



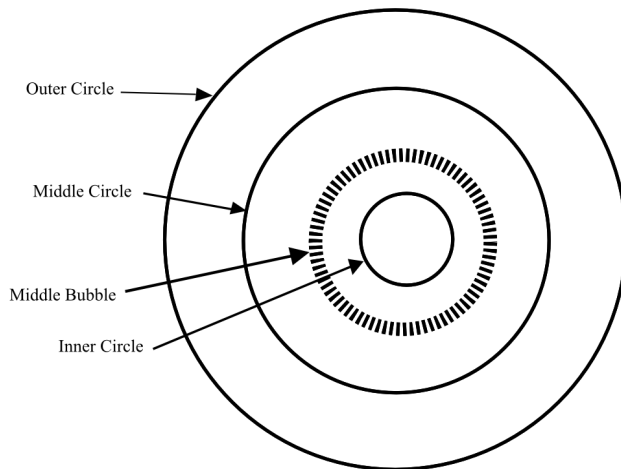
Week 1 - Step 1

[The three circles](#)

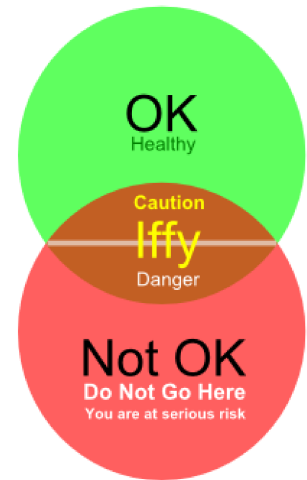
The three circles - goal: to help people identify their sobriety

Step 1 - "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. In addition to the three circles, some people use a fourth circle called the middle bubble. With the help of our sponsor or others in recovery, we write down various behaviors in each of the three/four circles. In the inner circle, we put the sexual behaviors we want to abstain from, the ones we consider *acting out*. The middle bubble is used for activities that while not strictly part of the inner circle are dangerous and will likely lead us into the inner circle. 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." Sex Addicts Anonymous pg 16



The three circles and the middle bubble



Three Circles

"We draw three concentric circles, consisting of an inner, middle, and outer circle.

In addition to the three circles, some people use a fourth circle called the *middle bubble*. With the help of our sponsor or others in recovery, we write down various behaviors in each of the three/four circles. In the inner circle, we put the sexual behaviors we want to abstain from, the ones we consider **acting out**.

Middle Bubble

The middle bubble is used for activities that while not strictly part of the inner circle are dangerous and will likely lead us into the inner circle. 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." Sex Addicts Anonymous pg 16

The Inner Circle

"In the inner circle we write down the sexual behaviors that we want to stop. Inner-circle behaviors are the addictive sexual behaviors that brought us to SAA, the things that made us hit bottom in our disease" Sex Addicts Anonymous pg 16

"When we're new to the program, our sponsor may suggest that we put compulsive sexual behaviors that don't have serious consequences in our middle circle rather than our inner circle. This allows us to concentrate on our most destructive behaviors first." Sex Addicts Anonymous pg 17 For example, people who have committed felonious behavior in their past may want to put only those behaviors in their inner circle.

It is vital to making progress to put as few items as possible in our inner circle. For many of us, at some time during the first 12 months of sobriety, the compulsion comes back in full force. If we can avoid the most harmful behavior at that point, we are improving our lives. Thus, we recommend putting only the most harmful behavior in the inner circle.

At this point, fill in the inner circle.

Table 1. Inner Circle Worksheet

Inner Circle item	Action to take

The Middle Bubble

The middle bubble is a layer of activities next to the inner circle that while not included in the inner circle are approaching it and can easily and quickly lead to trouble.

These serve as a warning that if the course continues acting out will occur. Experience and being honest with ourselves will allow us to record these items here. There is often a temptation to keep them in the middle circle as sometime the addiction will us to regard the middle bubble as a guilt free playground but the reality is trouble is ahead if we don't heed the warning. the middle circle is more like the yellow light at the traffic stop lights. We can get away with running a yellow on occasion but eventually, inevitably we will get caught and as we have come to learn, it is just not worth it.

At this point, fill in the middle bubble items.

