### ATTACHMENTS

#### 2017 ABM APPENDIX B TABLE OF CONTENTS - INDEX

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<td>17n13/17-05</td>
<td><strong>Item For Discussion:</strong> Discuss the text of the &quot;Meditation Book&quot; (CLC reference ID#18) to take the next step to move towards a motion to approve as Conference-approved Literature.</td>
<td>2 - 318</td>
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S.L.A.A.
Step Questions
Workbook
Introduction
This workbook was created to help sponsors go through the Steps with their sponsees. It is not meant to be the only way to work the steps and is not the “established S.L.A.A. way.” Readers are encouraged to take what they like from this workbook and leave the rest. If a question does not apply to how your addiction manifests itself, skip it in consultation with your sponsor. We are looking for ways to increase communication while working the steps.

Prayer and meditation is suggested before working on the questions. The writers of the workbook have found it useful to sit down with their sponsor each week and go through the readings together, sharing experience, strength and hope. Some have found that this takes too long. It is up to the individuals to discuss and decide what is right for them.

Some suggest doing bite-sized bits of the workbook. (Some give about 5 questions a week to their sponsees.)

We hope this helps in your journey through the Steps.

Respectfully in service, Step Questions Workbook Project Team
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<td>Step 7 Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings</td>
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<td>Step 8 Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.</td>
<td>29</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 9 Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 10 Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 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.</td>
<td>35</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 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.</td>
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**Step 1** We admitted we were powerless over sex and love addiction - that our lives had become unmanageable.

**Principles and Virtues of Step 1:**

- Surrender. (Capitulation to hopelessness.)
- Honesty -- After many years of denial, recovery can begin when with one simple admission of being powerless over sex and love addiction -- for sex and love addicts and their friends and family.

**Books to help you get started:**
Chapter 4/Step 1 and Chapter 5 in the S.L.A.A. Basic Text

**Pamphlets to help you start your new journey:**
- An Introduction to Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous
- Sex and Love Addiction 40 Questions for Self-Diagnosis
- Questions Beginners Ask
- Suggestions For Newcomers
- Withdrawal: Gateway to Freedom, Hope, and Joy
- Sponsorship: A Return from Isolation

**Recommended Readings**

Chapters 2 and 3 in the A.A. Big Book

Step 1 in the A.A. Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions

**What Step 1 Accomplishes**

- Helps us break through our denial and accept the reality of our sex and love addiction.
- Helps us to become willing to make changes in our attitudes and behavior tantamount to recovery.
- Makes us teachable.
- Opens us to the need for a Power greater than ourselves to overcome our sex and love addiction.
Questions to consider for Step 1.

1. What is your definition of a sex and love addict? Does this definition help or hinder your recovery? In what ways?

2. As a sex and love addict, what is your definition of “acting out?” Does this definition of “acting out” help or hinder your recovery? In what ways?

3. What does it mean to “admit” something and why do you think this step says, “We admitted” rather than “I admitted?”

4. Look up the word rationalization in the dictionary. What reasons have you invented to explain or justify your sex and love behavior to yourself and others?

5. How has your compulsive sex and love behaviors affected the following aspects of your life?
   • career?
   • emotional development?
   • relationships with family and friends?
   • financial security?
   • spirituality?
   • physical health? mental health?
   • integrity and ethics?
   • self-respect?
   • values and standards?
   • life goals and objectives?

6. What does the term “powerless over sex and love addiction” mean?

7. Make a list of specific examples of your powerlessness over sex and love addiction. (fill out the Step 1 chart on the next page).

8. What does the term “our lives had become unmanageable” mean?
9. Make a list of specific examples of how your life has become unmanageable as a result of numbing out in sex and love addiction.

10. Do you occasionally fall into what addiction professionals sometimes call “euphoric recall” - a tendency to lose sight of your previous powerlessness and unmanageability and experiencing an increased longing for the “good old days?” If so, describe how and when this has happened in your recovery.

