

**TRADITION QUESTIONS**  
**SUMMARY LIST OF TOPICS**  
**UP TO 2010**

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*These are all topics of general interest which have been asked of the CSTC. We would remind you that the views and opinions expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views or opinions of S.L.A.A., but are the views of various committee members based on their own experiences and study of the Traditions. Please be aware of the disclaimers at the beginning and end of each article. No group conscience was reached on these discussions and this is not Conference Approved Literature. We present these as a means to stimulate conversation and to give you a discussion from various points of view regarding these questions. Take what you like and leave the rest.*

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## INTRODUCTIONG

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**We introduce ourselves in ways that divide rather than unite. [For example, I am a ...relationship addict.... a sex and love addict... an anorexic etc.] Doesn't this violate the traditions, especially Tradition 1 regarding unity?**

Regarding the introductions, I see no conflict, since we all have our different manifestations of the disease. In most meetings which I have attended, most of the members introduce themselves with the more general, "I'm a Sex and Love Addict" My personal feeling is that our unity comes from our desire to recover together regardless of which manifestation of the disease we may have. We all have a commonality in our feelings and thought process which render the differences of manifestation irrelevant.

When an individual introduces themselves they are identifying their own sense of primary pattern of addiction, OR their identification with the body of the Fellowship in general. For an individual to say "I am anorexic..." or any other variation is not a threat to unity, because we already know that our patterns of addiction can vary, and the individual is speaking only about themselves. Any individual can identify themselves, or not, in any way they care to; they are speaking only for themselves. To say to someone else, "unless you identify yourself as a sex and love addict (in those exact words) you are not really a part of this fellowship", THAT would be divisive.

Our willingness to stop acting out in our own personal bottom line addictive behavior on a daily basis...This is what I think unites us.

I think this is a Tradition 4 issue. (Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or SLAA as a whole.) I think that each group can set its own requirements about who can attend and how they introduce themselves. Unity comes from acceptance. Divisiveness comes from leaders wanting to put people out of the fellowship as a whole. Unity comes from flexibility. Divisiveness comes from attempting to control. Each group determines for itself who can attend that particular group.

Tradition 2 states that our leaders are servants and that they do not govern. Acceptable styles of introduction are a local group conscience decision, not a

leadership decision. Each group makes their own decision about that group's acceptable styles of introductions.

Because a person is speaking for themselves, I see no problem in "unity" over differences in how we introduce ourselves. We all agree that our bottom lines are individual. Our unity is in our commitment to the 12 Steps of recovery, to a common desire to stop acting out on whatever our own addictive patterns are. It is no threat to unity that my pattern differs from yours, and however I describe my personal addictive pattern, I share with all those in the Fellowship the common desire to stop acting out on whatever it is. After all, we aren't saying "we are all (relationship addicts, sex addicts, anorexics, etc), we are saying "I" am a .....addict.

Unity does not actually mean uniformity. The spiritual structure of our program is to allow people to identify themselves as what they are. To require them to introduce themselves in a way they really don't identify with is problematic.

What do you think?

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## MEMOIRS

**A memoir writer, who is also a member of S.L.A.A., has a publisher for her proposed memoir. She contacted FWS to inquire about her desire to disclose in this memoir that she is a member of S.L.A.A. and further details of her sex and love addiction recovery as they pertain to her life story. Specifically, she wanted to know if such an acknowledgement would be a violation of the 11<sup>th</sup> Tradition.**

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This is a direct violation of Tradition 11 since the author will use her real name and make her membership in SLAA known to the public. If her real name is on the book and she says she's a member of SLAA then it is a violation of Tradition Eleven. This is totally unambiguous.

If the book is successful, she would likely become a public figure and, in turn, a spokesperson for the organization. This violates Tradition 11. We should have no spokesperson at the level of press and media.

Anonymity protects S.L.A.A. and the author. To mention S.L.A.A. by name would be a violation of the 11<sup>th</sup> tradition.

S.L.A.A. doesn't need protection. Members are always known to relapse; this is based on humility. It is part of our 12th step to spread the message. As long as it is made clear that she does not speak for S.L.A.A.

This sounds like a way to carry the message to the addict who still suffers. There are many sex and love addicts who know nothing of our program. Tradition 5 speaks of our primary purpose.

The AA 12 & 12 mentions autobiographies. There is a difference between autobiographies and memoirs. An autobiography is written by a famous person about his/her life. A memoir is written by a person who is not well known but simply has an interesting story to tell. So we really have no precedent for this.

I don't think we can tell a person that they should imply an untruth by omitting a significant part of their personal story. Could any of us write a memoir and not mention recovery? Perhaps she could say she's in a recovery group for people with relationship issues and avoid using the SLAA name. This would be acceptable if she used a pseudonym.

Reminded of O.A. book on tradition 11. No person's name should be associated with the program. May serve best to be anonymous.

If she chooses to publish under a pseudonym, the book must be written in such a manner that her true identity cannot be determined by someone who doesn't already know her.

What do you think?

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## SPECIAL STUDY REGARDING COURT SUPPORT

**A member of my group suggested that an SLAA committee conduct a study on the effectiveness of SLAA for sex addicts that could be used to support recovering addicts in court (or solicit some research in this area). Is this supported by the traditions?**

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[T]his suggestion conflicts with our primary purpose which is to help the addicts who wish to stop acting on their self-defined addictive behavior.

*Tradition 5: Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the sex and love addict who still suffers.*

It also conflicts with the tradition that there are no professionals in SLAA who do research and treat this addiction.

*Tradition 8: SLAA should remain forever nonprofessional,*

In order to "help" an addict in court we would have to defend a position and have an opinion that is outside the 12 Step Recovery Fellowships and would certainly court controversy.

*Tradition 10: SLAA has no opinion on outside issues; hence the SLAA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.*

When a member goes to court and identifies himself as a member of this fellowship they are giving up their anonymity. SLAA may then be judged by how well that person recovers and the person could be thought of as a representative for SLAA. This is not helpful to SLAA or the person. This would make such research if it existed, unusable without violation of the traditions.

*Tradition 11... We need guard with special care the anonymity of all fellow SLAA members.*

I don't think that our traditions say that research can't be done. However, how that research is conducted and how it is used might have more tradition related issues.

Alternate approaches to consider:

I would think that composing a letter which stated honestly the difficulty of recovery, but the outstanding results for those who DO come to work our program

or that of other "S" groups and providing a handout for those in a given area to reach meetings might be a reasonable form of outreach.

The idea of an outreach tool such as the one on *For the Professional* could be a great and valuable tool for judges and probation officers alike.

What do you think?

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## SPECIAL WORKERS

**Is it within the traditions for our special workers (e.g. FWS staff) to spread the S.L.A.A. message by contacting professionals (e.g. therapists)? Is this in accordance with tradition 8 and step 12?**

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Contact with therapists and other professionals has been one of the most effective tools which I have seen in attracting those who are suffering with our disease.

Tradition 8 reads- "S.L.A.A. should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers." With these facts in mind, I personally do not see a conflict for the following reasons - The therapists are not a part of the program; therefore, there would be no conflict with the possibility of our attempting to be professional in dealing with potential members. Also the therapists are not employed as special workers since they receive no reimbursement from the Fellowship for their work. They can, however, be our greatest cheerleaders if we make them aware of our existence, and they are able to refer clients to the rooms of the program.

Tradition 12 says, "Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities." I do not see a conflict with this tradition, either. These outreach materials are sent out either by the Fellowship or the Local Intergroup; therefore, the professional does not know who is a member of the Fellowship. If a client were referred to the Program, the therapist would know about their attendance and involvement which would supplement the work that the client and therapist are doing in their sessions. And this is as it should be since the professional is in a need-to-know position as to what is happening with the client.

This, in fact, could uphold Tradition 11, "Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than on promotion..." This would definitely be an additional means to attract new members to the Program, because if the one client is making progress and overcoming his/her illness, the therapist will be aware of this information and will feel much more comfortable in referring other possible members to the Fellowship. This would also uphold Tradition 5 "Each group has but one primary purpose - to carry its message to the sex and love addict who still suffers." This is just another way of carrying the message. If people are unaware of us, they will not come, and they cannot recover.

My interpretation of the question is that the inquirer wants to know if it is consistent with the Traditions to contact professionals in order to distribute information to clients in order that the clients can get further information about SLAA and 12 Step recovery. That seems to

be quite consistent with Tradition 5, spreading the message, and Tradition 11, attraction rather than promotion.

However, if the question is to contact professionals in order to promote or endorse each other as a referral base, then I believe that is contrary to Tradition 6 and 10, we have no opinion and do not endorse.

[T]he "Introduction to Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous" was the first piece of literature, and was written in order to do a mailing to therapists and judges, along with a simple sticker with the local Intergroup or group info number or even just a post office box number. This actually fits better into Step 12 than "attraction rather than promotion", even though the message it is carrying is by giving therapists something to give clients who they think might identify with the problem. In earlier days AA also did this, and has pamphlets written specifically for "therapists and other professionals." That pamphlet and some others are good ways to anonymously "attract" those who still suffer from this addiction. Placing the Basic Text in libraries has also been done, which accomplishes a similar purpose. There have also been volunteers who have told a bit of their stories, but remained anonymous, working in pairs, who have spoken at meetings of local therapists and law enforcement folk.

Several of us seem to have different interpretations of the question that is being asked. It appears to me that the inquirer might be concerned about FWS staff (who are not members of the fellowship) contacting therapists or other professionals and giving out information about a program to which they do not belong. I see no tradition violation with these special workers distributing conference approved literature. However, if the professionals have questions beyond logistics, I would hope that FWS staff members would refer them to a member of the S.L.A.A. program.

What do you think?

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## THE CONCEPTS

### Does S.L.A.A. use the Concepts for World Service from A.A.?

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*(Editor's note: The Concepts are currently under review by the BOT to see if they can be adapted to S.L.A.A.)*

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I would draw the inquirer to the statement found at the opening of the Preamble, on page 125 of the Basic Text which states that "Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous is a Twelve Step, Twelve Tradition-oriented fellowship based on the model pioneered by Alcoholics Anonymous." The statements found in the preamble, which I have heard hundreds of times at meetings, let me know at my very first meeting that we in S.L.A.A. would follow the very same principles as do those of our friends in AA.

As far as I remember, SLAA is based on the 12 Steps and 12 traditions of AA. So the simple answer is no, SLAA is not based on the 12 concepts of AA. It would be an interesting topic for future ABM's to make a set of concepts, etc, however. The reason why not may very well be that no one had asked the question or made the motion and if so, the asker is to be thanked.

My thoughts are that the spirit of SLAA and most of its members support the idea of including the Concepts to help us love the world we are in. The Concepts are part of AA. AA has a pamphlet about them. SLAA is based on the model of AA. I believe that eventually SLAA will have conference approved literature about the Concepts.

We have not adopted nor adapted the 12 concepts for our use yet. However, exploring this possibility has been a part of the agenda of the Board Governance and Nominating Committee this year and the whole board has just approved putting together a task force to hammer out what that would look like -- what would we want to adopt? What would we want to modify/change/adapt? How would this affect our current bylaws, etc? SLAA has not adopted the 12 concepts listed in Al-Anon's paths to recovery. That would be an interesting discussion to have at an annual business meeting. To me the concepts are a guideline for how to be responsible and accountable, and how to stay on my side of the street. The concepts give a further layer of recovery for people who are on a spiritual journey. Perhaps as SLAA grows and becomes more mature, we will adopt the concepts also and try to apply them in our relationships. For now they are rarely discussed in SLAA meetings or service work that I have done.

I assume SLAA will eventually make the Concepts of AA for service our own as well. I would reword the lovely representation of the reasons for these 3 "12" principle lists. I would say that in SLAA the Steps show us how to treat ourselves and others close to us lovingly; the

traditions keep our relationships among ourselves in the Fellowship loving, and that the Concepts keep our relationship with the world loving as well.

What do you think?

