

theJournal

Recovery Outreach Edition

Free of Charge

Sharing from the Heart

Characteristics of Sex and Love Addiction

1. Having few healthy boundaries, we become sexually involved with and/or emotionally attached to people without knowing them.
2. Fearing abandonment and loneliness, we stay in and return to painful, destructive relationships, concealing our dependency needs from ourselves and others, growing more isolated and alienated from friends and loved ones, ourselves, and God.
3. Fearing emotional and/or sexual deprivation, we compulsively pursue and involve ourselves in one relationship after another, sometimes having more than one sexual or emotional liaison at a time.
4. We confuse love with neediness, physical and sexual attraction, pity and/or the need to rescue or be rescued.
5. We feel empty and incomplete when we are alone. Even though we fear intimacy and commitment, we continually search for relationships and sexual contacts.
6. We sexualize stress, guilt, loneliness, anger, shame, fear and envy. We use sex or emotional dependence as substitutes for nurturing care, and support.
7. We use sex and emotional involvement to manipulate and control others.
8. We become immobilized or seriously distracted by romantic or sexual obsessions or fantasies.
9. We avoid responsibility for ourselves by attaching ourselves to people who are emotionally unavailable.
10. We stay enslaved to emotional dependency, romantic intrigue, or compulsive sexual activities.
11. To avoid feeling vulnerable, we may retreat from all intimate involvement, mistaking sexual and emotional anorexia for recovery.
12. We assign magical qualities to others. We idealize and pursue them, then blame them for not fulfilling our fantasies and expectations.

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S.L.A.A. Signs of Recovery

1. We seek to develop a daily relationship with a Higher Power, knowing that we are not alone in our efforts to heal ourselves from our addiction.
2. We are willing to be vulnerable because the capacity to trust has been restored to us by our faith in a Higher Power.
3. We surrender, one day at a time, our whole life strategy of, and our obsession with the pursuit of romantic and sexual intrigue and emotional dependency.
4. We learn to avoid situations that may put us at risk physically, morally, psychologically or spiritually.
5. We learn to accept and love ourselves, to take responsibility for our own lives, and to take care of our own needs before involving ourselves with others.
6. We become willing to ask for help, allowing ourselves to be vulnerable and learning to trust and accept others.
7. We allow ourselves to work through the pain of our low self-esteem and our fears of abandonment and responsibility. We learn to feel comfortable in solitude.
8. We begin to accept our imperfections and mistakes as part of being human, healing our shame and perfectionism while working on our character defects.
9. We begin to substitute honesty for self-destructive ways of expressing emotions and feelings.
10. We become honest in expressing who we are, developing true intimacy in our relationships with ourselves and others.
11. We learn to value sex as a by-product of sharing, commitment, trust and cooperation in a partnership.
12. We are restored to sanity, on a daily basis, by participating in the process of recovery.

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Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous Preamble

Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous is a Twelve Step, Twelve Tradition-oriented fellowship based on the model pioneered by Alcoholics Anonymous.

The only qualification for S.L.A.A. membership is a desire to stop living out a pattern of sex and love addiction. S.L.A.A. is supported entirely through contributions of its membership, and is free to all who need it.

To counter the destructive consequences of sex and love addiction we draw on five major resources:

1. **Sobriety.** Our willingness to stop acting out in our own personal bottom-line addictive behavior on a daily basis.
2. **Sponsorship/Meetings.** Our capacity to reach out for the supportive fellowship within S.L.A.A.
3. **Steps.** Our practice of the Twelve Step program of recovery to achieve sexual and emotional sobriety.
4. **Service.** Our giving back to the S.L.A.A. community what we continue to freely receive.
5. **Spirituality.** Our developing a relationship with a Power greater than ourselves, which can guide and sustain us in recovery.

As a fellowship S.L.A.A. has no opinion on outside issues and seeks no controversy. S.L.A.A. is not affiliated with any other organizations, movements, or causes, either religious or secular.

We are, however, united in a common focus: dealing with our addictive sexual and emotional behavior. We find a common denominator in our obsessive/compulsive patterns, which transcends any personal differences of sexual orientation or gender identity.

We need protect with special care the anonymity of every S.L.A.A. member. Additionally we try to avoid drawing undue attention to S.L.A.A. as a whole from the public media.

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The Twelve Steps of S.L.A.A.*

1. We admitted we were powerless over sex and love addiction - that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with a Power greater than ourselves, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to sex and love addicts, and to practice these principles in all areas of our lives.

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Letter From the Editor

Dear Reader:

Welcome to the special issue of *the Journal*.

For those not familiar with the program of Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous, we are a fellowship of men and women recovering from sex and love addiction. Our magazine, *the Journal*, is meant to be a meeting in print. We have compiled selections from various issues of the magazine to introduce our program of recovery.

Since sex and love addiction affects people from all walks of life in many different ways, we have included stories that deal with various aspects of the addiction. We hope that anyone who reads this free issue will walk away with a sense of how much the S.L.A.A. program has helped countless people recover from a seemingly hopeless state of mind.

As you can tell from the stories, we are not people who would normally mix. But we are brought together and support each other in meetings, outreach calls and fellowship.

If any of what is written in this issue speaks to you, as I hope it will, I urge you to find a meeting in your area and join us. S.L.A.A. saved my life as it did for many others. We hope to return the favor in part with service work such as this issue that you hold in your hands.

Thank you for reading. Be well.

Sincerely,

The Journal Managing Editor & the Conference Journal Committee

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Any opinions or beliefs expressed by individual members belongs to those members
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All Photos (except 1) in this issue were taken by *the Journal* Art Director

The Reality of Untreated Sex and Love Addiction

As a former primary counselor in a major treatment center, a former owner of a women’s shelter, and a Pastor, I have come to see the reality of untreated sex and love addiction.

It would be unethical for me to share patient, tenant, or member information with you, but I can still share with you a truthful story. The story invented below is a fictional synthesis of a thousand real stories, realistic in every respect. Situations and personalities have been combined in a way that no single real-life person is even remotely represented.

Beth is a cocaine addict. She entered treatment because her live-in boyfriend got into recovery and threatened to send her packing if she didn’t get clean.

Beth arrived angry, at him, at the treatment intake people, and at the world. She was quickly diagnosed with substance dependence, acute anxiety, and borderline traits. Her history of sexual promiscuity went unnoticed because she deliberately made a big deal about how faithful she had been to her current man.

During the course of her treatment, she would

frequently disappear into the bathroom for twenty minutes during trauma group.

The staff discussed it and decided that she was resisting treatment. The fact that she was visiting the ladies room to quietly masturbate went undetected as did her past promiscuity, so instead of treating sex and love addiction, the staff prohibited her from visiting the ladies room during group.

Beth abruptly entered withdrawal, which had not been her plan, so she responded by running away. She first found some cocaine and then held up in a hotel room with another relapsing addict. He introduced her to shooting cocaine during sex. No one could find her for a month.

When she emerged all mangled, she was not able to return to treatment because the insurance company was denying coverage.

Her boyfriend had lost interest in flying her home. Where she ended up after the emergency



room, only God knows. Lynn, the trauma specialist on staff had had a vague sense that Beth's acute anxiety had something to do with early abuse. She had quietly wondered what Beth had been doing in the bathroom. It never occurred to anyone on staff that Beth ran because of sexual withdrawal, not cocaine withdrawal.

Beth's borderline diagnosis explained the chaos and dependency in her personal relationships and her impulsive behavior, so love addiction (which insurance companies don't recognize as an addiction) was overlooked. Consequently, Beth disappeared like thousands of others, into a world of darkness.

If there was someone there, someone who had taken the time to start an S.L.A.A. meeting in the facility, if someone dropped by the treatment center to invite the staff to take the patients out to a nearby S.L.A.A. meeting, Beth might have found the help she needed.

Who is responsible for this travesty? I am.

— ANONYMOUS
(ISSUE #115)

If there was someone there, someone who had taken the time to start an S.L.A.A. meeting in the facility, if someone dropped by the treatment center to invite the staff to take the patients out to a nearby S.L.A.A. meeting, Beth might have found the help she needed.

Question of the Day

Every issue we ask one new question for S.L.A.A. members all around the world to share their experience, strength and hope. Here's a sample of responses that suggest how important the first impression of our recovery program is to newcomers.

“As a newcomer to S.L.A.A., what first really helped you?”

Everyone shared from the heart. I isolated, so it helped when people welcomed me.

— MANUEL, LOS ANGELES

I've been whistling around in my darkness, wondering when my husband or my boyfriend will find out about each other or my online romances. I went to an S.L.A.A. meeting and told my story. There were men and women there that seemed pretty happy and normal. They welcomed me and told me to come back. What a relief. I think I'll go back. All this secrecy is exhausting.

