

Date: Mon, 5 Mar 2007

Dear Steve,

We would be grateful if you would forward this email to Carl and the Literature Committee, and others who you feel might be interested.

Saturday afternoon and evening there was a special meeting of the KISS Group of Nokomis, Florida, to review the current draft of the proposed new "Blue Book." We are aware that the official deadline for comments is already five days gone, but we are hopeful that efforts of our group will also be considered.

The group expressed its gratitude for the work that the Literature Committee has done to date. At times it must have been considered a thankless task, and we are appreciative of the continued effort.

While there were elements of the proposed text that we found unnecessary or in the wrong order, the group's main concern centered on the approach taken. Therefore we spent quite a bit of time discussing the purpose of the text. As a result, our group decided that we would offer a conceptual approach rather than submit a line-by-line diagnosis. We offered such detailed comments last year and our remarks we find are still valid as they apply to the current draft.

As you might imagine, our discussion was both passionate and thoughtful. We are grateful that our group is quite successful in promoting coupleship healing and growth. The main driving force for that success seems to be the meetings themselves, rather than a completion of the 12 steps, adoption of a sponsorship couple, or even in at least one case developing a connection with a Higher Power. Because of the attendance at meetings, spouses find themselves addressing issues and making observations that their partners have never heard before. As one participant observed with a wry smile, "I come to the meetings to hear what my spouse is thinking."

It is not that the couples do not communicate outside of the meeting, just less often and not as focused. To some degree, daily life crowds in, usually leaving little time to even think of the topics we discuss in meetings, much less address them adequately and/or get input about them from others. In our meetings, that happens, and we presume and hope that it does in other meetings as well. It is in that exchange that many of us find at least a portion of our spirituality.

There was a feeling among some that the difficulty might possibly arise out of an attempt to

stick too closely to the traditional 12-step program organization and wording. Since virtually all of those other programs concern themselves with individual recovery, the borrowing of structure, language and tools may not sufficiently consider the dynamic of a coupleship. The result is what seemed to us as an unsatisfactory expression of the idea that one needed to work on oneself and then -- and as well -- on the coupleship. We felt the current draft and past Blue Books inadequately address this issue. While it is stated that it is important to do both, in the attempt to be accessible to all, it leaves open the idea that recovery may be possible without it.

Our recent (last two years) experience with new couples tends to support this view. After attending a meeting or two, many do not return, citing confusion about the program and the literature. Even though we know they may be unprepared for the open sharing and resulting intimacy that characterizes our meetings, we feel the provided text does not allay their concerns nor provide them with a sufficient path forward. There are not enough “meaty” stories couples can latch on to, descriptions of the failing relations with which people can identify, or descriptions of what might come to be.

Missing for newcomer and veteran alike, in our view, is that touchstone description of the problem that can help a couple identify that it is about them. In this context, we identified the 12-step descriptions for Co-dependants provided by Melody Beattie, as well as the ones in the SLAA text (usually attributed to Pat. C.) and the first 164 pages of the AA Big Book, as meaningful, moving, and resonant to those in trouble. The problem needs to be made real in the text so that the reader can say, “That’s me (us).” And then: “There is a solution, and here it is.”

Encapsulated, that was the result of the meeting. We recognize that starting out with our concept would require reorganization and some new writing, all of which may be too much as well as too late. Since our view was solicited, however, we offer it for any validity it may have on the current efforts. Our group is ready to speak to these topics more fully and directly should someone want to have that telephone call or meeting..

Several of us will be in St Louis and we look forward to seeing folks there.

Terry & Rick S.