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## DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

**How can the 3rd tradition be best applied when behaviors undertaken in a meeting are disruptive to many in the meeting?**

**Tradition 3: The only requirement for S.L.A.A. membership is a desire to stop living out a pattern of sex and love addiction. Any two or more persons gathered together for mutual aid in recovering from sex and love addiction may call themselves an S.L.A.A. group, provided that as a group they have no other affiliation.**

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There are a large variety of options. Tradition 4 states that each group is autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or SLAA as a whole. Some options include having a business meeting or a series of business meetings and design a meeting format to be read at every meeting that would address the problems. An ad hoc or temporary committee could be formed to work on the format.

There are sample formats on the slaafws website which might provide ideas.

Another possible option would be to assign one or two people to a service position to talk with the SLAA members who behave disruptively.

You could also contact the Conference Diversity Committee (CDC) and/or the new Leadership Mentoring Subcommittee (LMS) of the Conference Charter Committee (CCC) for suggestions. You can reach these through the FWS Office.

I have been to a number of meetings where there have been disruptive attendees. I have always been impressed by how effectively the other attendees have dealt with these situations. Our tradition has been to maintain our individual sobriety by keeping the spotlight on our own addiction, not judging others, or needing to confront others. We are a program of attraction; so when we model sober behavior the disruptive member either follows suit or tires of meetings. Whenever this issue comes to the Intergroup level, the group conscience has consistently been that there are no SLAA police whose duty it is to control others or require a specific standard.

This is a very difficult and touchy subject with which to deal. A disruptive member has to be handled gently to avoid more disruption.

I have been in many meetings where a sentence is added to the script to the effect that - if you feel that what another is sharing is inappropriate, please signify by raising your hand or quietly leave the room for a few minutes. Others have added a sentence to the effect - please avoid discussions of religion or other divisive subjects. I have been in meetings when a person seemed to almost be acting out as they shared or began to give a religious testimony. In these cases someone actually had to take the floor from the speaker stating that this was inappropriate for a meeting. (A group conscience was held immediately following such an incident.) A good way to deal with this to avoid the escalation of such behavior has already been expressed, that is for a couple of more experienced members to speak with the offending person privately and let them know that the behavior is unacceptable, since it is disrupting the meeting. The offending person will then either adjust their behavior or will look for another meeting to attend. It would be impossible to ban a member from a meeting in light of the requirements stated within the Third Tradition. In all cases the group conscience must deal with the problem and act accordingly.

I have a difficult time tying the question of disruptive behavior to Tradition 3 unless a group is trying to block the attendance of some members. If that is the case, Tradition 2 comes to mind... "Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern." Although the chair of the meeting is expected to keep the meeting flowing and in a spiritual place, I don't think the chair of a meeting should be expected to police others, especially to the extent of asking them to leave.

The rest of Tradition 2 seems appropriate as well: "For our group purpose, there is but one ultimate authority--a loving God as this Power may be expressed through our group conscience..." If members' behavior is affecting the meeting, I feel a group conscience is needed and hopefully the group will be open to discovering their Higher Power's will for them.

Tradition 12 also reminds us to "place principles before personalities."

What do you think?

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Q. If a member announces, for example, a party open only to S.L.A.A. members in the announcements at a meeting, is that OK? What about if a member announces an event for a member who attends that same meeting?**

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Part 1 – Yes, I believe this is a 6<sup>th</sup> Tradition issue. Because this is an event for S.L.A.A. member only it can be announced at a meeting. Part 2 – No, I believe this is also a 6<sup>th</sup> Tradition issue. The event announcement gives the appearance that S.L.A.A. is indeed endorsing the event. A better way to deal with this type of announcement is to have a set time before or after the meeting for non-S.L.A.A. announcements (assuming there is a group conscience to set aside that time).

Regarding the first half of the question, I do believe that is a Tradition 4 issue. Each group is autonomous and free to make that decision as a group. I, personally view social events at...i.e.... a game night at someone's home differently. There is no appearance of S.L.A.A. endorsing an outside enterprise. I believe announcing something like that is a Tradition 4 issue. My home group wrestled with this issue a few years ago, and finally voted that only Intergroup sanctioned events could be announced during the meeting. Everything else has to be announced after the meeting. Many Intergroups have struggled with this question so it is very common.

However, the second issue involves making money and I don't think it is appropriate to promote outside enterprises (Tradition 6)...especially for financial gain...during an S.L.A.A. meeting. It gives the impression that announcing the event at various S.L.A.A. groups that S.L.A.A. endorses this event, thus in violation of Traditions 6 "An S.L.A.A. group or S.L.A.A. as a whole ought never endorse, finance or lend the S.L.A.A. name to any outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property or prestige divert us from our primary purpose."

I have experienced a similar situation, when a member was promoting a social fundraiser that he has organized for S.L.A.A. members. He has been announcing it and selling tickets. One group has approved it through their group conscience which seems to be in keeping with Tradition 4. However, some of the other meetings where this is also being announced do not seem to have considered this issue in group conscience. It is my opinion that announcing a party exclusively for S.L.A.A. members as an announcement is the highest way of following the Traditions because it exemplifies unity and assures members that they do not have to have any other affiliation. Therefore it allows the group to be autonomous and guards members' anonymity.



Conversely, promoting a fellow member's personal event could prove to be shortsighted if S.L.A.A. guests don't understand Traditions of the 12 Step Program and interact with non-S.L.A.A. guests where in any manner anonymity is breached for the member having the event. It could hurt authentic unity of the underlying group.

.....  
 Traditions being referenced are – 1 unity, 3 each group having no other affiliation, 4 each group is autonomous, 11 guard with special care the anonymity of fellow S.L.A.A. members.

.....  
 If it is not an officially sanctioned Intergroup or group function it seems like an outside issue to me, contrary to Tradition 6. Regardless of whether it is a party including only S.L.A.A. members (is it open to everyone?) or promoting an art event for a single member.  
 .....

In the original question for the announcement of the party open only to S.L.A.A. members, I cannot see a violation of any Tradition. Such an announcement seems to be in harmony with the ideals of Tradition 1, that of promoting S.L.A.A. unity. This would be a great way for members to get together in order to enjoy some fellowship and to become better acquainted with each other. It is important, however, that if it is announced at a meeting, that everyone who attends that meeting is welcome.

The follow-up question does not seem to be so simple, since it seems to be a double edged sword. If the event is a private event, open only to S.L.A.A. members, it would also seem to be in harmony with Tradition 1. However, if this were to be a public event, then this would seem to come into conflict with Tradition 6 of endorsing an outside enterprise. It would also appear to be in conflict with the Tradition of having no opinion about outside issues, since the event could contain other things which could be sexually stimulating. In this case, it would be better mentioned either prior to or after the meeting.

In both cases, Tradition 4 must be recognized. The individual group, by group conscience, has the right to decide what types of announcements, if any, might be made at that particular meeting.  
 .....

Regarding part 1: It follows Tradition 1 by promoting unity and Tradition 4 in that each group is autonomous.

Regarding part 2: Announcing a non-S.L.A.A. function goes against Tradition 6 by endorsing an outside enterprise, however each group is autonomous to make that announcement, as long as that decision does not affect S.L.A.A. as a whole.  
 .....

What do you think?

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## SPECIAL MEETINGS

The Question – (Summarized from the original for brevity)

In my area some members decided to start an S.L.A.A. study group using the (well known step recovery book), which is not a conference approved text. A coordinator was selected and was to contact various local meetings to announce the study group.

One member asked for information and was told by the coordinator that she/he was not welcome to attend because someone else felt uncomfortable around that person and that it is a private meeting in which the members have chosen to not adopt the 12 Traditions. They do plan to read the Preamble, the 12 Steps, the 12 Signs of Recovery of S.L.A.A. and the Promises of S.L.A.A. from page 95 of the Basic Text. Additionally the meeting is to be open to all S.L.A.A. members for the first 4 meetings and then open only to those who have attended at least one of the first 4 sessions. There is a beginning and an ending date for this study group.

I have asked various members regarding whether or not any of the 12 Traditions have been violated. I have received differing opinions as to whether or not Traditions have been violated regarding the use of the book and the exclusion of one member of the Fellowship. Some feel that it is a violation of different Traditions and others believe that it is not since this is not a registered S.L.A.A. meeting.

These are my questions – Is this step study meeting an S.L.A.A. meeting? If this step study meeting is an S.L.A.A. meeting, what Traditions have been violated? Or is this not an S.L.A.A. meeting.

Could you please respond with some guidelines?

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In my area there are some special meetings which have rules like closing membership after four weeks or orientation, expecting people to leave if they do not meet sobriety requirements or miss some number of meetings. Sometimes they use conference approved literature and other times they do not.

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Here it is recognized that because these meetings do not act in accordance with the Traditions, they are not considered S.L.A.A. meetings, cannot be included on our meeting list and should not be announced with S.L.A.A. announcements. In our area there are meetings that have at the close of their meeting format "Are there any non-S.L.A.A. Announcements?" This allows members to announce these meetings but also makes it clear that it is not a part of S.L.A.A.

At a recent meeting I attended, a member was attempting to make an announcement for what is essentially one of these meetings during the S.L.A.A. announcements. During the meeting break, some of the long time members gently pointed out the Traditions issues and suggested options for announcing this meeting. My suggestion would be that the group discuss it at a business meeting and suggest putting a place in the format for non-S.L.A.A. 12 Step announcements if that is within the group conscience of the meeting.

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Even though it is not a registered S.L.A.A. meeting a coordinator is designated to announce it in the meetings in the area and the behavior of excluding one interested member breaches Tradition 1: our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon S.L.A.A. unity. And by one S.L.A.A. member standing up with the decision to exclude a fellow member, they are failing to recognize Tradition 2: For our group purpose, there is but one ultimate authority – a loving God as this Power may be expressed through our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern. I wonder how the decision maker would feel if they were excluded on the basis of making others feel uncomfortable.

I do not believe S.L.A.A. Traditions are being followed, but it is technically an S.L.A.A. meeting.

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There are many different factors at play: non-conference approved literature, one member being told she wasn't welcome/private meeting, group chose not to adopt the 12 Traditions and it is not a registered S.L.A.A. meeting.

Then the questions; is this step study meeting an S.L.A.A. meeting? – Tradition 2 comes to mind here; "The only requirement for S.L.A.A. membership is a desire to stop acting out a pattern of sex and love addiction." So it seems to me that they may call themselves an S.L.A.A. meeting. If this step study meeting is an S.L.A.A. meeting, what Traditions have been violated? – By asking a member not to attend the group seems to be violating Traditions 3. There is a difference in having a closed meeting open only to sex and love addicts and banning one member, unless this is a group conscience decision, in which case Tradition 4 would apply. I think the same Tradition applies in using non-conference approved literature. It is discouraged (mainly because it can be confusing to the newcomer, at least in my understanding.) But if GC decides to use it, it's OK, but it is a good idea to announce often that this is non-conference approved. Or is this not an S.L.A.A. meeting? – I don't have any experience around a group deciding not to adopt the Traditions.

I think that it's fairly common to close step studies to new folks after a period of time. I have experience with that in another Fellowship. If the group is working the Steps and sharing what each has written, it starts to feel unsafe to have those present who are not doing so or who have not been doing so. I'm not saying it's the right way to do it; I just know another fellowship did it that way also.

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This is one of the toughest questions with which we have dealt. There seem to be several areas of difficulty with the scenario presented.

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First of all, the adoption of a piece of non-conference approved literature is an area of concern. This is a Tradition 4 issue since it is up to the individual group as to how they conduct their meetings. As long as it is made clear that this is a Group Conscience, I would have no personal problem with their decision and could choose whether or not I wanted to attend that meeting.

However a second issue presents itself in this question – since this is a text written by a professional and is used by other fellowships as a means of teaching the steps. I wonder if this could be a bit of a Tradition 8 issue, since it is written by a professional. It would appear to be a Tradition 6 issue because if this is the only thing being discussed at this meeting, it would appear to be an endorsement of the author as well as the recovery foundation with which he is associated and publishes his book. This poses a problem for me since it seems to violate these two Traditions. Perhaps another Tradition to consider is Tradition 5 – which states that our primary propose is to carry the message to the sex and love addict who still suffers. It would be difficult to carry the message when we are not using our Basic Text, which is the message, as the basis of our study.