— TAMMY, TEXAS

When I was a newcomer, I knew about the pain of the disease all too well. I felt SO relieved to hear shares around the room that included a person's experience, strength and hope. I needed hope. It kept me coming back.

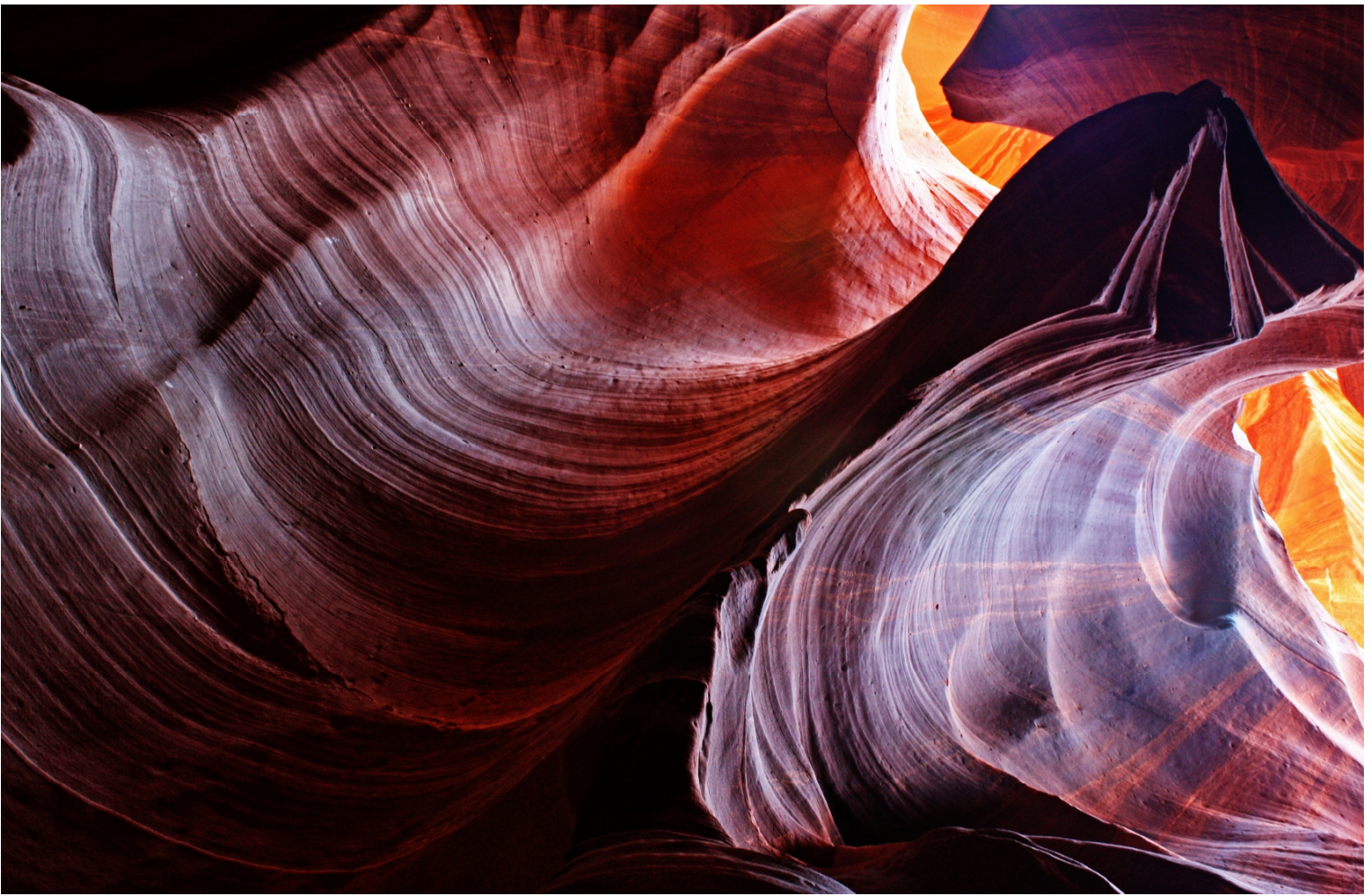
— AMY, NEW YORK

At the first meeting I ever attended, I was scared, lonely, suicidal, and convinced my life was over. I could hardly speak, and in fact throughout the entire meeting I could only croak out “pass” when it came my turn to share. But no one thought worse of me because of it, and I came home with one thing: hope. That made all the difference.

— JIM, FRESNO, CA

The first meeting I attended was very small. What helped the most was that everyone listened while I basically just spilled the beans. I was a wreck by the time I was done, crying and feeling hopeless. Immediately after the meeting all of the guys stayed and talked to me. They let me know they had been in the same spot and that the program had worked for them. Simple as that.

— GREG, BOISE ID



I Struggled to Define Myself as an Addict

Step One states, “*We admitted we were powerless over sex and love addiction - that our lives had become unmanageable.*” I have struggled with admitting that I am a sex and love addict. Mostly, I have struggled with the word, “addict.” It had, or I gave it, some pretty negative connotations.

To me, an addict is someone who is out of control, untrustworthy, and causes pain, lots of pain. So, why on earth would I want to identify myself as someone like that? My ego resisted. Eventually, Higher Power introduced a particular definition of addiction along my path. I then realized that I could take a loving position toward myself while still identifying myself as an addict. I’d like to share that definition in the hope that it may help someone else.

Addiction: Fear; running from self; not knowing how to love one’s self.

That pretty well described me; I had fear, I ran from myself, and I didn’t know how to love myself. I used people, places, and things to avoid being present to

myself. This definition provided me with a loving, objective perspective, a perspective that I hadn’t been able to find or give myself. Today, whenever I feel uncomfortable with identifying as an addict, I turn to this definition once more to ground myself and open my heart. I remind myself that in any given situation, I’ve done and still do the best I can with what I have, depending on where I am in my recovery.

As much as my ego might want me to believe that I am my dis-ease, I am much more. Slowly, with time, patience, willingness, working the Twelve Steps, going to meetings, meditating, praying, trusting, and doing service, I am better able to love and accept myself - addiction and all -and that has made all the difference.

Thank you S.L.A.A. for the new ways I’m learning and practicing to behave and think towards myself and others. Thank you, Higher Power, for my recovery.

— ANONYMOUS, CANADA
(ISSUE #121)



An Agnostic Finding Recovery Without God

I have been sober over 5 years. I am also sober 28 years in another fellowship— all without a belief in God.

When I was new to the program, being open-minded meant trying anything, including praying on my knees or while driving, at meetings and in private. I also tried my hand at the “turning it over to God” vocabulary. Ultimately, I knew I was kidding myself and I wouldn’t continue pretending to believe in God anymore than I would insist to a doubting youth that there absolutely is a Santa Claus and he lives at the North Pole.

I remember finding ways to fit

into discussion my story about how I would love to subscribe to an all-loving, all-powerful deity that cares about me, has a will for me and the power to protect and enlighten me. But for me, that would be insanity. And the program teaches me to seek the truth and shed unsound thinking. At times, I was speaking my truth and at times I was venting my Theist-resentment.

I know that what divides me and theists in the program is small compared to the common ground that binds us. Most of the time, I meditate during the time for prayer in meetings and apply the adage “Live and Let Live” during

the sharing portions of the meeting.

A value such as “turning my will and life over to the care of God” is indeed someone else’s value. I just don’t believe in God or heaven. There is much I don’t understand. I don’t willfully pump my own heart, for instance but I see much of the unknown as chaotic — not a divine mystery.

I joke that you might think the steps without God is a short cut, but actually it’s more work, more personal responsibility. But S.L.A.A. is for all of us. And you can belong without believing.

— JOE, TORONTO
(ISSUE #126)

Editor’s note: Publication of this share in the Journal is neither intended to espouse a particular belief nor an alternate interpretation of the steps. The intent is to fully share all stories of experience, strength, hope and recovery without bias to the path chosen.

Honesty: The Core of Recovery

One time at an S.L.A.A. meeting, an experienced member said, "Dishonesty lies at the center of every addiction." The converse is also true; honesty forms the very core of recovery. Without it, no recovery is possible. I have experienced this principle in my own plunge into sexual addiction and my slow upward crawl out of its depths.

