I'm good to Little Linda, eventually she, too, will know peace.

It hurts to realize that God loves us. It's novel. It points out the contrast between what we've gotten thus far and what we could have gotten. And accepting love also means being vulnerable!

Christine was loving to me a times. I feared, would God be inconsistent too? What price will I have to pay? Will God love me like Christine did? Because I loved believing I was loved, I exaggerated the good times and ignored the bad. But LOVE ISN'T ABUSE. Love is a feeling but it's also a verb, an action word. No one who deliberately hurts us, loves us. When we must inhibit ourselves to get "love", to get our basic needs met, the best we can hope for is safety, not love.

GRATITUDE

Gratitude is encouraged in all 12 Step programs. Why? It's important to look not just as what we've lost, but what we have left too. I don't think we should ignore pain and I don't think we should ignore our blessings either. They are there too.

COMBINE FIRST 2 SENTENCES When I practice gratitude, I'm acknowledging that someone/something gave me the gift of sight, for instance. A man had surgery and was told that he would wake up from the surgery completely blind. When the doctors did the surgery that found that they were mistaken, his problem was simple to fix, and when he awoke, we had his full sight. He was ecstatic for days. Yet, I sometimes take it for granted, as if it's a given. If you can see this text, understand it, walk across the room, they are gifts. Many people can't do these things.

When I practice gratitude I am acknowledging that some Being gave me my gifts. When I focus my attention on those gifts, I will feel LOVED BY THAT Being and blessed. For instance: *Why were we singled out for recovery?* If everyone came to SIA that needed it, we would be overwhelmed. I am most grateful that I have some peace about what my parents did and didn't do.

I can explain evil. I am certain that something happened to Christine when she was little and she repeated it to me. I can't explain why I didn't repeat it on mindless cruise control. I can explain why she did what she did, I can't explain why I didn't. For that, I am most grateful.

FAITH

The opposite of fear is faith. But faith is started in the dark. If we had all the answers we wouldn't need faith. When we drop a bill in the mail, we don't call the store to make sure they got our bill. We often have more faith in the postman than in God. I heard one person say that when God closes a door, He opens a window, but it's awful in the hallway!

I think we'd all like to believe that there is a loving Higher Power that loves us, that respects us. We got an email recently that read, "Although I have no faith... your prayers for me would be good." Hope is the first forerunner of faith.

IT'S A CHOICE TO BELIEVE. If we don't have faith, we can pray for some, we only need a little. We could say out loud, "God loves me. God loves ME!" We could write it on our refrigerators or our mirrors. Eventually, we'll believe it. Thoughts produce feelings so if we change our thinking, our feelings will eventually fall in line.

Why? Why did the abuse happen? Why didn't God stop it? I think I spend years trying to determine why Christine did what she did. I felt like a dog chasing his own tail. The bottom line was that I wanted to know that it wasn't my fault. If I could determine the why, maybe she'd been abused in a similar fashion, then I would know I didn't cause it.

I still don't know why. I don't have to know why anymore. But as long as I know that God loves me, I don't need to have all the questions answered. If I still have questions, I'll have an eternity to discuss it with my Higher Power.

It was in my 12-Step programs that I first found a loving Higher Power. The slogan Let Go and Let God completely baffled me and I thought I'd never "get it." Now, I use a "God box". When I want to "Let go and Let God" I write it on a piece of paper and put in a box that I've decorated. It is now God's job to take care of it. I'm done with it.

Spiritual recovery is a process, it's about progress not perfection.