The third issue which poses a problem for me is the exclusion of certain members from the study. Tradition 3 tells us that the only requirement for S.L.A.A. membership is the desire to stop living out a pattern of sex and love addiction. Although the next phrase of this same Tradition states that any two or more persons gathering together for mutual aid in recovering from sex and love addiction may call themselves an S.L.A.A. group provided they have no other affiliation. That takes us back to the second issue, once again. I also see a Tradition 12 issue here since exclusion would seem to be placing personalities before principles, instead of principles before personalities.

To have a beginning and ending date for the study would make this seem to be more like a special interest recovery workshop, which would not be directly affiliated with any S.L.A.A. meetings, which would make it possible for them to use anything which they desired for that workshop. That they do not intend to register this meeting with FWS could indicate that this is their intention.

Finally, that they do not intend to adopt the entire S.L.A.A. program, which would include the 12 Traditions, it would seem that they are not truly an S.L.A.A. group. To ignore the Traditions would seem to be a violation of S.L.A.A. unity. If we are not all going to embrace the entire program, we would truly cause confusion within the local area and the Fellowship as a whole, which would relate to Tradition; the principle of unity.

The book in question was used in my area a few years ago, as the theme of a retreat. It raised a lot of concern from some of the more experienced members.

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What do you think?

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## QUESTIONABLE FUNDRAISING

A member of S.L.A.A., who attends only (special interest meetings) which have their own format has recently been organizing events. He organized a social event recently to a theatre event in our city for members of S.L.A.A. Another event has been a lecture by a therapist followed by dinner. He hasn't had this event sanctioned at Intergroup, but is operating it on his own. He promoted the event during the announcements section of various S.L.A.A. meetings for some weeks, referring to it as an S.L.A.A. (special interest group) fundraiser and sold tickets to members of those groups after the meeting. When questioned by one group as to why he was doing this on his own and whether he ought to seek permission from the Intergroup, he replied that he could do whatever he liked and he didn't care what the Intergroup thought.

This member is acting as a bit of a renegade in the Fellowship. A committee was set up by the Intergroup about 6 months ago to deal with these (special interest meetings) and literature. Many members have left that committee stating that they could not work with him. He has recently told members of that committee to start asking S.L.A.A. groups for money for rent and travel costs to these committee meetings (This Intergroup covers a large geographical area). He is also announcing all sorts of non-S.L.A.A. related or sanctioned social events that are being organized by his committee without intergroup permission or knowledge at meetings. These are my questions -

- Should he be promoting his event at meetings without that group or Intergroup's permission to do so?
- Shouldn't he be calling it an S.L.A.A. fundraiser as opposed to an S.L.A.A. (special interest group) fundraiser?
- What Traditions could be cited around this issue in order to gain clarity on the best way to go forward and help to guide this person in his action?
- As this committee was set up as an intergroup committee, does the intergroup have the right to disown this Committee if he refuses to act as a trusted servant of the Intergroup?
- Can an Intergroup distribute a flyer to S.L.A.A. groups outlining concerns about a member's activities, obviously keeping it anonymous, and offering guidelines as to what each group can do if they are asked for money or if non-S.L.A.A. events are consistently being announced at their meetings, etc?

**What are your suggestions?**

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These questions combine a number of thorny issues, but since we've seen similar situations, it's clear that this is not an isolated incident.

Should he be promoting his event at meetings without that group or Intergroup's permission to do so? – Just as our Tradition Study Group does not govern nor police other groups, it's my belief that the Intergroup's position is not to govern. That's not how

our program works. We are led by our Higher Power's will that is made clear through our group conscience. I see Tradition 4 at work here. (Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or S.L.A.A. as a whole.) This appears to be a specific issue that is present in one group. I would suggest that the Group Conscience of that group should guide its actions, being mindful and centered on their Higher Power.

Shouldn't he be calling it an S.L.A.A. fundraiser as opposed to an S.L.A.A. (special interest group) fundraiser? – This seems to be a Tradition 7 issue. (Every S.L.A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.) In my mind what he calls it is not as important as the fact that a member is soliciting outside contributions. This violates the spirit of Tradition 7.

As this committee was set up as an intergroup committee, does the intergroup have the right to disown this committee if he refuses to act as a trusted servant of the Intergroup? - Again, we are not governed by any particular group. We are guided by our Higher Power as expressed through our Group Conscience. The closer all members can stay in touch with their Higher Power, the clearer the message and guidance will be.

There are a couple of other questions but I think they tie very closely with what I've said already.

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This is a difficult set of questions to answer due to their very nature. I am glad that we do not provide for a group conscience on the questions because this one could have many possible scenarios and good discussion is a healthy thing.

One important point to remember regarding this question is that it is loaded with Tradition 4 issues. The Intergroup in this case used its autonomy to establish these special meetings, which in turn are autonomous of each other. Each Intergroup or group has the right to conduct their business and meetings in any way which they wish, provided that they do not affect S.L.A.A. as whole or other meetings. As has been previously expressed in other questions, each group can decide whether or not to announce any events. The Intergroup does not have to sanction an event. In the area in which I live, the Intergroup does not sponsor events as a general rule, but does give support to them by encouraging members to attend those events.

We are fully self-supporting, Tradition 7, therefore these groups could very well promote fundraising activities among the membership which would certainly be in keeping with this Tradition, since they are not going outside the Fellowship to raise funds. Many retreat committees and recovery day committees have used this type of fundraising to help defray the costs of the event, thus making them more affordable for those who are attending, or to provide some expense money for a keynote speaker for the event or to provide scholarships to the event. It is not clear from the question as to how these funds are being used. If they are being used to help a struggling Intergroup, then it would seem to be in keeping with the Tradition. However, if the funds are being used to line the pockets of the one doing the fundraising, then this could be a violation of

Traditions 6 (money, property or prestige) and 7. The use of the funds could determine the title that is given to the fundraiser.

Because the committee that was set up to help guide these meetings was set up by the Intergroup as authorized by Tradition 9, it can also be closed by the Intergroup - Traditions 4 and 9. I would think that it would possibly be wiser for the Intergroup to ask the member in question to step down from the committee since he is generating controversy. This type of controversy has the potential to become public; therefore it could become a Tradition 10 issue.

To distribute a flyer to the various groups could be a breach of the unity spoken of in Tradition 1.

As to how controversial this issue might be, we need to take into consideration whether it is a small vocal minority who are questioning what is happening or whether it might be a majority of the membership in the region which is questioning the events taking place. This could become a Tradition 12 issue dealing with principles before personalities. Our primary purpose is to carry the message, Tradition 5, and this can be done using whatever is expedient for the Intergroup or group, Tradition 4).

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The inquirer might also refer to the previous, similar questions and responses, one captioned as the Announcements Question and the other as the Outside Literature Question. These are three similar issues which face our Fellowship as a whole.



What do you think?



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## UNDER THE INFLUENCE

### THE QUESTION -

**Is it an S.L.A.A. Traditions violation on a conference committee call for a member on that call to be noticeably under the influence of alcohol? What if the chair doesn't deal with the inebriated member either on the call or afterward?**

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Tradition 2 states that our leaders are but trusted servants they do not govern. Tradition 9 states that service boards or committees are directly responsible to those they serve.

When a member of a service committee shows up impaired, that person is not acting like a trusted servant. And it is incumbent upon all members of the fellowship to hold the person accountable. Individual members of the committee can bring the issue up to the Chair either during the call or outside the call. Members can ask that an item be placed on the call agenda to discuss sobriety requirements for the members and to discuss the comportment of trusted servants for the committee. Tradition 1 reminds us that SLAA Common Welfare comes first. If a member is on a Conference Service committee not acting responsibly, this affects SLAA as a whole. The Conference Charter Committee has a conflict resolution process to help Committees deal with disputes if the member's concerns are not addressed by committee processes.

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This is a bit of a difficult question in that it is not about a blatant violation of a Tradition, but is a violation of the spirit of a couple of them.

I recognize that there are those who deal with various other demons in their lives so I am not passing judgment with my comments. Tradition 1 comes to mind as my first thought. For a committee member to be under the influence could threaten the common welfare of the committee because we would not have a unity of focus on the call which could endanger other members.

The ultimate authority, according to Tradition 2 is "a loving God as this power may be expressed through our group conscience." We are trusted servants who have been chosen due to maturity of judgment. It would be most difficult for the member who is under the influence to use good mature judgment and have necessary guidance of his/her Higher Power when the mind is not clear and it is difficult to think clearly. To be under the influence would seem to be a violation of the trust which was placed in the committee.

I have been in a similar situation at my home group. We had two men who prior to each meeting would stop for dinner and have several drinks. When they came into the meeting a few minutes late they were noisy and disruptive speaking to people as others were reading. (Their having been drinking was obvious due to the smell, which could

be triggering to those who are also recovering from alcoholism.) When they would share they would begin to talk of other things or get into too much detail as to their sexual exploits during the past week. Finally, one night a member had had enough of the off subject sharing and objected to what was being shared as being inappropriate. A Group Conscience was called and all agreed that the sharing was inappropriate.

I believe that when a meeting, committee meeting or business meeting is disrupted by one who is obviously under the influence there are 2 possibilities which I can see. First of all, to call for a spiritual reminder so that everyone becomes refocused. Failing that then to add an agenda item to the next meeting and ask for group conscience regarding the behavior. This would hopefully end such a situation.

The chairperson should take the initiative to contact the member to see if the person were under the influence or possibly tired, ill or having some side effects to some sort of medication. We need to make sure that there is not some other sort of distraction before we accuse one of being under the influence.

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In studying the Traditions, the first Tradition comes to mind (Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon S.L.A.A. unity.) If a person attending a phone conference is distracting in such a way that common welfare and unity are affected, this person is breaching Tradition 1. I think a number of things might be considered in order to uphold this Tradition. Personally, I think the best approach is a preventive measure that would require the chair to be proactive.

- Schedule meetings early in the day.
- Record the meeting.
- Set a respectful business-like tone for all meetings.

I think these advance measures would make a person think twice before joining a call when he or she is under the influence.

Regarding "disciplining" the person after the fact: I think it's important that we all remember Tradition 2, "For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority - a loving God as this Power may be expressed through our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern." If any action needs to be taken, then I would look to this Tradition for guidance. I would hope that if I were the chair, I would put this as an item on the agenda, ask for 60 seconds of silence to bring our Higher Power into the meeting, discuss this in round robin style giving everyone a chance to speak without interruption and then let the group conscience prevail.

More and more I'm learning that if we let the Traditions guide us in our business meetings, we can't go wrong.

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This kind of situation is troublesome, because our traditions say that we have no opinion on outside issues. But this is an individual one, and the guiding principle is love and tolerance and honesty. None of us wants to trust the input of someone as a trusted servant of SLAA under the influence of a substance or other addiction instead of a loving God. I think at all service levels and meetings of all kinds of SLAA members, that we are to conduct ourselves by the spiritual principles of the Twelve Steps (...in all areas of our lives).

In my own opinion, that member should be told gently, without taking away all his/her dignity, something like..."It seems to me" (hopefully others on the call will do the "me too" thing)..."that your judgment and participation in this call today is affected in a negative way, perhaps by alcohol. Wouldn't it be better for you to drop off this call, and we can let you know about our discussion later, and you can give your input then?"

Of course, I would understand that all those on the call who noticed, and said nothing were simply unsure of how to address the problem. Given that fact, the offending member needs to be confronted now, respectfully but firmly, about what was observed on the call (always present the objective evidence) and talk about the inappropriateness of "attending" the meeting without a strong spiritually-connected, sober mind.

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What a tough question. Our fellowship models after Alcoholics Anonymous. The Big Book and the 12 & 12 from that fellowship are suggested reading. I believe that the SLAA maxim of being in right relationship with ourselves, our higher power and with others is one of the most important practices we can observe in maintaining sobriety. If a conference committee member is noticeably under the influence of alcohol it represents a real lack of discernment. Even though it may be a non-paid position the member is responding to filling the position of trusted servant. From the Basic Text I quote, "...those individuals needed to have shown sustained sobriety in S.L.A.A. over a considerable period of time: they had to be credible. If they were not sober and credible, then the very fabric of safety which had to form the background for each and every S.L.A.A meeting would be threatened. We needed to be constantly on guard that what happened within our Fellowship was consistent with our Fifth Tradition: "Each group has but one primary purpose---to carry its message to the sex and love addict who still suffers." (Page 124 paragraph 4)

So even though I can reference additional traditions that would be breached when a conference committee member attends a meeting inebriated, the image of the sex and love addict still suffering is sufficient motivation to deal with the member by calling an impromptu group conscious vote or rescheduling the meeting so that the other members attending are clear that the behavior is at cross-purposes with the goal of the conference committee member meeting.