The Fourth and Fifth Steps show us the necessity of being honest with ourselves and with at least one other human being,

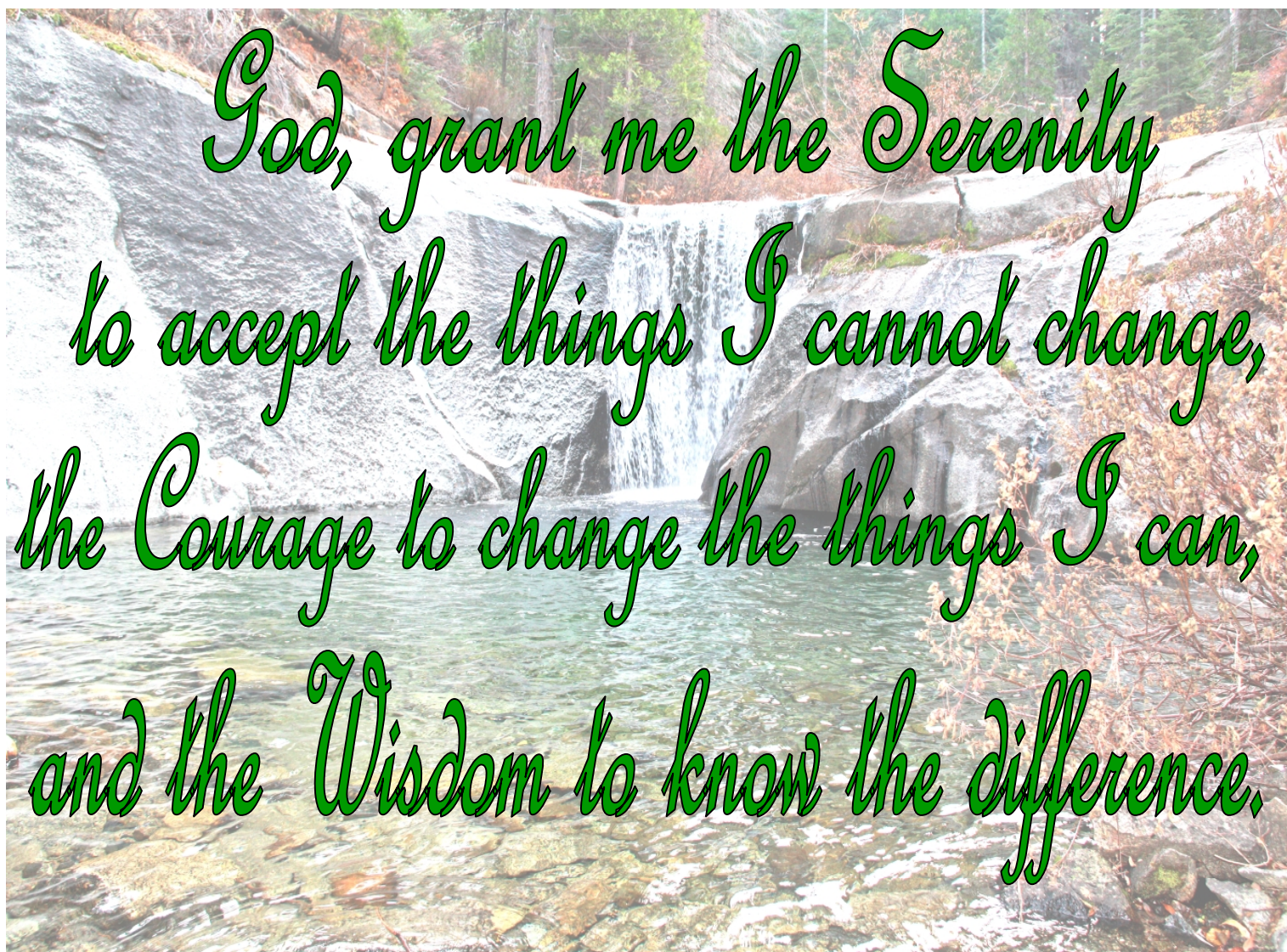
while the Tenth Step tells us that we need to continually be honest with ourselves and promptly admit when we are wrong.

As addicts, we try to hide the truth from our spouses, friends, and coworkers. After a devastating year in 2004, during which I concealed acting out from my fellow S.L.A.A. members, I finally got honest and began almost four years of abstinence from my bottom line. I thought I was cured, but I was not being completely honest with myself. Two years

later, what I thought to be an innocent emotional affair with a customer resulted in my second wife's attempted suicide, a terrible event that sobered me up for awhile.

I now know that I can only stay in recovery as long as I am honest with myself, my Higher Power, and others. It is painful, but it is necessary to face the truth of who I am and what I have done. There is no other way.

— JF, MISSOURI
(ISSUE #115)



Question of the Day

“How is isolation part of your sex and love addiction, and how do you find recovery?”

I can isolate anywhere, anytime; whether it's in a room alone, or in a crowded convention hall full of people. I can use my perfectionism to keep people away, any excuse to cut people out of my life. It's almost like a binge and purge cycle. After lengthy periods of isolation, I act out sexually. Then the shame sets in and I start isolating all over again.

— NICK, LOS ANGELES, CA

I am terrified of intimacy and so I isolate. I am the class clown, I have many friends and I am an extrovert but I am terrified I am not good enough for you, for the world, and for myself. I pretend and masquerade a self I think you want to see, that my parents told me was the right way to be, that is acceptable to society. But deep down I am ashamed of me, so I avoid real intimacy and letting the real me shine. I play second best.

I defer to others and then I resent you. I find recovery by accepting my self as is, and others as they are. I learn to listen. I learn not to run, to stay and participate, imperfect, broken and loved by God. I learn to be humble.

— ANN, LOS ANGELES, CA

Isolation is a major facet of my disease, a lot of unhealthy consequences result. I get lost in my own head too much. I lose practical perspective of what's happening in the world, I obsess and I get into self-pity. For recovery, I get in touch with my Higher Power, I think of things I can do for self-care and to be of service to others. I make a conscious effort to reach out to others.

— NATALIE, CHICAGO

Isolation (being anti-social) is a big part of my addiction. When I start to isolate, it is a warning sign that I am not taking care of myself which is a new top-line behavior for me. My isolation is a part of my not addressing my feelings or admitting my feelings and starts my slide down the slippery slope. I find recovery by calling program people and being honest about how I am feeling.

— STEPHEN, CONNECTICUT

Pornographic Anorexic

My bottom-line behaviors are one-night stands, pornography, and sex or intrigue with married women. Those in S.L.A.A. with experience told me that all my bottom lines are anorexic. At first, I did not know what they meant.

It makes sense to me now. What I liked about one-night stands was their brevity. One night, one of my trophy girls passed out drunk in my bed after we finished our sexual frenzy.

I stayed up reading almost until sunrise so that she would sleep it off enough so I could wake her and send her home, all to avoid sleeping next to her. It's not that she was unattractive. It's just that I'm an anorexic sex and love addict.

Pornography was the most anorexic. The only thing on the celluloid was disconnected sex. The anorexic part of me was comfortable with the horrible acting.

I did not want to know the characters. The best part was that no one ever had to see me physically or emotionally naked. I could get my addictive hit without ever being known. Zero intimacy. If that is not anorexic, then I don't know what is.

Married women were safe because I could cut it off at any time by declaring that adultery is wrong. Of course I had no such morality when I lured them in. I always pretended

that they somehow manipulated me into their web of marital dishonesty, but it was just a front for my emotional anorexia. It was the lie I told myself.

I just wanted the woman to go away. All this acting out was an avoidance of giving and receiving love. The old-timers in my home group were right. All my bottom-line behaviors are anorexic.

It's now possible for me to experience love. It started with my sponsor, then I was able to love my family with real emotion, and they could feel the difference. I used to just fake it. I love now in ways I didn't know were possible, and none of the people I love are one-night stands, porn stars, or the wives of others. I can even cuddle with my girlfriend without feeling like I need to wiggle free after a few minutes.

Thank God I'm free of the craziness. They tell me that one day at a time I can live life without falling into bottom-line behaviors, provided I maintain my spiritual condition. I just keep coming back to S.L.A.A. and follow the few simple suggestions that always work when we truly follow them.

— VLADIMIR, RUSSIA
(ISSUE #116)

It's now possible for me to experience love. It started with my sponsor, then I was able to love my family with real emotion, and they could feel the difference.





Isolated From

When I walked into anonymous programs fourteen years ago, I was isolated from God, myself and others.

I was isolated from God because I spent most of my life either believing He didn't exist or thinking He must hate me if He did exist. I suffered a lot of verbal, physical and sexual abuse as a teenager from a nine year relationship with a psychopath who ended up murdering my best friend. I thought if God did exist he abandoned me a long time ago.

Through the tools of S.L.A.A. (steps, meetings, praying to a God I didn't understand and meditation even when restless) I started to see that God did exist and He hadn't abandoned me — I had abandoned Him in favor of my boyfriend. I made my boyfriend my higher power for nine years. Most of the time it was because of fear (because he stalked me and threatened my life). But a lot of it was staying in a bad situation because I was addicted to him.

S.L.A.A. helped me break my isolation from God and taught me to maintain conscience contact with Him daily. My sponsor had me write out what I thought God was. At that time he was an evil man who sat up in the sky on his throne and played tricks on me. He was constantly ruining everything in my life and laughing at me. He was judging me and I was always coming up short. My sponsor had me tear up the sheet of paper that contained that writing, symbolically throwing that God out. Then I had to write what I wanted God to be no matter how outrageous my demands.