11. What pattern(s) have evolved? What is/are your bottom-line behavior(s) as evident from your addictive pattern(s)?


13. Make a list of withdrawal symptoms that you experience. Keep a copy in your purse or wallet.

14. Each morning write a to-do list (self-care) and ask for God's help in dealing with the day ahead.

15. While you are working on this step, at the end of each day fill in the following chart:

**Personal Conclusions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stressors today:</th>
<th>Resulting numbing out behaviors</th>
<th>How I lost control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example: Boss yelled at me</td>
<td>Ate too much from the vending machine</td>
<td>Called my “qualifier” (see Qualifier Worksheet)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**STEP 1 CHART**
# Motions and Items for Discussion

2017 S.L.A.A. Annual Business Meeting,
July 25 – 28, 2017
Fourth Version – July 25, 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Childhood</th>
<th>Teenage years</th>
<th>Adulthood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Obsessive compulsive behaviors that you couldn’t stop</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Attempts to Stop (tried to limit, change, or control behaviors)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Lies you told yourself and others about your obsessive sex and love thoughts and behaviors?</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Promises you made about your obsessive sex and love thoughts and compulsive behaviors, to yourself, your Higher Power, to members of your family, and to others</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ways you tried to hide your obsessive and compulsive sex and love behaviors</strong></td>
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</table>
16. What do you think your life will be like in the future if you do not work the S.L.A.A. program of recovery now?

17. If you are in a relationship right now and unsure whether they are a qualifier or not, it is suggested that you fill out the “Qualifier Worksheet” on the next page.

As a result of the work on Step 1, do you feel you are powerless over your sex and love addiction and that your life has become unmanageable? Explain.

Suggestion: Read Step 1 to your sponsor before beginning Step 2

Qualifier Worksheet

Qualifier: If a member qualifies as a sex and love addict because of an addictive relationship to a particular person, the member may refer to that person as a “qualifier.”

Purpose of this worksheet:
To help S.L.A.A. members work with their sponsor to figure out if their love interest/partner is a “qualifier.”

1. Have you caught him/her in a lie? Yes No
   a. If yes, how many times? ________ Describe each situation and its importance.
2. Do you make excuses for him/her? Describe.
3. Does he/she take a long time to call you back or break dates often without explanation?
4. Do you find it impossible to ignore phone calls/demands from this person even if it’s inconvenient or harmful to you?
5. What do you think will happen if you ignore demands?
6. Do you feel unsafe because of anything he/she has done? Explain.
7. Are you able to communicate feelings to this person without fear of repercussions?
   a. If not, what kind of repercussions have you suffered?
8. Does your partner give as well as receive, or are you always the giver even if it’s harmful to you?
   a. If so, do you fear the loss of the relationship if you quit giving so much?
9. Is there room for other activities/people in your life or does this person take up all of your time?
10. What would happen if you spent less time with them?
11. Is your partner jealous? If so, describe.
12. Do you play games to keep them more interested? If so, describe.
13. Are you playing a role around them? If so, what would happen if you were honest.
14. Have you broken up with/had no contact rules before?
   a. If so, how many times?
   b. During the time you are waiting for contact, what goes through your mind? (List positive and negative fantasies.)

15. Who have you used or manipulated in his/her life to get closer to them? Describe: a. Physically: (getting close to parents and friends). B. Secretly: (stalking on social media/being an overly curious investigator?)

16. Has he/she ever physically harmed you?

Suggestion: Discuss with your sponsor if your answers to these questions add up to a qualifier situation. If so, discuss a way to proceed with a no contact rule.

**Step 2** Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

**Principles and Virtues of Step 2:**

- Hope. (Step 2 is the mirror image or opposite of Step 1. In Step 1 we admit that sex and love are our Higher Power, and that our lives are unmanageable. In Step 2, we find a different Higher Power who we hope will bring about a return to sanity in the management of our lives.)