## What do you think?

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## COMBINED MEETINGS QUESTION

### THE QUESTION -

**Since we have Chapter 3 in our Basic Text, "Living with the Sex Addict" (and I would like to add in our present culture – Anorexic), could not a Chapter 3 S.L.A.A. meeting be recognized as an S.L.A.A. meeting? [This would include the loved ones and members attending meetings together. This would amount to having a combined S.L.A.A. – CoSLAA meeting.]**

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Many of our meetings are open meetings. That means to me that anyone may attend, whether a sex and love addict (to me that term includes anorexic members) or not. In the spirit of Tradition 4 that groups are autonomous it does not seem contrary to the traditions to me to create a 'Chapter 3' focused meeting so long as the meeting is for members of S.L.A.A. Remembering that the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop living out a pattern of Sex and Love addiction and those groups consist of two or more S.L.A.A. members (Tradition 3) it seems to me that such a group could be within our Traditions.

I would caution members of the group that if the purpose becomes other than carrying the message to the sex and love addict who still suffers, then the group may no longer be an S.L.A.A. group (Tradition 5).

I recently attended a conference co-sponsored by S.L.A.A. and a Co-S.L.A.A. group. I attended a Co-SLAA meeting at the conference for couples and found it really refreshing to hear couples discussing issues related to their partnership from both the S.L.A.A. perspective and the Co-S.L.A.A. perspective. From a boundaries perspective though, I think the meeting organizers always need to be clear whether it is an S.L.A.A. meeting or a Co-S.L.A.A. meeting and I'm doubtful that it could be both at the same time because of Tradition 6.

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The concept of a combined meeting with the addict and his/her significant other is something about which I had never given any thought, until this question was asked.

Could such a group exist and call itself an S.L.A.A. group? I believe that a couples meeting could very well exist in light of Tradition 4, because each group is autonomous, which would make it free to set up its own format and even close the meeting to non-couples. No one has the right to dictate to another group as to what sort of meeting it should be. Within the Traditions of S.L.A.A. (or those of Co-SLAA, as far as I know) it could definitely work, but should identify itself as one or the other. To combine the two

programs could come into conflict with Tradition 3 in that there should be no other affiliation.

My personal preference for this sort of meeting would be that it be an additional meeting which would be limited to couples, only. I can see it as being a meeting which would strengthen relationships as both members of the couple work on their personal addictions and co-dependent issues.

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The meetings in my city are all closed except to "those seeking help for their own sex and love addiction." So essentially, they are closed meetings. This decision was made based on a group conscious decision of each meeting. In that vein, it seems to me that according to Tradition 4, each group is autonomous and able to decide whether or not to have an open or closed meeting.

Any group who opens up to those who are not sex and love addicts, however, would hopefully keep in mind Tradition 5, that our primary purpose is to carry the message to the sex and love addict who still suffers.

To me, a combined SLAA meeting and a Co-SLAA meeting falls in the same category as special interest meetings: a woman's only, gay and lesbian, people of color. While these meetings are not for everyone, they do exist and meet specialized needs. When I talk to sponsees about these meetings, I encourage them to NOT make these special interest meetings their only meeting since their focus is by their very nature is narrower than a regular SLAA meeting.

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What do you think?

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While I certainly hold all 12 Step Programs in the deepest of respect, I prefer not to hear all about them as a member is sharing. The reason being, that my experiences are with sex and love addiction and not with alcohol, drugs, etc. I can't always make a point of reference to what someone might be sharing if they speak in depth about another addiction and their recovery from it. I do realize, however, that there are times when it is necessary to make mention of another fellowship because the member might have, when they became sober, realized that there was more involved in their addictive behaviors. In fact they might have realized that the other addiction was not their core addiction, but they used it as a drug to soothe the pain of their sexual addictions. In those cases, I appreciate the member being honest and forthright as they tell what it was like and how they came to find the rooms of S.L.A.A.

For the same reason, I do not believe that speaking of religious doctrine or religious experiences are productive, since each member has his/her own set of beliefs or reasons for not being a part of any religion. It becomes counterproductive when one is sharing along the lines of experiences which cannot be shared by the majority of the people in the room. For example, many times in a meeting I hear references to the traditions and practices of a certain religion using terms which would only be understood by a member of that particular religion. When that happens, I find myself, wondering just what, exactly is the member talking about.

Although other 12 Step Programs are certainly important to many in the room, as well as is some sort of set of religious beliefs, to spend extended periods in a brief share or in a lead discussing those matters is not going to help me continue to recover from my sexual issues. Since we do not endorse other programs (*Tradition 6: An S.L.A.A. group or S.L.A.A. as a whole ought never to endorse, finance, or lend the S.L.A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.*) or any particular set of beliefs, nor do we endorse the fine efforts of many professional therapists, these things would become very distracting to the other members in the meeting, whether a new comer or a long timer. The same would be true of mentioning in depth experiences or practices of other "S" Fellowships.

Although I am involved in other activities outside S.L.A.A., I do not bring those up other than a brief mention when they are absolutely necessary to my sharing.

Those are my feelings, take what you need and leave the rest.

What do you think?

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## PERSONAL CONTRIBUTIONS FOR A SPECIFIC PURPOSE

### THE QUESTION

*At our Intergroup a member twice gave to our Literature Sales and Distribution Rep \$100 to buy Newcomer kits to be distributed equally among the groups who could then give them out for free. No one objected at the time and things were done as requested. Then, someone brought up that it might interfere with Traditions 6 and/or 7. The only thing I found in Tradition 7 is that it would not be wise to accept personal contributions as the donor could use that contribution as a way to impose his/her personal will. This member is no longer around so we do not foresee having to deal with this situation again...but we never know. We can't make up our minds as to whether it really interferes with Tradition 7 since it was quite beneficial to the newcomers. Does it? However after discussion we agreed that it would be best to accept only orders from Group Reps as voted by their group's conscience. Is this the best way to go? I personally tried to find some information about the maximum amount that could be given by one living member, which I believe was discussed at the ABM a few years ago, but I could not find the reference. Could you also answer that question?*

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To have a member offer to donate funds to provide additional literature to the groups in their area is a commendable gesture. As I look at this issue I do not see any mention of that member making this offer expecting to receive any favor or return from the groups or the Intergroup. If this were a no strings attached donation specifically earmarked for a certain project, unless it exceeded the Intergroup's guidelines for individual contributions or the Intergroup had a policy regarding not receiving any earmarked contributions, then I would see no issue as to this being in keeping with the spirit of Tradition 7.

FWS does have a maximum individual contribution limit of \$12,000 per year from an individual member. Due to limited funding FWS does not currently accept earmarked donations and all funds go into the general operating fund. This was discussed at the 2008 ABM and it was decided that there would be no change made to the contribution limits at that time. Some Intergroups have an individual contribution limit written within their by-laws; therefore, it would be wise to check to see if the contribution were in keeping with the policies set down by the Intergroup.

As to Tradition 6, I do not see an issue because this seems to have nothing to do with aligning S.L.A.A. with other enterprises.

In my opinion this is a good example of a member recognizing the importance of Tradition 7 and honoring that Tradition by making a generous donation. I knew there were limits for individual donations, but I couldn't remember what they were.

I think it's important to examine the spirit and driving force behind Tradition 7 and not get tied up in interpretation. In my study to better address this issue, I went to Al-Anon's *Paths to Recovery*. Here is what it had to say:

"Even within Al-Anon, no one is allowed to contribute great sums. When any single-person or small group of people contribute too much, problems of jealousy and dominance are likely to arise. Our spiritual fellowship is based on equality and, though we may not all contribute exactly the same amount, by spreading responsibility widely, we assure ourselves of the mutuality of our self-help. When we did not contribute to the group, we found our participation was lessened, and in time, our own recovery was threatened."

In the situation from our inquirer, I think it is important that the group examine the big picture and see if one individual is, indeed, contributing "too much." That wouldn't be determined by a dollar amount but instead by whether or not the donation is enabling others to lessen or forego their own financial contributions. If that's the case, then the donation is harmful. However, if this contribution is not affecting the financial giving of others, then I don't see a problem. I do recognize that this determination would not be an easy call to make, but I believe strongly that it's at the heart of this discussion.

The individual contribution allowed by SLAA for one year is considerably above the \$3,000 limit set by AA. These contributions come well within that limit. The question of designating those moneys for a specific purpose is different. SLAA has a history of honoring such gifts with specific targets, such as contributions for the delegate equalization fund, or for a Step Chip initial prototype and first order. However, two ideas are relevant to me.

SLAA has not adopted the AA Concepts for World Service, but many think we should, and the guidelines of those concepts make a great deal of sense. Concept III says that the Intergroup itself has the power to decide where contributions go, and the contributing person can only suggest, not dictate the use. The alternative would be for that person to buy a certain number of beginner's packets and take them to various meetings him- or herself. Groups normally give these to beginners without charge, although they pay for the materials in the packet to FWS and/or the Intergroup.

The other issue is individual "credit" for contributions. Anonymity about such contributions is the custom, and I think that practice is wise, both for the Fellowship and for the individual. Some people have less financial capacity to make such contributions, but provide priceless value with prodigies of service, all without pay, and nothing more than brief recognition at conferences or group business meetings. Humility in action should guide our decisions, always. If an individual will "donate" money only if control over its use, and/or personal recognition is made, I believe the

donation should be respectfully and kindly refused. A gift should be a gift. If conditions are attached, there is ego involved, not the spirit of humility.

What do you think?

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## BREACH OF ANONYMITY

At a meeting in my area, a man shared about having sexual activities with very young children, including one relative. Although he had never been arrested for his activities, he did reveal to the pastor of the church where he is employed regarding his attraction for young children.

Because he shared openly regarding his activities both during and after the meeting with some members, one member who is bound by the requirements of his profession to report sexual or physical abuse was very troubled with what he had heard and feared for the future possible victims. This member felt that he needed to report what had been shared to the police.

**Is this a breach of anonymity or is it a member doing what he is duty bound to do by trying to protect possible future victims?**

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### **RESPONSES-** *(edited for sake of anonymity and location)*

In my own case, many in the program and my own lawyer (writing me stating very strongly that I should not report myself to the authorities) advised me against turning myself in.

Page 77 of the AA Big Book, bottom of the page: "...we will never get over [acting out on our addictive patterns] until we have done our utmost to straighten out the past."

I had entered into a romantic relationship with a client, serious enough in itself. But this person had a dissociative disorder, and a child personality loved and trusted her therapist, me, as a substitute parent. My ethically and legally forbidden lapse amounted to child molestation. I did to another what had been done to me. I could only make that right, at least in part, by being sure the perpetrator did not go unpunished. Even so, I am sure the harm I caused was irreparable.

Page 78: "Perhaps we have committed a criminal act that might land us in jail if it were known to the authorities.....Reminding ourselves that we have decided to go to any lengths to find a spiritual experience, we ask that we be given the strength and direction to do the right thing, no matter what the personal consequences may be. We may lose our position or reputation or face jail, but we are willing. We have to be. We must not shrink at anything." What follows is the reasoning for not doing that, if harm to others would occur when I made my amends.

I could see no way, after much prayer, meditation, and consultation with Program friends who knew me and cared about me, to make any significant amends with

anything less than turning myself in. I was terrified. I would never suggest to another S.L.A.A. member that they should follow my example. I did not go to jail, but everything else happened. I lost my job and 2 subsequent opportunities to work. I surrendered my license to practice my profession. S.L.A.A. people shunned me. (I suppose they really, really, really didn't want what I had.) For myself I believe it saved my sex and love addiction sobriety. That was 22 years ago sometime in April (my new beginning at the First Step was February 2nd, 1988 when I clearly and finally ended the relationship. My career never recovered. Just for myself, I believe that I had to do it, and I have no regrets. If I am subject to arrest even now by revealing this to you all, knowing I could be found and would not hide the details from the authorities, I would go willingly, if not happily, with only a little less terror than I faced back then. I did pay substantial financial reparations at the time as well. The humility of having unfinished amends has been enough of a barrier for me regarding different kinds of wrongs to be a very strong barrier to acting out on my other or similar character defects as well.