I wanted my own personal Santa Claus who gave me everything I wanted and loved me unconditionally. My sponsor told me my

When I think back to my loneliest moments, there was usually somebody sitting there next to me.

God, Myself and Others

Higher Power would love me unconditionally but that I would eventually get a more realistic God than Santa Claus. When I had a lightening bolt spiritual experience two years later I saw what she meant. I was insane, on my hands and knees crying and screaming and hyperventilating about a relationship with a married man. I called a fellow S.L.A.A. member and she said “Prayers are powerful. What do you want me to pray for?”

I said, “Pray for my obsession with (my qualifier) to be lifted.” She said the prayer with me over the phone. I felt a calm and sanity come over me. That was my S.L.A.A. sobriety date. I was a completely different person from that day until now, nine years later.

Today, I am convinced that God does exist and works in my life as long as I seek Him and ask for His plan. He has given me the gift of sobriety and a life beyond my wildest dreams because I am free from the insanity of my addict mind.

I saw a movie once about a woman who ended up standing in the dark all alone because she refused to accept God because she suffered tragedy and her life didn't go the way she wanted it to. I don't ever want to go back to that place and feel that level of isolation from God again.

I was isolated from myself because I didn't even know myself. I was so busy trying to be the perfect daughter, girlfriend and worker that I didn't know what I liked.

I fit my personality to the situation. If I was going to a party, I dressed up in tight clothing and played the party girl even if I was uncomfortable or cold or tired.

I didn't even have a hobby because I was too busy running around trying to make my boyfriend's lives easier.

I got good grades to impress my parents but hid that from my stoner friends. I was in honor society

and cheerleading and gymnastics but was also a chain-smoker who could drink anyone under the table. I was in so many groups that I never knew which one I truly belonged to.

When I joined S.L.A.A. I had to start being honest about who I was and what I thought. A lot of this was revealed in my Fourth and Fifth Steps. My sponsor made me get a hobby.

I chose bead work. Today I make beautiful beaded necklaces.

She also forced me to take myself out on dates. I had to start thinking about what I liked to do. In the past I always went along with what my boyfriend wanted to do, even if I was bored to tears. I took myself out to movies and restaurants and art galleries.

This came in handy when in my fourth year of S.L.A.A. meetings, I started dating a guy from London. I went to visit him and he was too busy with work to spend time with me. I took myself to all the plays and musicals I could find. I had a blast instead of sitting in his apartment stewing over his disinterest.

My sponsor also forced me to become self-supporting through my own contributions. I couldn't rely on my parents for money anymore which was a huge step for me. My self-esteem grew by leaps and bounds when I could honestly say I supported myself. And I didn't have to rely on anyone else to come and rescue me.

Rescuing usually brings control along with it.

Another big part of isolation from myself had to do with honesty. I wasn't honest with myself or anyone else. I ran around telling so many lies so that I wouldn't hurt people's feelings or get hurt myself that I no longer knew what the truth was anymore. Knowing that you're lying to people and doing it anyway because you're desperate is not self-esteem building. And keeping a bunch of stories straight doesn't leave time or room to work on getting to know



yourself. I was spending so much time remembering stories that I couldn't look inside myself and really get to know myself.

Being honest in meetings and with my sponsor cleared out all the junk in my head so I could focus on character defects and actually work on myself. I had so much more energy when I wasn't running myself into the ground with lies.

Breaking out of my isolation from myself helped me with my isolation from others.

Once I was able to trust myself and my sobriety, it was easier to trust others. In my first few years in S.L.A.A., I felt like I was in a high school class. We all went to the same meetings and out for fellowship to great restaurants. We had game nights and birthday parties and anti-Valentine's Day parties. I went to potlucks and picnics and even dances. Before S.L.A.A., these events were only opportunities to find someone to hook up with. I didn't care about being real or being there for anyone, it was all about the chase.

When it's a competition, it's every man (or woman) for himself. But in S.L.A.A. it was like I was a kid again, dancing with abandon and not caring if anyone thought I was a dork because I wasn't going to be able to hook up with anyone anyway. Those were the unspoken rules for those parties.

I remember, at one party I wore a sign around my neck that I had seen Sandra Bullock wear in the movie "28 days." It said "Confront me if I don't ask for help." My sponsee and I laughed all night about that. We had so much fun knowing that we didn't have to impress anyone and we could ask anyone in the room for help if we needed it.

When it came to significant others, it took a lot of outside help to tackle that behemoth. But, like Ali McBeal said, "Maybe I'll share my life with somebody...maybe not. But the truth is, when I think back of my loneliest moments, there was usually

somebody sitting there next to me." Being seen but not heard is very lonely.

None of the guys I was with before my recovery in S.L.A.A. ever heard me. I was never honest with them or myself so they couldn't hear the real me anyway. S.L.A.A. helped me find the real me. And God and S.L.A.A. helped me find the man who became my husband and partner.

My sponsor gave me a dating plan that helped me show my partner the real me and gave us enough time to really get to know each other. I wasn't able to isolate myself because I had to be in constant contact with my Higher Power, sponsor and meetings. I had to do this because a healthy fear of my disease made me feel like everything would be too overwhelming otherwise. I felt like dating would break me without all the help I got from God and other S.L.A.A. members.

The difficulty with being honest and showing another human being who you really are is that they can see who you are and say "You know I really don't like that so I'm going to go now."

I suffered from post-traumatic stress that gave me panic attacks in my first year of sobriety. I dealt with my panic attacks with therapy, outreach calls and prayers. By the time I started dating in sobriety my panic attacks were much more manageable and with less frequency. They used to come in the form of blinding swirling lights. If I was on the freeway and a panic attack hit me I had to stop the car because I couldn't see — It's a good thing they only happened when I was sitting in bumper-to-bumper traffic.

With a lot of work on myself and doing the 12 steps five times, the severe panic attacks stopped. Every once in a while I would have what I began to call an episode. I wouldn't have attacks anymore but I would get confused and not know where I was or what year it was. When I first began to date my now-husband, he

didn't know how to handle these episodes.

My character defects of jealousy and drama queen and immaturity were also pretty hard to handle. After six months of dating, my then-boyfriend decided he didn't want to deal with it anymore. So he broke up with me.

This was confusing to me because even though I did the dating plan and followed my sponsor's direction and felt I did everything right the S.L.A.A. way, he was still a human being with his own thoughts and feelings who could choose to walk away, which he did.

My anorexic addict voice said, "see you shouldn't trust people because even if you do everything right they'll abandon you in the end anyway."

I told him that if he wanted to get back together to give me a call otherwise to please not contact me. I knew my addict would start trying to manipulate him to come back to me if I stayed in contact with him and tried to be "friends." I would have gone back to my dishonest codependent ways to try to change his mind. That was too much of a temptation for me.

He went away and I went to the desert to visit my family and grieve. I read the "Grief in Recovery Handbook." I was amazed that I didn't even feel like acting out or retaliating or replacing the loss. I relied on God, meetings, my family and the fellowship of S.L.A.A. to get me through that tough time that used to break me (before sobriety in S.L.A.A. I always gained 40 pounds and became suicidal after a breakup and acted out with anyone who would have me).

And two months later —after he did some soul searching — he came back to me.

I needed that time away to realize that relationships are more about trusting God and myself than about trusting others. And its about communication and living in reality. Once I stopped choosing dangerous men, my partners turned out to be trustworthy human beings.

I found a really good guy in sobriety (God chose him) who is willing to do the work with me. That was part of the reason he came back. He realized he had a partner who was also willing to do the work.

He joined S.L.A.A. a year after we started dating and he's the chair of our local intergroup and sponsors more people than I do.

I always say that God found the perfect partner for me. He's not perfect, but he's perfect for me. I'm not that scared little girl anymore hiding in her apartment with the curtains drawn doing puzzles and smoking cigarettes all day. And sleeping on the floor at night with all the lights on because she's afraid someone will break in.

I actually like going to parties and meetings and meeting with sponsees. I like going to the beach and the park and hiking and being out in the world. People know the real me and some even like me.

I wouldn't trade what I've got today for anything and that's a good place to be. I am grateful to S.L.A.A. and God for my life.

— LISA C.

Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous Resources

Visit the official website of Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous

www.slaafws.org

discover:

local meetings, phone meetings,
online meetings

connect:

find a long-distance sponsor,
purchase literature

write:

The Augustine Fellowship,
Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous,
Fellowship-Wide Services, Inc.,
1550 NE Loop 410, Suite 118
San Antonio, TX 78209

Phone:

+1 (210) 828-7900



Where I Belong



Secret thoughts and behaviors define my disease.