Table 2. Middle Bubble Worksheet

Item	Description
Middle bubble item	

Item	Description
Actions and behaviours to tune into	
Middle bubble item	
Actions and behaviours to tune into	
Middle bubble item	
Actions and behaviours to tune into	
Middle bubble item	
Actions and behaviours to tune into	
Middle bubble item	
Actions and behaviours to tune into	
Middle bubble item	
Actions and behaviours to tune into	
Middle bubble item	
Actions and behaviours to tune into	
Middle bubble item	
Actions and behaviours to tune into	
Middle bubble item	
Actions and behaviours to tune into	

Item	Description
Middle bubble item	
Actions and behaviours to tune into	

The Middle Circle

"The middle circle helps us avoid being perfectionists about our standards for sexual sobriety. In the middle circle, we place behavior that is *slippery* for us or about which we are uncertain.

"Most of us come to **SAA** without really knowing what healthy sexuality is. We're usually uncertain about whether some behaviors are addictive or not. We place them in the middle circle until we can determine if they are addictive or have negative consequences." Sex Addicts Anonymous pg 17

We can place in the middle circle all those activities that lead up to acting out. For example, we can put in things like contacting an old partner, "cruising", the driving to an acting out place, etc.

At this point, fill in the middle circle.

Middle Circle item

Actions and behaviours to tune into

Table 3. Middle Circle Worksheet

Middle Circle item	Actions and behaviours to tune into
Middle Circle item	
Actions and behaviours to tune into	
Middle Circle item	
Actions and behaviours to tune into	
Middle Circle item	
Actions and behaviours to tune into	
Middle Circle item	
Actions and behaviours to tune into	
Middle Circle item	
Actions and behaviours to tune into	

Middle Circle item	Actions and behaviours to tune into
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Actions and behaviours to tune into	
Middle Circle item	
Actions and behaviours to tune into	
Middle Circle item	
Actions and behaviours to tune into	
Middle Circle item	
Actions and behaviours to tune into	
Middle Circle item	
Actions and behaviours to tune into	
Middle Circle item	
Actions and behaviours to tune into	

The Outer Circle

"Finally, we put those behaviors in the outer circle that we consider healthy, safe, and beneficial to our recovery. Practicing these behaviors is a way of being gentle with ourselves. These are acts of self nurturing that help bring meaning, fulfillment, serenity, and joy into our lives.

Outer circle behaviors include healthy sexuality. Healthy sexual behaviors are ones we choose that enhance our life, our recovery, our connection to others, and our spiritual life. Examples might include dating, non-abusive sex within a committed relationship, healthy masturbation with or without fantasy, taking a dance class, wearing attractive clothes, or enjoying affectionate touch.

Many of us include in our outer circle other healthy activities in our lives, not just healthy sexual behaviors. These are frequently the things we didn't have time to do when we were acting out." Sex Addicts Anonymous pg 18 Many of us start the program not knowing what to put in our outer circle. One way to find out items to put here is to do a "gratitude list" where we list all the things, relationships, and activities in our lives that we can be thankful for. This list can suggest many items to put in our outer circle.

At this point, fill in the Outer circle worksheet.

Table 4. Outer Circle Worksheet

Outer Circle item	Activities and Behaviours

Outer Circle item	Activities and Behaviours

Foreseeable Positive benefit to life

Table 5. Outer Circle Benefits to Live

Outer Circle item	Notes
Outer Circle item	
Action to take	
Foreseeable Positive benefit to life	

Outer Circle item	
Action to take	
Foreseeable Positive benefit to life	

Outer Circle item	
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Outer Circle item	
Action to take	
Foreseeable Positive benefit to life	

Outer Circle item	
Action to take	
Foreseeable Positive benefit to life	

Outer Circle item	
Action to take	
Foreseeable Positive benefit to life	

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Foreseeable Positive benefit to life	