I hope that in some way my experience can benefit others, to bring strength and courage, or humility in choosing another way that does not risk incarceration. The people who carry this kind of burden are already greatly punished. The promise is that we will find a new freedom and a new happiness. I believe whatever an individual chooses to do in recovery, done sincerely for spiritual reasons, should bring self-forgiveness, strengthen one's own bond with their own Higher Power, Higher Self, and the Fellowship, and bring to them all the gifts of sobriety and recovery. It is between the individual and God.

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In the state where I live, and possibly in some other states and countries, sponsors and therapists are legally required to report this information to the police. So perhaps these should not be used as examples.

I would advise, but do not know how to put this into clear writing for this project, that the person seek someone who does not have legal responsibility to protect. Maybe go to another town some distance away and go into a Catholic Church confessional and tell a priest who does not see you. Use a made up name and change some identifying details so that you could not be tracked down even if someone had the information and wanted to.

If turning one's self into the police is part of Step 9, I think that is more appropriate than revealing secrets of the past which are not current problems. So Step 9 activity might be treated differently than Step 5.

Also, it might be advisable to do this part of Step 4 only in secret in the mind and not write it down as someone might find it if it is written down.

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This is a difficult issue for all those concerned! Of course, if the individual sharing that information is talking about "in the past", and adds that acting out is no longer a choice, it seems easier. But members in general in S.L.A.A. need to be aware that the promise of anonymity is not a promise from one's attorney or a priest or a doctor who have some legal right to not contact the police. Even in those professions, however, there is a legal duty to warn those who may be at risk of direct harm. If I hear someone share this kind of thing at a meeting, I generally will not know enough to prevent harm, because I will not know the person's last name, where they work specifically, or how to get the police involved except by setting up some kind of sting operation, or surveillance of the meeting, which violates everyone's anonymity.

It is my belief that when someone starts to share information about acting out that puts their social well-being at this kind of risk, the chair or someone else at the meeting should stop the individual, remind them that details of acting out need to be shared with a sponsor or a therapist, not in a general meeting, where some people may be obligated by law to report ongoing criminal activity. Anonymity should never be used as a way to avoid meeting honestly the consequences of our addiction. Equally important is that those S.L.A.A. members as a group need to be focused on our primary purpose, helping each other live in recovery from our addictions.

I was in a similar position once several years ago, and the man revealed at a meeting that he had stopped preying on children in general, that he now had just one young teen "lover" whose parents knew about the arrangement, and who accepted generous gifts of money and goods to look the other way. I spoke up immediately afterward, saying that he must understand that the promise of privacy in meetings does not mean we can confess crimes and then continue them. I said that I assumed that by sharing this disturbing information at a meeting he was asking for help to stop, and offered to go with him to the police or to a mental health professional to get this acting out stopped. I added that while I respected his effort in coming to S.L.A.A., that in my own opinion, acceptance did not include enabling his behavior, so harmful to the child involved, to continue. If he did not take immediate action to report and/or stop his own behavior, that I would feel morally and legally responsible for reporting the danger to this child to some authority.

I don't know if this was an appropriate response or not. I have had to tell others I was sponsoring at times not to give me details of a crime they had committed unless they were now willing to turn themselves in for it. I never saw that man at a meeting again, but he could easily have avoided running into me by attending a men's meeting. I remain troubled by the incident, and concerned about how we should respond as a Fellowship to this kind of issue.

I don't claim to speak for anyone but myself, but I do believe there is one requirement for S.L.A.A. membership, and that is a desire to stop acting out on our addictions. I must

not use the meetings to get forgiveness from others without the pain of direct amends, nor to intrigue with other S.L.A.A. members in ways that seem to give me 'permission' to continue acting out.

I committed a grave ethical mistake in sexual behavior seven years into S.L.A.A. recovery, for which I could have been arrested in several states (not the one where it happened). My sponsor told me in no uncertain terms to stop the behavior and report myself to the appropriate authorities. He could not report me, because he did not know where I worked, or how to identify the details of the act. Even though I took some reasonable action, I was not ready to go all the way in amends until almost 3 years later. Ultimately I did report myself, paid reparations to the other person involved, and put on record my confession and willingness to go to jail if I had to, and enlarged my commitment to sobriety. In my experience, the clarity of my sponsor's response is one we need to have as a Fellowship for those who are currently breaking the law. His clarity is why I believe I am sober today, and enormously grateful to be so.

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Where I live we started to wake up to this type of abuse during the court case against a pedophile priest in 1994. [99 % of the people did not know the word pedophile - although it was going on. And the idea of a priest doing such things was inconceivable]. Our Intergroup had to respond to this issue, as there was a government proposal, in 1996, that such abuse would need to be reported, to the appropriate authorities, by counselors and other such groups. In fact, the proposed law mandating the reporting of such behavior was not passed.

However, our Intergroup, having discussed the problem over a number of business meetings, did pass a resolution advising our groups on a possible response to future sharing of such behavior. We obtained a resolution, which was sent to us by a contact from California, who was also in another S-fellowship. We adopted this for the sake of the abused and the abuser, on the one hand, and our own group and individual safety on the other hand.

As I understand it, our resolution requires the group to act on behalf of the members. This safeguards the individual members.

As I understand it, our resolution requires the abuser to do the steps and therefore, in Step 9, make amends, even if that requires him/her to submit to handing him/herself to the police.

As I understand it, our resolution requires the group to report the individual to the authorities if the person does not do the steps, culminating in making amends.

As I understand it, our resolution intends to help the abuser to change his/her behavior. {We should not stand idly by after such a share}.

As I understand it, our resolution, if it brings about a change in behavior, would reduce the possibility of the person recidivating even if the person has been incarcerated.

I hope this is of some help in this matter, which is a difficult area in which to balance anonymity with responsibility.

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This is probably the most difficult question which we have come upon, because it deals with not only the legal and moral implications but also the traditions of anonymity.

I believe that it is important that we not attempt to hide behind Traditions 11 and 12 to claim that we could not report a person who is committing illegal acts or is contemplating doing something illegal. I believe that Tradition 11 is in place so that we do not seek publicity from the media and to keep the identity of our fellow members unknown from the public. Tradition 12 tells us that we are to place principles before personalities; that is, we are all equal in S.L.A.A. regardless of our position in the community or in the event that a member is well known in his/her profession.

I have been in a situation like the one described in the question and one of my sponsees came to me very troubled the next day because of fears for the small children who might be involved. He is a professional caregiver and is required to report any type of abuse to the authorities. He is also the father of two small children and as a father has fear regarding what someone might attempt to perpetrate on his children.

My advice to him was to first of all pray about it and ask for guidance as to how he should proceed and then the next day if he felt that he was directed to make a report that he should do what he needed to do. I also suggested that most police departments have anonymous tip lines where you do not have to leave your name or number, which would not only protect him but the group where such a situation was shared.

We can also have the situation where a member who has been incarcerated as the direct result of their acting our might share in a general way regarding their past actions. In those cases, the debt to society has been paid and the member is practicing honesty in their sharing. This is a different situation from the person who is actively practicing their addiction, and although it might be uncomfortable to hear, sometimes it is necessary for us to hear just how far down the addiction can take us if left unchecked.

I would recommend that everyone seek their Higher Power regarding clarity in these and all other situations and then seek that guidance. I recognize that there are those who are bound by a higher ethic than others among us and they have to be true to those requirements.

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*Summary Editor's Note:*

*In July, 2003 the BOT approved a statement regarding Anonymity, the Law and S.L.A.A. and distributed it at the ABM that year. The entire document is available on the FWS*

website. I am attaching an excerpt from that document which is read at some meetings.

#### THE FOUNDATION OF ANONYMITY

*"Anonymity is the foundation of our program. It is essential if we are to continue the 12 Step work of S.L.A.A. However, even this basic principle may give way to the pressure of individual consciences or legal requirements. Therefore we, the members of this S.L.A.A. meeting, make clear to newcomers and old timers alike that speaking of any potentially illegal activity, especially relating to minors, endangers the speaker and lays a burden of knowledge on others that they might not be willing to assume. When it is necessary to speak of such activities, whether they are happening now or only contemplated, sharing with our sponsors is valuable and important, but we must acknowledge that sponsorship is not a legally protected relationship."*

What do you think?

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## NEWS STATION INQUIRY

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 Question: Recently our Intergroup received an inquiry from a news station doing a story on teenage sex addiction on the Internet. We returned a call to the reporter, but never heard back. Since the issue of teenage sex addiction affects SLAA as a whole, we wanted to inquire with the steps and tradition committee on how we might handle this issue if it comes up again. There are a host of legal issues to consider when dealing with minors and sex and we are not clear on how to handle them. Any information you might be able to provide would be great.  
 .....

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Tradition 5: Each group has but one primary purpose to carry the message to sex and love addicts who still suffer.....The internet is a very powerful medium and I suspect it serves to lure unsuspecting computer users into compulsive, addictive or obsessive practices on the internet. Tradition 4: Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or SLAA as a whole .....Any individual that responds to the inquiry from the news station would be sharing their individual experience strength and hope and would need to make sure to communicate that their opinions do not represent SLAA as a whole. I think the diversity with our program makes it difficult to respond to one specific symptom associated with Sex and love addicts. It could potentially inhibit sex and love addicts with different obsessive, compulsive and or addictive characteristics from recognizing a commonality that could support their recovery. Add to that the fact that the news station would be in control of what is broadcast. This could skew the public's perception of SLAA as a whole. Tradition 11: Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, TV, film, and other public media. We need guard with special care the anonymity of all SLAA members.....The individual responding to the news station needs to guard with special care the communication to ensure it is understood that they do not represent SLAA as a whole. The SLAA rep can share their experience, strength and hope but would need to be clear that no one person governs. And of course the SLAA contact would need to protect all other SLAA member's anonymity. Tradition 9: SLAA ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to who they serve.....our fellowship could help so many more sufferers of SLAA, maybe as a fellowship we should have a service board or committee that can represent the fellowship as a whole for press release purposes.

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Additionally, it might be suggested that the Intergroup contact the BPRC (Board Public Relations Committee) for further guidance. You might also consult the 12 Suggested Guidelines for Dealing with the Media, which is posted on the FWS website.

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What do you think?



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## SOBRIETY REQUIREMENTS FOR SERVICE

**Editors note; The CSTC was asked to comment on the subject of Sobriety Requirements. The responses have been edited for sake of anonymity.**

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My experience with other fellowships and with S.L.A.A intergroup here in my area is that anyone is welcome to be on a committee/intergroup but there were sobriety requirements to hold a position or to be an officer. This always seemed to work out well in that everyone was welcomed to be a part of but we also took care of ourselves by having certain requirements if someone wanted to hold a position.

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I have some mixed feelings regarding sobriety requirements. While we read in the Preamble that the only requirement for S.L.A.A. membership is the desire to stop living out a pattern of sex and love addiction, we read in the Conference Service Manual that it is suggested that in order to serve as a delegate a member should have a period of six months sobriety. Since many of the committee members are or have been delegates, I would assume that they would already have at least that much sobriety. However, there are many good people who struggle daily with their sobriety who could be valuable committee members. Therefore, although I would prefer that committee members have some time sober, I would hate to refuse anyone the opportunity to serve. Doing service could very easily lead to greater sobriety. I do feel, however, that if a person were to become very active in their bottom-line behaviors that they should report that to the committee so that they could discuss whether or not they could continue to serve in an active way or whether it would be best for them to step aside for a time and work on their recovery.

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Anyone who was at the International Recovery Convention a few years ago and heard me speak (or has listened to the CD) knows that I had a slip just prior to the ABM and IRC. I went to both my Intergroup since I was a delegate and the IRC planning committee since I was scheduled to be the keynote speaker. My Intergroup came back with what I thought was an excellent response. They asked what I thought I needed to do for my recovery. Would it help to step

back and have time to work on my recovery or would it help me to stay involved. They supported me either way.