- Faith -- It seems to be a spiritual truth, that before a Higher Power can begin to operate, we must first believe that it can.

**Books:**
Chapter 4/Step 2 in the S.L.A.A. Basic Text
Release Unto Hope (pages 163-67) in the S.L.A.A. Basic Text
And In The Meantime (pages 185-90) in the S.L.A.A. Basic Text

**Pamphlets:**
Setting Bottom-lines pamphlet (answer all the questions)

**Recommended Readings**

Chapter 4 in the A.A. Big Book
Step 2 in the A.A. Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions

**What Step 2 Accomplishes**
Belief in a Power greater than ourselves
Restoration of sanity
Recognition that sex and love addiction is a spiritual disease requiring a spiritual awakening
Provides hope to counteract the feeling of powerlessness and fear experienced in Step 1
Establishes an open-mindedness required for Step 3.

Questions to consider for Step 2

1. What does the phrase “Came to Believe” mean as it relates to your sex and love addiction?
2. What does the phrase “Power greater than ourselves” mean as it relates to your sex and love addiction?
3. As used in this Step, what does the word “sanity” mean?
4. Why does this Step say that a Power greater than ourselves “could” restore us to sanity rather than “would” restore us to sanity?
5. How has the nature of sex and love addiction perverted your value system?
6. Do you believe that a Power greater than yourself can relieve your sex and love addiction and restore you to sanity?
7. Define that Power or what you would like that Power to be.
8. What are some elementary solutions to the problem of belief or faith in a Higher Power as it relates to sex and love addiction?
9. What’s the difference between humility and humiliation?
10. Describe how your thoughts and actions have been insane as it relates to your sex and love addiction
11. What makes you think that your next love relationship will be any better?
12. On a separate sheet of paper, write a description of your idea of God before program (even if you didn’t believe in God maybe you thought, “If God does exist, God is mean and plays
tricks on me.” Write all of your beliefs about a Higher Power. After reading this to your sponsor, take the sheet and tear it up and either throw it away or burn it.

13. Now write about what you want your Higher Power to be. It can be whatever you want (I want my Higher Power to give me all the money I can carry). Read this to your sponsor and work together to come to a realistic concept of Higher Power. Write this concept on a small piece of paper and carry it with you.

14. Suggestion: Make a God box (decorate a box to put all your thoughts and prayers to Higher Power in.) Suggestion: Read Step 2 to your sponsor before beginning Step 3.

Step 3  Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.

Principles and Virtues of Step 3:

• Commitment. (The key word in step 3 is decision.)

• Surrender -- A lifetime of self-will run riot can come to a screeching halt, and change forever, by making a simple decision to turn it all over to a Higher Power.

• Faith

Books:
Chapter 4/Step 3 in the S.L.A.A. Basic Text
“An Unmerited Gift” (pages 219-224) in the SLAA Basic Text

Recommended Readings

Chapter 5 in the A.A. Big Book (pages 60-64).
Step 3 in the A.A. Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions

What Step 3 Accomplishes

Nurture a personal conception of a Higher Power

Identifies selfishness/self-centeredness as the root of our troubles

Establishes a “Higher Power agenda” before our own
Making decisions and taking actions on healthier sex and love-related behaviors, then leaving the results to God

Understanding of God’s will for us

1. What does the phrase “God as we understood God” mean?

2. What is your concept of God (or Higher Power)?

3. What does it mean to turn “our will and our lives over to the care of God”?

4. As it relates to your sex and love addicted behaviors, what is the difference between life run on self-will and life that follows God’s will, however you understand God?

5. How has self-will served you to this point as a sex and love addict?

6. As a sex and love addict, what is a recent example of exercising self-will rather than following what you believe might be God’s will?

7. How can you know God’s will?

8. What reservations do you have about turning your will and your life over to the care of God as you understand God?

9. What does it mean to “make a decision”?

10. Now that you have been staying clear of sex and love addictive entanglements on a daily basis, how can you begin a newer relationship with God?