Outer Circle item	
Action to take	
Foreseeable Positive benefit to life	

Outer Circle item	
Action to take	

Outer Circle item	
Foreseeable Positive benefit to life	

Outer Circle item	
Action to take	
Foreseeable Positive benefit to life	

Three Circles Worksheet

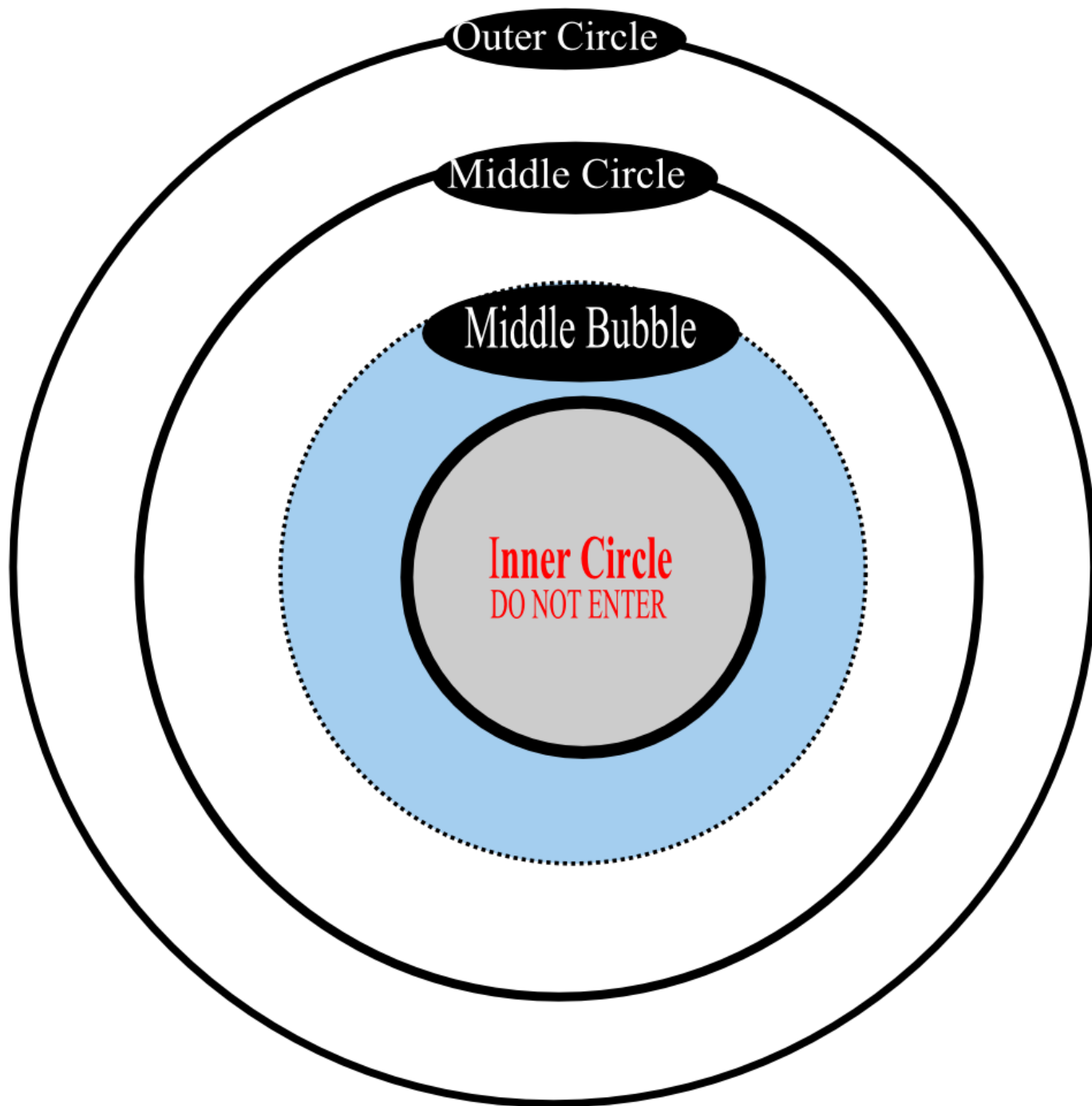
The Circles Exercise

Now, working with you sponsor, co-sponsor or other trusted servant, share and discuss the lists you made in the previous sections and then fill in the circles below remaining conscious of your middle bubble and your inner circle. Remember, your sponsor will help you determine which items are more problematic for you and items where you are being too hard on yourself.

Place as many safe and healthy items as you can in your outer circle. Remember, these activities are good activities for you to perform and they are activities you enjoy. Time spend doing them is time you will not spend acting out.

Work closely and carefully with your sponsor for your middle circle, middle bubble and inner circle. Explain how each activity has affected your life and how the absence of them will improve your life and what you anticipate you life will be like in the absence of them and then fill that item into the circle.

The Three Circles (and inner bubble)



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