I needed to stay involved. I was ready to run. I already had so much shame coming up over the event; I was seriously considering leaving the program. I discussed it privately with a member of our Intergroup who has many, many sober years with the program. He told me, "Leaving the program isn't the answer. We need people like you to remind us all that our next slip could be just around the corner. What happened to you could happen to anyone. We are never cured from this disease. We sometimes lose sight of that." The IRC planning committee was equally supportive.

Obviously, I stayed in the program and continued my service work. In my case, service helps to keep me sober... one day at a time. I talked to some members of the CSTC committee who were active at that time and they told me they supported me in my wish to continue to serve. For me, I'm glad we don't have sobriety requirements for service work and hope we never do. I think the requirements have the potential to do far more harm than good.

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For the seven years I have been doing service on Conference committees there has never, to my knowledge, been any sobriety requirements.

I have experienced horrendous lapses and failures by trusted servants who were sober in their self defined SLAA sobriety. My experience is that quality performance does not correlate with SLAA sobriety.

I question the value of sobriety requirements for officers. My experience is that in Intergroup, these have resulted in lapses of service when a capable trusted servant, resigned without notice and without mentoring a replacement, and the whole Intergroup and all fellowship members of the area suffered from the chaos and problems that resulted. The S.L.A.A. "slip" that occurred only once one evening, significantly affected lots of people. My thought is that if the person needed time away from service for their own recovery, they could perhaps have at least mentored their replacement. I think lots of people need to take time off from service, and I have no problem with people stepping down part way through a year. Hopefully they can still mentor their replacement.

My fear is that any sobriety requirements on Conference Committees, would reduce continuity, institutional memory, and service to the fellowship, rather than solve or prevent any problems.

I think sobriety requirements on Conference committees would do more harm than good to both the individual member, who would have to discontinue

service, which is part of recovery, and the fellowship as a whole which benefits from the service.

Trusted servants have to step down from service for a large variety of reasons including illness of a family member. To add sobriety requirements to this list would, I think be harmful to everyone.

Also, I think any sobriety requirements would deter people from volunteering to do service on Conference committees, Subcommittees, Writing Groups, Task Forces, and Working Groups. Any sobriety requirements for any positions, would add confusion and chaos to the already formidable Conference level service structure.

My Intergroup changed some of its officer requirements from sobriety time to time in program.

Strugglers need the opportunity to be of service without the stigma of being a struggler. We also need new literature that will be helpful to strugglers. We need their participation to help us write.

Do we want to have a "Scarlet Letter" for strugglers in S.L.A.A.?

I think delegates and board members are a separate issue from Conference Committees.

What do you think?

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## PRIVACY AND ANONYMITY

Our Intergroup has been considering putting an information packet together to distribute to the criminal justice system. We are trying to determine if leaving literature and contact information at the courthouses is in keeping with the Traditions. There has been some concern expressed about privacy issues. We would be grateful for your input.

.....  
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This outreach is not a violation of Tradition 11 regarding anonymity, because it does not identify individual members, and is information about, not promotion of SLAA. "An Introduction to SLAA" was written specifically for this kind of use. This outreach activity is a fine example of a group fulfilling Tradition 5 - our primary purpose is to carry our message to those who still suffer.

The privacy issue, and the reality of today's world, suggests that it is wise to have the contact information other than any individual's phone number, e-mail, or other address. If the local group or intergroup does not have a post office box, answering service or web-site, a special e-mail identity created specifically for contact purposes can be used. Another inexpensive contact point can be a post office box. Especially in prison outreach, safety practices protect the individuals in the outreach effort from unpleasant experiences and the inmates from the temptation to act out with intrigue

.....  
My understanding is that this outreach works one way but not the other. It is ok for us to distribute informational packets to treatment centers, therapists, and the criminal justice system. However, it is not ok for us to promote these facilities within our meetings. The way I understand it is that it is important, even necessary for us to carry the message (Tradition 5) by attempting to educate others about our recovery fellowship. AA and Al-Anon even have commercials now for educational purposes. An informational packet at the criminal justice system would definitely come under the heading of attempting to educate others....and carrying the message. I would hope this could be done in a way that does not single out certain individuals but rather allows access of information of numerous recovery programs to all who might be interested. If this is not the case, perhaps individuals with this issue could be given packets by probation officers or case workers.

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In terms of outreach, putting together information for the justice system is a commendable thing to do. We realize that while all addicts are not offenders and all

offenders are not addicts, there are a great many people in the justice system who would qualify as addicts.

In my area we did this a few years ago by sending out a letter to the county probation departments as well as to the parole authority to make them aware of our services. In order that we might keep the anonymity of the members of the Fellowship, we signed the letters as the Outreach Committee of (name omitted) Intergroup. We also included the phone number to our information line as well as our web address for their convenience. We also included the pamphlet "For the Professional".

Because IDs are commonly checked as we enter government buildings, it would be difficult to use a pseudonym to go in personally to deliver the information. This could then draw unwanted attention to the individual and to the program as a whole. As a guide the Intergroup could refer to the pamphlet of the 12 Guidelines for Dealing with the Media and adapt the suggestions to this outreach.

I do not believe that this would be a violation of any of the Traditions regarding anonymity.

What do you think?

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## COMBINING S.L.A.A. LITERATURE WITH RELIGION BASED SPIRITUAL PROGRAM LITERATURE

**Q –I recently received an email announcing a new telephone meeting proposed to combine S.L.A.A. literature with literature of a religion based spiritual program. I love the course which was listed, but don't feel that the appropriate place to bring it is as an S.L.A.A. meeting. I'm looking for guidance here. Can you give me some feedback on the best way to approach this with the meeting coordinator? We want to discuss the issue at the next telemeeting intergroup meeting.**

*(Editor's note: the name of the spiritual program is not listed for sake of anonymity and knowing that similar questions might come in at a future date we make every attempt to keep the inquiry anonymous. Also, an instructor with that program has referred people to S.L.A.A.)*

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The Conference Service Manual contains two motions that were approved by the Conference at ABMs. I think one was in 2002 and one in 2004. My memory is that they allow the use of outside literature in S.L.A.A. meetings if it is clearly labeled and presented as outside literature and not misrepresented as S.L.A.A. Conference Approved Literature.

Tradition 4 tells us that each group is autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or S.L.A.A. as a whole. While an individual group may decide for themselves what format of meeting that they might hold and what local practices they might observe, there seems to be a problem in that this seems to be an attempt to meld the practices and teachings. This, to me presents a problem since it seems to be an attempt to alter the message which is presented in the Basic Text. Any group may decide to use outside literature in their meetings; however, it needs to always be noted that this outside literature is not Conference Approved Literature.

The course could be a direct conflict with the thoughts of Tradition 3, "...may call themselves an S.L.A.A. group, provided that as a group they have no other affiliation." While individual members of any meeting might decide together to participate in such

a course, it should definitely be done in an outside setting so that those members desiring recovery from their sex and love addictions might be able to get the help that they need from the sharing of the experience, strength and hope of S.L.A.A. message rather than being distracted by another school of thought.

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Tradition 6 states "An S.L.A.A. group or S.L.A.A. as a whole ought never to endorse, finance or lend the S.L.A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise..." The use of this course would seem to signify an endorsement of the course. This would set a very dangerous precedent for S.L.A.A. in that it would seem to bind us to an unrelated organization.

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According to the information which I was able to scan through by doing a quick online search of this course, it would seem to be a controversial school of thought which would violate Tradition 10; "...the S.L.A.A. name ought never to be drawn into public controversy."

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If such an announcement was distributed to members of either on-line or phone meetings who have listed their contact information or if it was distributed from member to member within people's personal contacts, then there should be no problem with such an announcement. However, if it was distributed to a confidential list of delegates and committee members, it would be a violation of the anonymity Traditions 11 and 12.

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What do you think?

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## Copyrighted LITERATURE

**What Tradition supports using a copyright to ban or limit the excerpting and adapting of Conference Approved Materials as a means of reaching the still suffering addict, when these materials were created by the Fellowship, for the Fellowship?**

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This issue is governed by the Fourth Tradition, which states that each group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting other groups or S.L.A.A. as a whole. By publishing anything but brief excerpts from our literature, especially the content of an entire pamphlet or chapter of the Basic Text, the income to Fellowship Wide Services is jeopardized. The price of pamphlets supports the printing of pamphlets and other literature, which are important tools for carrying the message of recovery of S.L.A.A. to others. It would be much better for the local website to provide a link or the web address of FWS for information on specific pieces of literature or suggest that inquirers attend a meeting to obtain literature.

At this time contributions from the Fellowship fall far short of the cash needed to keep the FWS office staffed and open. Therefore, sale of literature, tapes and CDs, chips, etc are necessary to meet this shortfall. If our copyrighted literature is available at no cost then the FWS office would have to cut even more services and it would not be long before there would be no FWS office at all. So, this is my roundabout way to say that the Traditions at issue here are; Tradition One, "Our common welfare should come first. Personal recovery depends upon S.L.A.A. unity." Tradition Seven, "Every S.L.A.A. group (and this includes FWS) and the Fellowship as a whole, ought to be fully self-supporting declining outside contributions."

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Tradition 1 – "Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon S.L.A.A. unity." In this case the group is not looking out for the common welfare of the Program, since they are giving away that which others of us spend our Tradition 7 funds to purchase for distribution at meetings. It would seem that this would circumvent one of the means of raising operating funds for FWS. This would have a negative effect on the program since the funds would not be available to provide services to the Fellowship and the still suffering sex and love addict. Tradition 7 would also be compromised since we are expected be fully self-supporting. Tradition 6 could also

come into play with this situation since if a group or and Intergroup were to offer the pamphlets via the internet, then we open the door for treatment facilities to also download and offer the pamphlets through their websites, which could appear to be an endorsement or affiliation. I can see a way where this could be done in a much more acceptable manner if the Intergroup in question were to purchase pamphlets and make them available by mail to the prospective member upon request, and then there would seem to be no violation of any Tradition. This would be upheld in Traditions, 4, 5 and 11. In this case the Intergroup or individual group would be choosing an alternate method of getting the message of Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous out to the still suffering addict.

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To me the Fifth Tradition states that we should, whenever possible, spread the message of 12 Step recoveries to those who still suffer so that there should be as little obstruction between the addict and the message of recovery. In my area, we give the pamphlets freely to anyone who wishes to have one; however the groups pay for them and comply with the copyright owned by FWS. We cannot accept the cost of printing and shipping of the pamphlets as a gift from outside the Fellowship. FWS is dependent on contributions from the membership and reimbursement of costs for pamphlets. Therefore, it is reasonable to me that there are restrictions in the use of Conference approved literature. No one speaks for S.L.A.A; therefore, the copyright is not to restrict ideas. It is intended to avoid controversy and endorsement of anything outside of S.L.A.A. recovery. Using copyrighted material as the Fellowship's opinion or endorsement of anything would put us at risk of controversy and should be avoided. The Fourth Tradition is also intended to allow anyone or group to act autonomously without implying the endorsement of FWS or the Fellowship as a whole.

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The part that keeps getting in the way for me is if it's a "free" pamphlet, FWS isn't losing money.

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If this discussion is for the free pamphlets only, our offer is that the Intergroup put a link to the S.L.A.A. FWS website pages, where the free pamphlets are offered. The purpose for this is to control our copyrighted literature. We are not trying to limit use of the free pamphlets, we are only trying to limit where this copyrighted material is available. If changes to the free pamphlets are needed for whatever reason we can make those changes at a single location.

What do you think?

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A.A. model of recovery constitutes a matter affecting other groups or S.L.A.A. as a whole, or presents a "problem of money, property or prestige." It may be a precedent that warrants further consideration at a later date, but cannot be said at present to be clearly in violation of Traditions 4 or 6.

I realize that in certain areas of the country, where there are few meetings of any of the S-Fellowships, that there are Service Groups consisting of members of several S-Programs as well as Co-S Programs, where they combine their resources in order to have a web presence and where they come together for retreats and other sharing days. This seems to work well for them; however, there seems to be blurring of the differences between the various S-Fellowships. They each meet separately, but since a great number of members from each Fellowship attend meetings with other fellowships, there is the tendency to adopt some varying viewpoints regarding recovery and defining sobriety and what should be done.