I was in the military and, in addition to near constant sex with prostitutes in far-east Asia, I always had a stash of hard core porn. Sometimes I was on a ship for long periods of time and the porn and masturbation was a ritualistic part of almost everyone's day – but it had always been for me, whether on or off shore.

After the military I hit a brutal bottom with cocaine and alcohol and cleaned up in rehab and a 12 step program in my mid-20s.

Then, during college in the mid 90s something happened – the internet. I soon found the free hardcore and fetish sites completely irresistible. It was as addictive as, and more damaging in many ways, than my other addiction to cocaine would ever be.

When I moved in with my fiancé in the late 90s, we bought a computer for my graduate school studies. I never had a chance. We looked at internet porn together a few times for laughs. But I secretly said to myself “if she only knew the half of it.”

I was constantly, constantly clearing the search history, site history, image caches, key words and internet viruses – the

evidence of my secret life. And it was a secret life: hours and hours spent “researching” for school. Late nights turned into early mornings masturbating compulsively.

The fetishes went from weird to insane – I followed links that descended into a hell of depravity, always seeking to find a bigger “hit.”

Six years of meetings and service and sponsorship in another 12 step fellowship was no match for my sexual addiction. The shame and remorse, the lies and secrets – I could not sleep and started abusing sleeping medications.

Narcotic sleep meds from a doctor, first to sleep, then to “get high,” taking them on my way to school because I liked the way it helped me dissociate from the emotional hangover of the previous night's activities. Soon it was painkillers and tranquilizers, too. In short, my internet porn addiction led me back to my drug addiction.

I didn't talk about the new drug habit in my meetings though – I still “claimed my seat” and now had more lies than I knew what to do with. This went on for three years. Then marriage came along

and I promised myself the insanity would recede in the lights of my successful career and relationship. Instead, a bottom I never could have imagined was only two years away.

By now the prescription drugs were almost daily, the internet porn was daily, and it led me to throw away two \$2,000 laptops because I couldn't stop the pop-ups and couldn't have explained to my wife what was wrong. My sex life was nonexistent, now massage parlors and clandestine sex were back in the picture, too. My identity was completely consumed by my addiction. My work suffered tremendously. Guilt ate at me hourly. Vodka seemed like something I could get away with though it had been 12 years since my early trips to rehab following the military. After that, I began using cocaine again.

I was still not talking about any of these secrets with anyone. They say you're as sick as your secrets. Well, I was pretty sick. I had a meltdown. Rehab for drugs and alcohol was successful again, but I refused to take the sex and porn addiction seriously.

I left my wife rather than tell her the truth. I started having compulsive sex with any available



or unavailable woman I could find, civilian or “pro.” Internet sex was almost nonstop, sometimes using a cell phone and masturbating in the car. I ruined relationships with my friends because of my paranoia, thinking my sex partners were sleeping with them. I took hostages.

I became socially anorexic in an almost absolute sense. I was at the jumping off point. I went to treatment for sex addiction.

I entered a sexual recovery program, but slept with one of the women there. Then I went home to my community, now divorced and humiliated, having learned the language of sex addiction but having done nothing with it. I wish I could have found the courage to face the music, instead I left town. I landed in a new community, no job,

picked up the cocaine and prostitution and internet porn like I had never left. Unbelievably risky illegal behavior was a part of my daily existence, so much for a geographic cure. I was now nearly destitute, divorced, unemployed and unemployable.

Welcome to my bottom, now for the good news. I have found recovery. S.L.A.A. has given me relief from a life of insanity. I am clean from all substances, but I devote myself to 12-Step recovery from sex/ porn addiction as my primary addiction. My sex/porn addiction is-THE main path to crazy town and I pray to God that I never forget that fact. I will use drugs and die if I don't deal with my sex/ porn addiction. I will go to prison if I don't deal with it. My

**They say
you're as sick
as your
secrets.
Well, I was
pretty sick.**

luck will run out and I'll suffer health consequences that I've somehow avoided.

What do I love the most about S.L.A.A. recovery? I love the certainty that I am not alone, that my story is not unique. Nothing compares to sitting at a meeting, defining my bottom line behaviors in practical terms and discussing my freedom from them. I talk to my fellow men in my network about temptations that I've survived, sometimes just barely, with compassion and humor.

It seems hard to believe as I write this that I'm free of the insanity. I know it is my relationship with God and with other recovering addicts that has saved me. Help is only a phone call

away. There are meetings six nights a week only 20 minutes from my home where I can play a role in the recovery of other addicts and share experience, strength and hope.

I feel useful, and my past is actually not just a source of pain. In leaving it behind my past now is useful to others, another story of heartbreak averted, death postponed for another day. My path from here is clear – I will clear up the wreckage of my past with the 8th and 9th Steps. I will share my story of spiritual recovery with others and support meetings in my community wherever that may be.

One of my favorite concepts in recovery is “social anorexia.” It fits me so well – at times in the past I withdrew from virtually all

relationships in the service of my disease. But I no longer accept as normal the shame, paranoia, guilt and manipulation that the withdrawal represented. I talk to my family now and I have friends again. I am in the process of repairing relationships that are important to me.

Within the safety of the S.L.A.A. fellowship I can now shine a spotlight on the darkest parts of my past, my deepest fears. I have found my tribe at last. Some members of my S.L.A.A. network have other addictions in common with me. I have never felt so at home. I have never felt such hope.

— JAY, CONNECTICUT
(ISSUE #123)

S.L.A.A. Common Definitions

Anorexia: The compulsive avoidance of giving or receiving social, sexual, or emotional nourishment.

Bottom Lines: Self-defined activities from which S.L.A.A. members abstain in order to experience physical, mental, emotional, sexual, and spiritual wholeness.

Higher Power: A self-defined power greater than ourselves that is capable of restoring us to physical, mental, emotional, sexual, and spiritual wholeness.

Qualifier: Anyone who becomes your drug of choice, who qualifies you to identify as a sex and love addict (typically an ex-lover.)

Sponsor: An S.L.A.A. member willing to give a ‘sponsee’ direction based on their experience with how to work the 12 Steps of S.L.A.A.

Top Lines: Self-defined activities that members pursue to experience physical, mental, emotional, sexual, and spiritual wholeness.



The JOY of Relationship

I am now in my first sober, healthy relationship. Before this, I had not been in a relationship in over 10 years. Looking back, I felt like I was going to be alone forever, never connecting with another human being. I did not really know I was a sex and love addict and there are ways to heal this. When I first came into the program, when I was not sexually active, my life was black and white.

When I was sexually active,

however, it was in color, it was rich, and everything mattered. It was exactly like the Big Book says, I was like a dazed animal waiting to be prodded into life. Sex was euphoric. It did not matter the length of physical contact, whether it was in a relationship or just a one-time experience — it just was somebody else validating me rather than myself.

I had no sense of who I was. You hear people say, “Just be yourself”

on a date, and I always thought “Which one?” I had only different ways of acting to get what I wanted. It took spending years in the program to develop an inside. That is what I relate to now, not to external validation.

That became terminology I heard, I didn’t know that was how I was operating. It took a long time to have self-value, self-love, integrity and virtue, things I did not know how to put into place. I



had to start with bottom lines, doing the Steps in S.L.A.A. and doing the work.

The value of going to meetings, sitting in rooms and hearing people's stories helped me to see people as people. I was forced to listen to their experiences. This was new to me, because until recently, I objectified everyone. I saw people as just cardboard cutouts who were getting in my way. I decided who I would bother talking to or not, or who might be a friend, or who was interesting.

I made these judgments before anybody opened their mouth. So sitting in the rooms, I found myself relating to so many people's stories that I never thought I would. I started to soften and have compassion, especially with men. I had so much rage and anger and fear toward men that I didn't think men had feelings. Listening to them in meetings revealed beliefs and experiences very similar to what I was experiencing – like trying to connect and have love in their lives. The support in the fellowship is so valuable. The group, I think, is developing where love is, where God is and people are sharing their experiences.

Anorexia is always lurking! There was an anorexia meeting that I went to early on in the beginning of my recovery. I walked into the meeting and the S.L.A.A. Anorexia pamphlet was being read and I related to so many of the characteristics, it was really painful to hear.

My first thought was, I'm not catching this. This is contagious; I'm out of here. Probably the reason why I was so turned off by sexual anorexia was that I really related to it, being alone, keeping people away. In addition I was an extrovert, so I really related to social anorexia, particularly the

part about being around a lot of people, having a lot of fun, but just feeling alone and isolated.

All this tied into my depression with a feeling very similar to the withdrawal depression of "Oh no, I'm never getting up and dating, I'm not going to connect with another human being ever again, and I never like anybody." I know that the top-line meetings really helped me to get out of my anorexia, to do things differently, to take action. I worked really hard to get on the phone and make calls when I did not want to, to stay busy, or to force myself to date.

Before recovery, I could barely walk down the streets when couples walked by holding hands. I just felt so envious and alone and separate.