I do see a violation of Tradition 3, "...any two or more persons gathering together for mutual aid in recovering from sex and love addictions may call themselves an S.L.A.A. group, provided that as a group they have no other affiliation." This statement from Tradition 3 tells me that we may not be yoked together with other groups or organizations (religious or secular) as we come together for recovery. Such an affiliation seems to appear to be an endorsement of the other fellowship or organization. This could lead to having a mega-group which could become so large so as to violate Tradition 6, "...lest problems of money, property or prestige divert us from our primary purpose." Until the Inter-fellowship Committees of all fellowships come together and would come to some kind of unity statement and all the Conferences or Service Organizations approved the unity, I believe that we are all better served by staying independent and carrying on as we have for the past 30 years.

I see no reason to limit the recovery of members who live in smaller communities if they want to sell and study the literature of more than one S-Fellowship in the same weekly meeting. Why rent two meeting sites on different days for one small group of people and sell literature from only one fellowship at one meeting and the other fellowship at the other meeting? Seems to me that selling literature from both fellowships, and even more than two fellowships at the same meeting, is an efficient and appropriate way to carry the message to the addicts who still suffer. With autonomy, flexibility and support, rather than interference, reaching out to the sex addicts who still suffer can be increased.

Today, it really seems that we have much to learn from each other and cooperation is quite different than "merging". I would enthusiastically support having joint conferences with meetings led by members of all fellowships. That cooperation would not violate the Traditions in any way, in my opinion.

It does bother me that there is a meeting that calls itself S.L.A.A. and another organization at the same meeting. The Tradition that any group can call itself an S.L.A.A. group as long as it has NO OTHER affiliation in addition to S.L.A.A. keeps coming to mind. Every group is autonomous and can use whatever literature it wants.

A Group can send FWS any contribution it wants as long as it is less than the annual maximum contribution. We can define our own bottom lines. Differences of opinion are irrelevant. But being aligned with 2 groups simultaneously is not consistent with my understanding of the S.L.A.A. Traditions.

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What do you think?

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## DRESS CODE

**Q. At our last group conscience, members raised the issue of being triggered at meetings when some members dressed in attire that they would see as being inappropriate. We were wondering if you have any guidance on this sensitive matter.**

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I guess the Tradition that comes to mind for me is Tradition 4 "...each group is autonomous..." It would make sense to me to discuss it in group conscience and if the group is so led by their Higher Power, decide on a sentence or two to be included in the script that would suggest that non-provocative clothing at meetings is appreciated.

We had this problem some time ago at some of our meetings. We found it best to talk to the member's sponsor. If there is no sponsor, then to a program friend, if no program friends, then someone of the same sex or gender preference. We should ask this "safe" person to take the member aside and talk about this manner of dress which proved problematic for some members of the group and would this person mind terribly dressing in a more appropriate manner for S.L.A.A. meetings.

The Traditions state clearly that the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop acting out on our addiction, but as was pointed out, the first Tradition on unity is also relevant. If someone's dress is acutely uncomfortable for others, it can distract from and affect the unity of the group. I do know groups that include a statement that says something like, "Please respect the needs of others in your use of perfumes, manner of dress and giving details of your patterns of acting out to avoid triggering others." I have privately cautioned another woman at times about wearing skirts that were very short or sweaters that seemed provocative, and in general, I think the private approach is best, because the message bearer can also be sensitive to the individual so she or he does not feel embarrassed or rejected.

I can see that there is a Tradition 1 issue here, "Our common welfare should come first...". The reason is very simply that if a member, man or woman, comes to a meeting dressed in a provocative manner; that is a threat to the common welfare of each group member. This can be a great trigger to many of us.

Also, Tradition 4 is important in this situation. It is up to the group to decide in a Group Conscience meeting whether or not a suggested dress code is appropriate for that particular meeting. Including a short statement regarding clothing, scents, etc is one way to handle the problem should the group decide to do this. I like the idea of having a seasoned member of the same sex (preferably the sponsor of the member) approach the member to let them know that their manner of dress might be triggering to some in the room.

Some might argue that this is not a requirement for membership because of the statement of Tradition 3, "The only requirement for membership is the desire to stop living out a pattern of sex and love addiction." So, for obvious reasons we cannot dictate, but we can suggest. If such a situation cannot be remedied easily, it might be necessary for those who feel triggered to move on to a different meeting or begin a new meeting where they can feel safe.

I have found that meeting around a table, instead of a circle of chairs, to be preferable in this type of situation, since the table does provide for some cover. It can also be necessary to move to a different part of the circle where the view is less noticeable.

My opinion is that this would be a Tradition 10 question. Another's attire is an outside issue. If I am not triggered by another's actions, it is my response that this is an outside issue and I need to respond as soberly as I can with God's help. Personally, I sit in a meeting where I am not triggered by another addict and I try not to get sucked into other's acting out behavior. Tradition 4 states that any group can do whatever is Group Conscience. It is important that everyone feels safe. In a meeting, if the Group Conscience is to have a dress code that is the group's right. However, that there are no S.L.A.A. police trying to enforce any rule is always a problem. Anyone who is willing to stop addictive behavior is welcome in S.L.A.A.

What do you think?

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SCREENING NEWCOMERS

**Q – What about an Intergroup using a phone line rather than posting a meeting schedule of times and places to a website. This is done to avoid or deter predators and/or the media. Is this a form of “screening” and, thus a violation of Tradition 3?**

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This seems to be a clear violation of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tradition, based on fear of the media and predators. The point is that we have seen many “predators” come into S.L.A.A. and recover. Media infiltration is extremely rare, and any group can vote to allow a member of the media in or not. The real result of “screening” or requiring someone to share part of their story in response to a question of “Why do you think you need this program?” is to discourage those awash in shame and secrecy to find recovery. Needless to say, there are a number of people who have entered, either with the intent of finding victims or pretending to be members in order to get a story, who have then admitted they really needed S.L.A.A. and became active, honest members later.

The other Traditions that are relevant, in my opinion, are Traditions 4 and 5. Tradition 4 allows any individual group or Intergroup to operate even in flagrant contradiction to the Traditions, if they choose to do so. As a Fellowship, we are responsible only to point out that the practice is not in the right spirit even if it is either labeled openly as screening or is any form of 12 Step work not characterized by the S.L.A.A. member sharing their own story, while requiring no disclosure from the prospective member,. Tradition 5 reinforces this idea by saying that “passing on this gift is our one aim” (Table of Contents, 12 & 12 of AA), and that this sobriety cannot be kept unless we give it away.

I see that there would probably be a violation of Tradition 4 if we were using the requirement that a potential member call an information number and be interviewed. Since the only requirement for membership is the desire to stop acting out, then there is no way that anyone can refuse us admission to a meeting. I have no right to question another’s motives for attending a meeting. The only requirement for S.L.A.A. membership is the desire to stop acting out in our addictive bottom line behavior. If someone feels that they need to be here; they do.

Tradition Four states that each group is autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or S.L.A.A. as a whole. How a group lets others know it exists and how to find it is completely at the discretion of a handful of members. It is completely understandable that this group would want to get some sobriety and experience before tackling these predators.

My idea is that this is a local meeting option and not dictated to or regulated by the Traditions or Intergroups. Tradition 1 talks about our common welfare. I do not think that this mandates every group meeting to cater to that which is most common and fail

to meet the special needs of an uncommon minority. I feel that Tradition 4 gives each individual meeting and group the right to choose to meet the needs of a special uncommon minority. Tradition 1 forbids someone from being turned away, because someone else is judging them as not a member of S.L.A.A. Tradition 4 allows individual meetings to establish special attendance criteria for members of the fellowship and accept only those members of the Fellowship who meet the criteria. If a local community has a problem, such as only offering meetings with special focus and narrow admissions policies, these are local problems that can be solved by starting general meetings for all members of the Fellowship. The problem cannot be solved by legislation of worldwide policies. And we do not have S.L.A.A. police to enforce worldwide policies. We make suggestions.

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Tradition 5 states that the primary purpose is to serve addicts who suffer. Tradition 4 gives the meeting or groups the autonomy to choose which suffering addict members of S.L.A.A. it wishes to serve. Tradition 5 prohibits a meeting or group from having a primary purpose other than carrying the message to suffering addicts. It does not specify which of the suffering addict members are primary above other suffering addict members of S.L.A.A. One meeting or group may wish to serve those members of S.L.A.A. who have uncommon safety issues. The primary purpose would still be carrying the message to a special unique portion of the addicts who still suffer. There would not be a primary purpose other than carrying the S.L.A.A. message to addicts who suffer.

.....  
I feel that any group can screen attendees to their group as long as they are not intended to exclude persons who wish to stop acting out. One's sexual preferences should not be a criterion for exclusion. However, screening for the "simply curious" or media seems quite consistent with the need to maintain anonymity and provide safety for the unity of the group.  
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What do you think?

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## MENTIONING MY SPONSOR'S NAME

**Q – Is mentioning our sponsor's name to other members, or telling a member the name of another member we had a conversation with breaking the Tradition of Anonymity? When I talk to my sponsor should I avoid mentioning other member's names?**

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We are not meant to be anonymous to each other. The Eleventh Tradition states it is at the level of press, radio, TV or film. However, there seems to be an element of shame and secrecy about who we really are. And it is this element that keeps many of us anonymous. To the men and women I have sponsored, and the men and women I attend meetings with, I make it clear that they have my permission to tell anyone that I am in this program and they are free to use my full name, my phone numbers and any other information they deem helpful to anyone. Some years ago I got a call from a man in another state who had been to some meetings where I live. He had moved twice since then. He was in trouble and really needed to talk to someone. Mine was the only last name he knew and he was able to contact me. We talked about his situation and I got him in contact with some local S.L.A.A. members.

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Regarding mentioning our sponsor's name to another member; I see no violation of Tradition 11. My reasoning is this; I am not ashamed of my sponsor and am proud to be associated with him. Also, someone might be talking with me about finding a sponsor and I can recommend my sponsor to that person. Of course, I have to realize that there might be some sponsors who would not wish to have their identity revealed for some reason known only to them. In the case my sponsor asked that I not reveal his name, I am bound by respect to follow his request. Regarding mentioning other member's names to m sponsor; I also find no violation in this case for the same reasons stated above. I just need to be careful not to share another's personal stuff.

Regarding telling a member the name of another member we had a conversation with; I also see no violation of the Tradition in this situation, provided that I do not divulge personal information which should be held in confidence. I have found myself in the situation where I am discussing a subject with another member and recall a conversation and mentioning the name of the other member, if I remember it. The person whose name I mention could perhaps have a deeper understanding of the subject and could possibly be of more help.

I do respect the wishes of any member who would prefer to be anonymous. I also have no objection to telling outsiders, on a need to know basis, of my participation in S.L.A.A. These others will have knowledge of the person I used to be and, I believe, should know about this side of my life. The violation of anonymity, as I see it would be to divulge my identity or the identity of other members to the press, TV, radio, film, internet or any

other form or public information. I do not look for other scenarios or try to read between the lines of the Tradition, I just read, believe and follow it as written.

.....  
If I am recommending my sponsor to another, I have to share his name. But if I am identifying a piece of advice as coming from my sponsor, I see no reason to give his specific name other than "my sponsor: My home group prefers to avoid specific names of places, people or things so that my message is as generic as possible so that others can relate. If I am spreading gossip, there is certainly no need to speak at all, and I especially need to avoid using names. Therefore, I recommend thinking before using specific names. I certainly recommend not using anonymity as a way to live in shame. I prefer to think of my anonymity as a way to stay humble rather than a way to cover up my shame.  
.....

Regarding this issue, I remember a sponsee who told me that she was careful never to tell her boyfriend my name. I asked her why. Her reply was very enlightening. She said there is a tendency to blame anything that he doesn't agree with in the relationship on the sponsor. So recovery is just easier if he doesn't have a specific target for his resentment. I hadn't thought about it from this angle before. It made sense. It is also easy for addicts (or anyone for that matter) to hear a name and transfer blame to that person. If names are kept out of the equation, then we are able to focus on principles and not personalities (Tradition 12).

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What do you think?

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FEMALE – MALE RELATIONSHIPS IN THE PROGRAM

Q – I am confused as an S.L.A.A. female relating to S.L.A.A. males. I was instructed by my sponsor to stick with the females and that seemed appropriate for the first few months, but after 16 months it actually feels imbalanced. I trust myself and I am willing to trust being in a relationship with my fellow male S.L.A.A. members. Are there S.L.A.A. Traditions that spell out how we can be in the best relationship with our fellow members based on gender differences? Is there a specific cut-off point? Is hugging inappropriate?

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I agree that early into recovery it is very appropriate to avoid one's trigger whether it is people, places or things. As one becomes more sober then one can decide if it is a bottom-line behavior to avoid contact with a certain segment of the population. That defines sobriety for me. Nor is dealing with those of the opposite sex the real world that one has to just accept and therefore we have no control over it. It needs to be left to our Higher Power.

In the chapter about relationships in the Basic Text, they talk about cleaning up one's house in order that we can invite others into our house. So for most of us in the program we hope to be able to share in healthy relationships. But it also says that there is something nice about a clean house that doesn't require us to share it with others. We define this as healthy solitude rather than unhealthy loneliness.

The Preamble talks about ignoring outside issues such as gender, sexual orientation, etc. So I believe it is very appropriate at some time to develop relationships with all people both inside and outside the rooms. We need to be aware of Thirteenth Stepping however. The 12 Traditions are how we relate to others and that includes both genders.

Specifically considering hugging, in home group, we ask before we hug. I have refused to hug when it made me uncomfortable but I try to make it clear to the other person that it's about me, not the other person. I am just not ready to hug at this moment.

.....  
If either of the two is in early recovery, there is a real danger there. And romantic relationships need to be avoided. But as recovery gets more solid, it may be time to start looking at others in the program as potential healthy partners...taking into account all the factors mentioned. I know of several couples who are both in the program and their success seems to be pretty solid.  
.....

From my experience most women wish to be around other women in the meetings. It is with them that they seem to relate and with them they can receive the most possible support. After some time has passed I usually see the women and men relating to one another in a healthy platonic manner as well as working together on committees or various local projects. That is good healthy recovery.

Unfortunately, I have witnessed a number of times when a male member will begin to pay too much attention to a woman newcomer so as to make her noticeably uncomfortable.

We are bound by Tradition 1 in seeking S.L.A.A. unity, Tradition 3 that the only requirement for membership is the desire to stop living out a pattern of sex and love addiction and Tradition 5 that our primary purpose is to carry the message to the still suffering addict.

A sponsor is wise to suggest that a newcomer of either sex refrain from trying to establish a relationship with a member of the opposite sex. With time, sobriety and growth, it is possible for women and men to have healthy relationships within S.L.A.A.

What do you think?

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SHARING REGARDING OUR OTHER ADDICTIONS

Q – What Tradition may help me interpret, understand or support needing to understand how to integrate sharing how various co-existing issues/addictions affect my recovery as a whole? For example, my drug and alcohol illness and recovery affects my love addiction and sexual anorexia and recovery. I know the Traditions make reference to “outside issues” and our “primary purpose.” When I am honest about the how, what, where and why of my recovery, is it safe to share my thoughts about these other issues? What are your Thoughts on how the Traditions apply here?

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The Traditions which come to mind are Tradition 4 “Each group should be autonomous...” and Tradition 5 “Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the sex and love addict who still suffers.” This is a question as to local custom or acceptability of sharing about other addictions within the meeting. In some meetings this is acceptable, but in others it is frowned upon. There are instances when the addictions are so intertwined as to make it difficult to separate the addictive actions of one addiction from those of other addictions. Most likely there is a core addiction which brought about the other addictions' which were used to numb or medicate feelings. My personal view on this is that when this is the case, other addictions and their relationship to sex and love addictions could be brought out to help others to better understand the interconnection of these various addictions. This certainly is an opportunity to carry the message since others may be struggling with these various issues.

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I think the Tradition that addresses this question is endorsing outside issues. I think that it is OK to mention other 12 Step Recovery in one's own share but it is not appropriate for S.L.A.A. as a whole to endorse or condemn any other entity. Certainly any group can set the rule that other addictions cannot be mentioned, but that cannot be S.L.A.A.'s stance according to Traditions 4 and 10. Personally, I agree that all my addictions are intertwined.

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Over the years I have let Tradition 5 guide me more and more. (Tradition 5; Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry the message to the sex and love addict who still suffers.) With that in mind, I consider the newcomer in the room. I want to make sure that what I share carries the message of S.L.A.A. first and foremost. I, like many others, have addictions in many other areas and I may mention them casually in my shares, but I try to keep in mind that if I talk about AA, Al-anon or DA (the list goes on) extensively this just muddies the water for the newcomer or relatively newcomer who is trying to figure out our program. This is not to say that I ignore those other issues. As a

wise person once told me, "take the message to the meetings and the mess to your sponsor." I have sponsors or other program friends in other 12 Step meetings that I can talk to, but when I'm in a meeting of sex and love addicts, I try to stick to the message of sex and love addiction...for myself and for the newcomers.

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S.L.A.A. is a fellowship that evolved from the principles and traditions of AA. The diversity within the rooms of other fellowships may seem less apparent than what I find in the rooms of S.L.A.A. It makes sense that other 12 step programs are mentioned more in our rooms than, perhaps, other fellowships because of our individual definition of sobriety. I think in order for each one of us to come out of isolation and our aloneness, we need to be able to share our experience, strength and hope from our highest level of integrities. That may mean mentioning recovery in other fellowships and it may mean speaking facts about other fellowships not exactly fitting our needs. One stark difference about our rooms is that members need to feel safe in the same way that our S.L.A.A. text book shares experience, strength and hope of the founder of our program; it seems that discipline used in the book to not be graphic. So I say anything should go as far as members feeling comfortable articulating the tools, programs and techniques they are using to move forward with living a recovered life. But maybe we could suggest that our meeting format encourage members to limit the background/history/graphic information associated with the support they are receiving outside our fellowship. And maybe could suggest that our meeting format articulate not promoting any other enterprises including other 12 Step fellowships since it breaches our Tradition of attraction not promotion.

What do you think?

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## GIVING MONEY TO A SPONSEE

**Q – Can the Steps and Traditions guide us on giving a sponsee (a large sum of money) when the sponsee is hungry, angry, lonely and tired?**

**The 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition is that we should do it on our own and not depend on the kindness of others. The 5<sup>th</sup> Tradition states that our primary purpose is to carry the message and what message are we carrying when a sponsor gives that sum of money to a sponsee? The 6<sup>th</sup> Tradition warns us to use money for influence or prestige. My memory of the AA stories is that sponsors routinely helped the sponsees with food, shelter and clothing if needed. In S.L.A.A. is that being supportive and friendly or co-dependent or rescuing?**

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If it is just between the sponsor and the sponsee, then it would appear, at least on the surface, to fall into the realms of Tradition 10 since it appears to be an outside issue. On the flip side, it could fall into the realms of Step 11 which would indicate that after prayer and meditation the sponsor felt this was God's will for him/her.  
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I don't think the Steps or Traditions speak to this question at all. If a sponsor, or anyone else in the Fellowship, wants to make a gift or loan to someone inside or outside the Fellowship, it is a personal matter. However the giver should be very clear about his/her motives in making this gift or loan, and a discussion with the giver's sponsor is certainly in order.

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In my opinion and based on my reading of the Traditions, the Traditions and Steps refer to individuals in relationship to themselves, among others within the Program, and between individuals and their relationship to the Program membership and groups. They simply do not apply to an individual helping out another member financially or on issues outside of how to apply the spiritual principles of the Program to everyday problems. The issue is basically an outside issue. I have concerns about the possibility that the loan WILL be perceived by the recipient or by others as coming from "SLAA practice." Especially, I am concerned that the recipient is hungry, angry, lonely and tired". What does money do to alleviate those things? Gifts are of time and caring, and in themselves alleviate loneliness. So does going to more meetings, staying late, coming early, sharing and talking with other members. All of THOSE things add to a person's self-esteem, not threaten it, as a loan or monetary gift would do. It is my opinion that the effect on the individual's relationship with the giver and with themselves, especially given the individual's less than solid poor spiritual condition is the most important issue. The gift may represent pity and pride in one's own financial circumstances rather than practice of the spiritual principles of the S.L.A.A. program.  
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What do you think?

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WHAT IS THE MESSAGE OF S.L.A.A.?

Is the message of S.L.A.A. which is mentioned in the 5<sup>th</sup> Tradition only about the 12 Steps or does it include principles of the organization as expressed in the preamble of sex and love addicts anonymous?

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I do not think any of the Traditions apply except Tradition 5. I think the most relevant reference here is to the 12<sup>th</sup> Step. It states "practice these principles (*of the Steps*) in all areas of our lives." The message is the spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps and the principles of the Traditions that are referenced in the Preamble.

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The message referred to in the Fifth Tradition is the message of the Twelfth Step. "Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps..." Our message is that the Steps bring about a spiritual awakening. The spiritual awakening means that we can "...do feel, and believe, that which we could not do before on (*our*) own unaided strength and resources alone."

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I found the information in Chapter 6 of the Basic Text. The Author points out that all we can do is to share our own personal experience and rely on guidance from our higher power that these individuals who need to hear this message would be led to us. The author reminds us that our mission is not to recruit others, but to remember the Eleventh Tradition of "attraction not promotion." (p.18, Para. 2)

I understand this to mean that any of the 12 Steps and/or the Preamble that have specifically been a part of our own experience, strength and hope are part of our S.L.A.A. message. To me, when we share the S.L.A.A. message, we share our pain, what our patterns looked like, what we had to do to get sober, and finally what we are doing to stay sober.

It is important, according to the author of our Basic Text, to be ready to admit that there is much we do not know. For example, we don't know where our recoveries are headed or whether another's patterns might actually qualify them as sex and love addicts. We don't know why others could behave a certain way and not be powerless, but we could not. It is necessary for us to be humble and admit that there is much we don't know. (p.119, para.2)

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I guess the S.L.A.A. message to me is my experience, strength and hope.

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In response to the question at hand, the message of S.L.A.A. is definitely the 12 Steps and how my life has changed as the result of working and living the 12 Steps. The 12 Steps are summed up quite neatly in the 5 major resources listed within the preamble; Sobriety, Sponsorship/Meetings, Steps, Service, Spirituality. The Preamble absolutely should be included in the message of the Program which we are carrying to the suffering addict.

What do you think?

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### SIDE CONVERSATIONS-

**Q – Is it a Tradition violation to continue talking for long periods of time while the ABM General Assembly is in session? This is regarding side conversations being ongoing as others are speaking (have the floor).**

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While the question which is before us is very important, I can find no violation of Tradition. I see this as an act of common courtesy to those who have the floor at a given time. I do feel for the persons who are seated next to and near those conversing and I notice that as time goes on, people seem to move away from the area where these are being held. I believe the conversations which are being held would be better held during breaks or before and after the general sessions and the comments regarding those conversations could be made at the appropriate time within the sessions when that subject is on the floor.

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When I am speaking at the ABM, I should be the only person speaking at that time. If I am speaking to another person while another delegate has the microphone, I am not paying attention to that speaker. The person I am speaking to can't hear the speaker either. It is respect and acceptance of this basic understanding that I define as my sobriety. I try to carry this message in every aspect of my life. To look away, interrupt or contradict is disrespectful. I prefer to listen, then digest and then respond to the speaker. The Tradition that I try to maintain at the ABM is to stay focused on the discussion at hand and be present to what is happening in the moment.

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Tradition one suggests that our common welfare is of utmost importance, that we are charged with putting the well being of all members before our individual issue of the moment. I think this Tradition speaks to side conversations at the ABM. Issues for Discussion (IFDs) and Motions are discussed because they affect the common welfare of the group first when we are discourteous and carry on conversations while business is in progress.

If we put the welfare of us all as our first priority, we are more likely to achieve unity. The discord that comes with distracting conversations works against unity and can actually become divisive. Many times controversial subjects are discussed at the Annual Business Meeting. There is already a tendency to take sides and argue against each other. A person who distracts others with side conversations makes unity even more difficult to achieve.

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What do you think?

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