Holding hands, getting married. I considered that normal, what normal people do. I never knew how to be normal. Now I'm in love. How did this happen? I think it happened by doing a lot of things opposite to my addiction and my anorexia and learning that my thinking was faulty. I constantly have to really challenge my faulty thinking and say, "Well, that's not really true."

I like who I am, and I like who my partner is able to see today. Before, I could not say these things. I would say that maybe I tricked somebody into liking me, falling in love with me, or my sexuality was a commodity. That is not the case now. Now it is based on friendship.

I had always heard that you can have a relationship with friendship, where your partner is your best friend. That concept terrified me because I thought that meant that I would not be attracted to the person as a friend. I have learned that it is not the case. I feel blessed.

— JILL W.
(ISSUE #126)

Question of the Day

What's your personal experience and recovery around fantasy?

I used to lay in bed at night as I fell asleep thinking and dreaming of how I was going to “get” or seduce someone. Four hours later, I was still awake repeating over and over variations of the same theme. When I awoke the next morning I was exhausted. Today I know this is the “hangover” of a fantasy addict.

— ANONYMOUS

I have always been an artist, and fantasy has been my stock in trade. When I came into the program, I obsessed constantly about romantic fantasy – today, I rarely obsess, but my imagination is intact and no longer disturbed by constant distraction.

— KAREN W., DELRAY BEACH, FL

Before this addiction running rampant and my eyes would roam – objectifying women and fantasizing scenarios. Now I look at women and men in a spiritual sense as human beings.

— KURT M., CONNECTICUT

One of my aspects about fantasy regards who my partner is. My fantasy is he will always be there for me. He will show up when I need him. He will rescue me and protect me. But my partner is human. In recovery I realized I often didn't ask my partner for what I needed because if he couldn't do it, it would destroy my fantasy. My sponsor reminds me to speak up, gather information and recognize my partner for who he really is, not who I fantasize he is.

— KIM B., BOSTON MA

As a sex and love addict, I am no stranger to fantasy – whether sexual, romantic, or simply imagining awful outcomes to scenarios that may never occur.

The way that I have dealt with fantasy is by working the Steps. In particular, Step Four helped me to deal with fear-based fantasies I had practiced over a lifetime; Step Ten helps me to deal with them as they come up. I have also used Step Ten for shame surrounding obsession involving a “love” object.

When I'm going through a sexual or romantic fantasy, I accept, first and foremost, that I am a sex and love addict and these things will happen to me, but they do pass – especially when I share them with friends (like other sex and love addicts) who understand. I can also ask for hugs from safe friends since my need for love is real.

— OWEN, NEW YORK NY



Me and Mrs. Jones (twoo woo)

Married men are catnip to your basic love junkie.

For one, it's all so tragic and dramatic.

If only he had met you first! You two were fated to be together, had not cruel fate intervened. Yes, I know that's contradictory on its face. Don't argue with someone in love. It's dangerous. Married men are like unappreciated artists, or suicide survivors, or vampires, and relationships with them are

similarly doomed, beautifully, romantically doomed.

This, of course, is the point. Because deep down, what a love junkie is terrified of is actual intimacy. The illusion of relationship beats the hell out of "What do you want for dinner tonight, honey?"

Next great thing about married men: They are incredibly affectionate and forthcoming about their feelings. They can ADORE you unreservedly, because they have no fear of commitment to get in the way. There's a simple reason for this: They are already committed, to someone else!

It was harder and took me longer to get off married men that to get off cocaine... Married men are cheaper, easier to come by, and generally legal.

Third – and we’re getting down to stuff you should be talking to your therapist about now – married or otherwise unattainable men are a self-fulfilling prophecy for women with zero self esteem. You don’t genuinely believe you deserve someone in your life. Guess what? You don’t have to worry about that any more. Plus, if you can snag some other woman’s man, even for a little while, you must be better than her, right?

Your desirability has been confirmed for one more night. You can breathe again. Then there’s the whole Forbidden Love aspect of it. It’s taboo and rebellious and edgy.

Admit it, that’s just plain sexy. In a world where age, race, religion, social class, geography and gender are no longer barriers to relationship, it is

hard to find a good obstacle to bang your head against. Some of us like banging our head against things. Helps drown out the voices inside.

It was harder and took me longer to get off married men that to get off cocaine. What I didn’t know at the time was that, neuro-chemically speaking, they were pretty much the same thing. Married men are cheaper, easier to come by, and generally legal.

That does not, it turned out, make them a better idea.

— ETHLIE, BEVERLY HILLS,
(ISSUE #124)

Gratitude for 20 Years in S.L.A.A.

I wanted to acknowledge my gratitude for Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous in a special way on the occasion of its thirty-fifth birthday.

S.L.A.A. changed my life. Or better, it gave me a way to stop destroying myself and start living up to my potential. I started attending S.L.A.A. meetings over twenty years ago. I don’t think about it very often, but when I do, I realize that my life would have taken a completely different course if I hadn’t stumbled onto S.L.A.A. I had a long history of out-of-control sexual behavior starting around ten years old and only ending at age forty when I got into recovery.

Alcohol and drugs play a big part of my story. I had no idea, until I got into recovery, how much sex I was having. I never thought about it for a minute, never discussed it with even my closest friends or the therapists I went to.

It was just what I did – I left the house to get a carton of milk and I could easily end up behind a building, or in a public bathroom, or in some lost person’s home having wild, mindless sex.

But it was after I became sexually sober that I realized my relationship style was dangerous, self-centered and emotionally masochistic. I had been in one dramatic, hopeless relationship after another – all of them brief – all of them with handsome, aloof men – all of them ending in what felt like tragedy.

I was always pursuing, as if my life depended on it, one ‘unavailable’ man after another. And it was only after getting active in S.L.A.A. that I came to realize that I was the ‘unavailable’ one. And I started seeing

the pattern: pursuit of a hopeless relationship with some fantasy object, the inevitable crash and burn, and then binging out on sex for the next few weeks. Romantic obsession always was followed by long periods of dangerous, emotionally disruptive, sexual acting out.

Ironically, in my circle of friends I was “Mr. Love.” I “loved” so deeply. When I got into a relationship, I lost weight, counted the minutes before they returned my phone calls, did anything I could to make myself invaluable to them, and talked about them incessantly. Now I realize I was living in psychological arrogance. I knew them, the targets of my attention, better than they knew themselves. I knew what they needed. I knew what they were up to. I could outfox them every step of the way.

In S.L.A.A., I began to learn that there was some possibility that I didn’t know what love was. I later realized this idea was a great gift.

I learned that I wasn’t an open, vulnerable good person who fell in love with emotionally shut off, cold, bad people. I was hurt and immature and didn’t know how to be honest with myself or anyone else. Another irony is that I had always considered myself a very spiritual person.

But in recovery I found that escapist spirituality, spirituality that made me reject life, was part of my problem. I needed to move away from exalted spiritual thoughts and feelings that transported me out of reality and move into the real. I came to believe that there was a God, that God had faith in me, wanted me to enjoy this world, live up to my potential, and see the value of each person I meet. No more smoke and mirrors. Also, my life used to be driven by feelings, moods, impulses and drama. Now I have principles that I can live by and that guide me: honesty, openness, willingness and compassion.

I no longer have to plead with someone to make me feel loved. I

don’t use people as sources of toxic sex and emotional validation — I don’t ask anyone to make me look and feel good at all costs.

When I get obsessed I know where to turn. When I need to escape into self-centered sexual acting out, I know who to talk to.

I feel connected to the people I’m close to and rarely feel exploited or used. Most importantly, love is now synonymous with respect and appreciation, not adoration or uncontrollable sexual desire and heartbreak.

And lastly, I used to pride myself on being disconnected from the human race, alienated and alone and depressed. I thought these were signs of intelligence and my deep spirituality. I also had far too many self-serving opinions about men, women, gay culture, American society and the stupidity of most people I had contact with.

These attitudes and beliefs are now tell-tale signs that I’m shutting down and that I need to be reconnected through meetings and members of the Fellowship. The ability to identify with members of the Fellowship—rather than the chronic, monotonous competition, judgment and comparison — is a great gift and a sign that God is restoring me to sanity.

And all of this — meetings, service, literature, etc. — has helped open me up to a life that I never anticipated.

I now realize life can be very difficult. There is no easy access to a permanent sense of security, or permanently high self-esteem, or an endlessly fulfilling romantic relationship. Shame and self hatred still go on the attack in my head.

But there is love everywhere if I stay open to it, and keep my heart in the right place. So I thank all of the women and men I’ve traveled with and may God continue to bless S.L.A.A.!

— GLENN, LOS ANGELES
(ISSUE #131)

Most importantly,
love is now
synonymous with
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God is My Answer

Love addiction is a disease of desperation. It's desperation for attention, affection and love. The addict will be temporarily satisfied with a fix at anytime, in any amount and from anyone.

It's pathetic to watch the way a love addict will manipulate, lie, and even cheat in order to get a fix. I know. I'm a love addict.

I did not have a name for who I was in relationships. Sex addict was not an accurate description for the way in which I acted out. Sure, I had a number of men I sexually acted out with in my 20's, but by the time I married at age 28 that form of acting out was over. That's when the love addiction kicked in. It would be another 20 years before I'd see that although no longer a "sex" addict, I was indeed still an addict.

The proof that I was an addict was evidenced by the fact that I felt so unlovable. I felt so desperate. I

felt so lonely. I felt so hopeless. I felt so unloved. This was despite my being married to the same man for 20 years, having a wonderful son, many friends and family, a thriving career and an abundant life. Outwardly, I appeared happy. It just didn't make sense. I had been in 12 –Step programs for 25 years, worked a rigorous program, sponsored, provided service and still I was not happy.

The day I walked into S.L.A.A. and identified myself as a "love" addict was the day my life began to change inwardly. There was a man who each week checked in with "I feel loving of my wife and family and free from addiction." I wanted to strangle the guy. It was painful

to hear him say the words that I wanted so desperately and yet seemed to elude me over the years. I was convinced my husband did not love me as that man loved his wife and I was sure he never would. I certainly didn't feel loving toward my husband and in fact, was known to often say to close friends, "It would be so much better if he just died."

That's how much pain I was in. It took 6 months of meetings twice a week, working the Steps and numerous outreach calls to break through all the anger I felt toward my primary "love object," my husband. I was so invested in blaming my husband for all of my problems that I couldn't even begin

to look at my part. I got a lot of fuel out of badmouthing my husband.

When I realized that I was never going to progress by being supported for being a victim, my first breakthrough occurred.

I began by telling the “whole” truth. I used the meetings to gain my courage. I would practice on the group level by telling the truth. An example is that I would say, “I come to the meetings to get attention,” or “Sometimes I get a hit when someone comes up after the meeting to praise me about my recovery.” I told the truth any opportunity I got.

No sugarcoating. My behavior had been to lie, to sugarcoat by omission, to just not tell you everything. I call it “selective truth telling to avoid conflict.”

I stopped blaming my husband for my problems. I stopped acting like a victim. There’s a huge difference between being a victim (which most 12-Step people are in some way) and acting like one. Acting like a victim is a choice for staying stuck. The day I decided to get off the victim soapbox is the day I began to heal from love addiction.

My love addict, though, is very sneaky. She will do almost anything to get validation for “being right.” The next big step in my recovery was when I began to be honest with my husband.

My way of relating to him prior to recovery was to tell him only what I wanted to tell him so that he didn’t have to ever know about all my flaws which keep me secure in my self-righteousness.

Guess what? You can’t have an intimate marriage by not telling the whole truth about who you are.

So I took baby steps and began to be more honest about whom I was. It was uncomfortable. It still is uncomfortable, but I have more

intimacy than I’ve ever experienced. It scares the daylights out of me. I didn’t grow up telling the truth about myself. I did not grow up letting others know about who I really am.

I did not grow up having closeness. My hope is that someday I will feel comfortable being intimate. I keep coming back to S.L.A.A. because the women who have more recovery than I do assure me that my day will arrive. I’m choosing to believe them until I have the faith to know it without a doubt.

Then there is my relationship with God. Currently, I am working on trusting God with regard to the love addiction. I still do not fully believe that God is with me everyday, all day long. I have to make outreach calls to be reminded. My vision is to be a steward of God’s love.

My goal is to express God’s love by being a loving wife and mother more often than not. That’s not a reality for me yet.

I believe the only way for me to become more loving is to be open to God’s grace. I believe the only way for me to feel lovable is to open to God’s love. Then the desperation, loneliness, fear and despair will melt away.

Each day I have to say, “God please remove the desperation, please remove the control, please remove the bad choices so that I might be a loving steward of Your love in all my relationships. Fill my heart with trust, faith and love. Remove the fear that keeps me from my greatest good. Thy will not mine be done. Amen.”

A few weeks ago at a meeting during feelings check-in I said, “I’m feeling loved and I’m feeling loving of my husband and family.” I meant it because now I only tell the truth. I meant it because by the grace of God and working the program I am beginning to heal.

It’s a miracle that’s been granted to me by God, who’s doing for me what I couldn’t do for myself. When I began S.L.A.A. recovery I had no hope, little faith and no trust.

Now I have some hope, more faith than before and a little trust. When I showed up 18 months ago I thought, “Well, I’ll hang out here for a year, take what I like and leave the rest, and be on my way.” That was the love addict’s happily ever after version of love addiction recovery.

The reality is that I have some recovery, but I have a long way to go in order to experience intimacy in all my relationships. Leaving S.L.A.A., for me, would not be a wise choice. S.L.A.A. offers me experience. S.L.A.A. offers me strength. S.L.A.A. offers me hope.

But in order for me to experience the promises of S.L.A.A. recovery that I’m worthy of, I need to keep coming back.

It’s unfortunate that I (as well as all S.L.A.A. members) did not get loved the way we could have, should have and would like to have been when we were growing up. It’s also sad and in many cases downright tragic.

Yet to stay stuck in the past of could have, should have and would like to have been is a waste of the life I can have, should have and will have. I can learn to be loved. I can learn to love.

I can learn to make wise and loving choices for myself. S.L.A.A. promises me a different life if I am willing to do what is suggested. I’ve had 48 years of feeling unlovable, lonely, desperate and hopeless. I’d like the rest of my life to be different.

With God and S.L.A.A. all things are possible, even a life of emotional sobriety and love!

— ANONYMOUS, SACRAMENTO, CA
(ISSUE #122)

Question of the Day

“What has been your biggest achievement in S.L.A.A. recovery this year?”

The natural capacity to realize that what I feel is about me. So much freedom comes from it, from owning my stuff. It actually gives me a sense of worthiness.

— CHRISTINE,
MONTREAL, CANADA

I am more aware of myself and getting integrity, less concentrating on others. Being here and now, every day.

— LUCIANO,
WARSAW, POLAND

I am joyful for reconnecting with my family. I thought that I had lost my brother, but because of my work in this program I now have a loving relationship with him and I am able to be actively involved in my nephews' lives.

This is something that wouldn't have been possible without the program.

— NICOLE,
SANTA MONICA, CA

Feeling better.

— JAMES E.,
SEATTLE

First and foremost, I have remained sober and committed to my program amidst a year of tremendous growth and courage.

I moved in with my girlfriend – a first – and I'm learning how to cohabitate with love.

— JENNY,
LOS ANGELES

Hope for a beautiful life full of love and serenity becoming the person I truly am.

— MARTIN,
MANNHEIM, GERMANY

My husband and I were separated due to my acting out. We reconciled and continue to work on our relationship. We celebrate our 5 year anniversary with a vow of renewal this October.

— JESSICA,
HOUSTON, TX

I have been able to use the tools of recovery to love myself more consistently than at any time in my life. I have to practice this every day, and it's not always easy. Today I really do love myself.

— BRIAN R.,
WEST PALM BEACH, FL

About Boundaries

When I started my recovery in S.L.A.A. at the tender young age of 46, I did not have any boundaries.

None. Nada. Zip. Zed. I did not know I had thick walls around me.

For most of my life I had been in denial, deeply hidden behind my walls of shame. Very early in my recovery I had an argument with my then soon to- be ex-wife and I realized that I felt very, very different afterwards.

Later that day, during ‘getting current’ with a person wise in the ways of S.L.A.A. recovery, I went over the incident and he told me that I had boundaries during the argument. Being the newbie, I responded with the question – “Okay, then what is the difference between walls and boundaries?” The answer that came back was “If you have walls ... you start bleeding and you don’t even know you got hit ... with boundaries the incoming sort of get close before dropping to the floor near your feet – they don’t get in.”

That was 20 years ago and I can still remember how I felt after hearing that – it was like my Higher Power hit me in the forehead with a 2x4. I know that over the years my boundaries have improved a lot, but I do not have a perfect recovery. And, from time to time, I find out I have walls instead of boundaries. That’s when I go to a meeting and ask for the topic to be about “boundaries,” because I’m a very slow learner.

When I was growing up in an abusive home, I developed walls to keep me safe –then my fetish addiction (and the consequential shame) made those walls even thicker. In recovery, I have learned that my boundaries need to flex- there always needs to be some give and take- and that flexing has been based on being mindful of the present moment. If my boundaries do not flex, they become rigid and I am right back dealing with walls.

I know that my boundaries are my choice and in recovery I discovered that I had choices. When I remain present, aware and available, especially during what appears to be emotional stress, I can choose to keep my boundaries intact. “While vigilance was still important, the choices we had to make now seemed easier.”¹ Boundaries keep me safe while I learn my lessons.

I have internal boundaries and external boundaries. For me internal boundaries are basically about not taking on someone else’s opinion about me or my actions and then beating myself up because I do not meet their expectations. External boundaries have to be explicitly stated e.g. “If you continue using that kind of language I will leave the conversation.” If I cannot articulate my external boundary then there is

no boundary. In addition, I have learned that once I state a boundary, I have to follow through. In the case of above, the person trampled all over my boundary and I literally left the room without saying another word. If I cannot follow through, then the boundary setting is incomplete and I have not taken care of my spiritual and emotional well-being.

The following quote is paraphrased and I have long forgotten the author. However, I can claim being deeply moved by it, “If I can’t say ‘no’ then how do I know when to say ‘yes?’”²

And that brings me to boundaries in my service work. In recent years I’ve been involved in service work within the S.L.A.A. Conference and Board structure. It’s been a wonder-filled time for me. For years I’d been saying, “I love our fellowship because it saved my life.” With the help of my Higher Power and my sponsor I learned that, just as in my primary relationships, I had to put feet under the words “I love you.” Otherwise, I was saying empty words. And so finally, by “walking the walk” I have begun to develop a deeper feeling of gratitude for, and towards, our Fellowship.

In service to our Fellowship, just as in other areas of my recovery life, I have found that I need to



have good internal and external boundaries.

Service work at this level is about my ability to stay focused on the business of the Fellowship. If I take our Twelve Traditions to heart, I find my overall direction in the closing phrase of Step 12, “to practice these principles in all areas of our lives.”³ Then, by coupling that guidance from our founders with Tradition 12, “Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.”⁴ I find new depth in the boundary stated there. That brings me to viewing all our 12 Traditions as group boundaries while our 12 Steps remain as my personal boundaries.

In 2006 I began working with S.L.A.A. Conference committees and I quickly learned some difficult lessons. I learned that anyone volunteering in service to our Fellowship was not my enemy. I carry many of these lessons from service back to my primary, familial relationships. So, for example, when I find myself occasionally trying to build resentment toward my wife, I literally have to say to myself, “she is not my enemy!”

I love S.L.A.A. I’m grateful for my recovery. I express my gratitude by performing service work. My “attitude of gratitude” is an expression of love and all my service work is an act of love. I respect and honor the boundaries expressed in our 12 Steps and 12

Traditions. By honoring those boundaries I show love for myself and everyone else. Thanks to everyone in our fellowship for all the expressions of healing love.

— LEON C. DALLAS, TX

(ISSUE #123)

(footnotes)

1 The Basic Text for The Augustine Fellowship, Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous, First March-April 2010 edition, p. 96

2 Author attribution not known.

3 The Basic Text for The Augustine Fellowship, Sex and Love Addicts, First edition, p. 101

4 The Basic Text for The Augustine Fellowship, Sex and Love Addicts, First edition, p. 123

Q: What do all the world’s great religions have in common?

A: They refer their members to 12-Step recovery from addiction!

A Lovely Way To Live

I am so glad to be in this program, and always glad to be in a meeting where I can feel the calm and soothing presence of my Loving Power. It always brings me closer to the best part of myself.

I am grateful to be sexually sober today. To me, that means I have a choice about intimate relationships, I have options. Instead of fighting off all the compulsive junk in my mind and heart, like I used to do all the time, I find enjoyment and fun in learning about real love that lasts and what my part is in it.

Learning to love for real is difficult, yet so much easier than that other thing I used to do. It's so good for me to remember that, one day at a time. I'm so grateful for the increased connection to my Loving Power that comes

through living recovery. New doors have opened for me here, new doors to better feelings, and then better and better life opportunities as time goes by.

I am relating right now to Steps One, Two, and Three. Even after years of Loving Power's help and love, I still go through times of forgetting that my Higher Power is on my side. I might begin to think that life is out to get me. I forget to trust!

Throughout the nine years I've been in program, I cannot remember a single time



Photo by Anonymous

when I surrendered in Step One, said yes in Step Two, and then turned it over in Step Three, that it has not turned out well - not one single time. My recovery has not been perfect or according to my expectations, but the great thing is that I can surrender again and make a new choice.

Making different choices as my life evolves

is another great gift of the program. Being willing to love myself, love life, and love others is a new skill. I don't always know how, and I don't have to. I'm glad I'm willing and able to learn. This is a lovely way to live.

NANCY M., WARWICK, NY
(ISSUE #118)



Quotation Corner

“My mind is like a bad neighborhood at night, I shouldn’t go there alone.”

“Nothing changes if nothing changes.”

“God doesn’t close one door before at least opening a window. But it’s hell in the hallway.”

“The elevator to recovery is broken. You’ll have to use the Steps.”

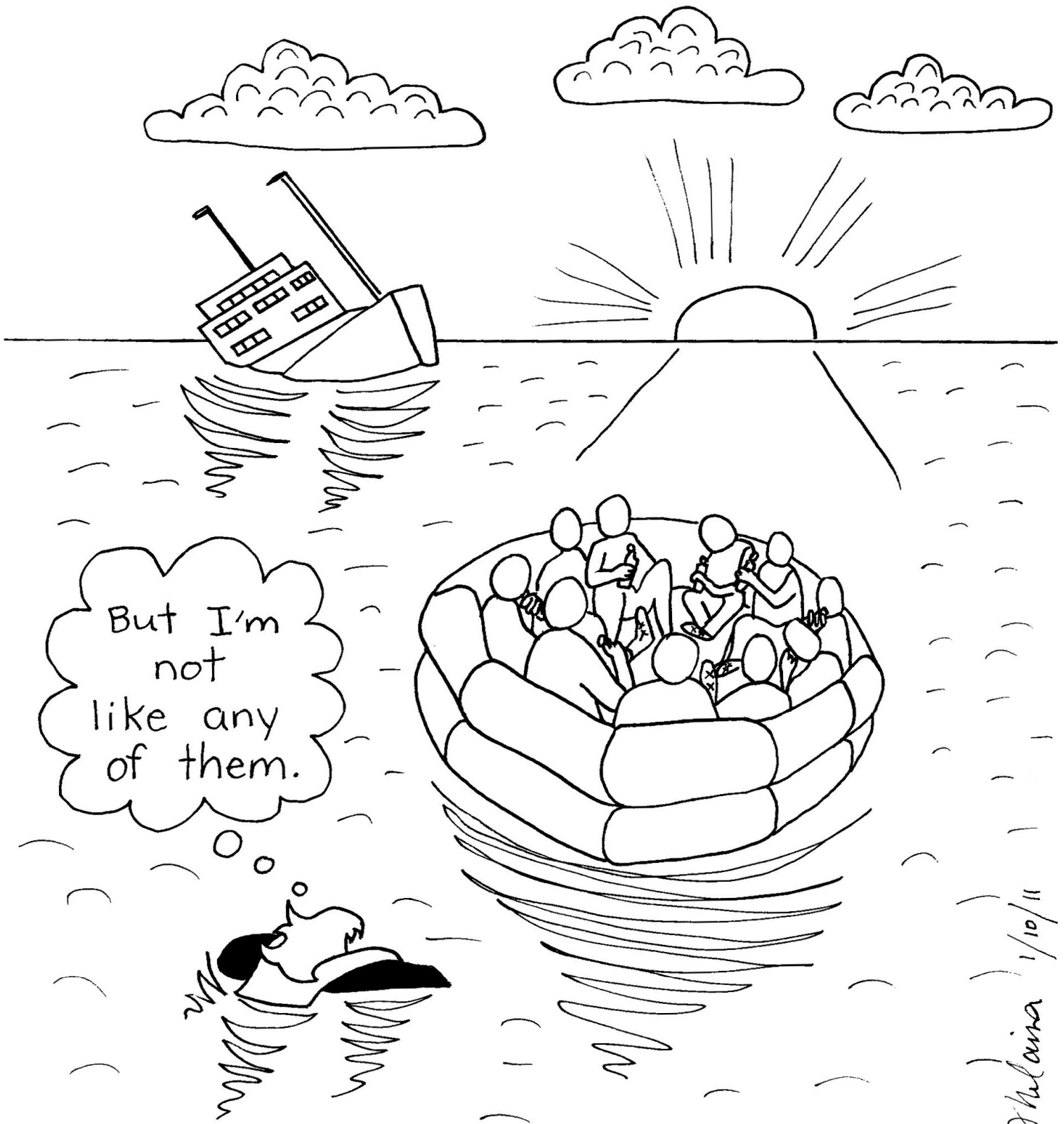
— CONTRIBUTED BY ERIC EE





**Keep Coming Back.
It Works, If You Work It.
And You’re Worth It.**

Terminal Uniqueness



Just get in the damn boat.

theJournal