11. Once we choose to “tip our own cup over and let the sickness run out,” (S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Step 3) what is the danger of refilling the cup by our unaided will?


13. As a sex and love addict, how do you work this step and how do you know you are working this step?

Read Step 3 to your sponsor
Look up the third step prayer (page 63 of the A.A. Big Book) write it in your journal. When you finish reading Step 3 to your sponsor, say this prayer together.

**Step 4** Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

**Principles and Virtues of Step 4:**
- Honesty. (An inventory of self.)
- Soul Searching -- There is a saying in the 12-step programs that recovery is a process, not an event. The same can be said for this step -- more will surely be revealed.
- Courage

**Books:**
Chapter 4/Step 4 in the S.L.A.A. Basic Text

**Recommended Readings**
Step 4 in the A.A. Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions
Chapter 5 in the A.A. Big Book

**Preliminary Questions:**

1. How do you plan to use the 3rd Step as useful support for this 4th Step?
2. Make a list of any internal obstacles you might have to doing a thorough inventory.
3. What clarity do you hope to get from this 4th Step?
4. What new acting out patterns have you discovered or remembered since completing Step 1?

**Fourth Step questions:**

1. What kinds of images did you try to present to the world? What actions did you take to portray these images? Describe your behaviors.
2. Were you successful in portraying yourself in these images? How did/do you feel about your success or failure?
3. What did you think you would get out of appearing as these images?

4. Did you get what you thought you would? Did it feel the way you thought it would? Describe and explain your feelings.

5. How did the traits of pride, resentment, and self-justification help you continue and maintain your addiction?

6. What other traits kept you acting out? How did those traits manifest themselves in your addiction?

7. How have those traits conspired to keep you from getting honest about your past and maintaining your bottom lines? Are there any other traits that are making it difficult to get honest, do this 4th Step, or stay sober? Explain.

8. Discuss any relationships that seemed particularly troubling in your life.

9. Discuss the kinds of people you gave away your life to.

10. Make a list of relationships where you can identify the need to rescue or be rescued.

11. Inventory the motives of your appearance (clothing, body image, grooming choices, etc.)

12. Discuss how your flirting has led to addictive behavior.

13. Write about the relationship between sex and power in your life.


15. Are there examples in your life of using physical abuse? Describe.

16. What patterns of behavior, however seemingly small, can you identify from your acting out?

17. Are there any relationships that you have labeled “healthy” or “harmless” that are actually less obvious expressions of your addiction?

18. Do you find similar motives in non-sexual relationships (family, friends, and co-workers) that were driven by the same motives as the addiction?

19. What were the driving emotions and motivations behind your acting out activities? Any similar threads?

20. How had dishonesty played a role in not seeing the progression of the disease clearly?
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21. Compile a thorough list of lies you’ve told to cover up addiction activities.

22. Are there any other examples of dishonesty in your life, whether verbal or non-verbal?

23. How did self-centeredness contribute to your denial about the seriousness of your addiction?

24. How did pride contribute to your denial about the seriousness of your addiction?

25. Make a list of people and the money you spent in trying to impress them.

26. Inventory the attention-seeking behavior that is part of your disease.

27. What were the payoffs of the addictive behavior?

28. Describe events that brought you resentment. Describe the full extent of the role you played in the above events, no matter how small. What traits or behaviors enabled you to keep from seeing your part in the event?

29. Describe events that brought you guilt. Describe the full extent of the role you played in the above event, no matter how small. What traits or behaviors enabled you to keep from seeing your part in the event?

30. Describe events that brought you fear. Describe the full extent of the role you played in the above events, no matter how small. What traits or behaviors enabled you to keep from seeing your part in the event?

31. Describe events that brought you shame. Describe the full extent of the role you played in the above events, no matter how small. What traits or behaviors enabled you to keep from seeing your part in the event?

32. Discuss the role of self-pity in your life.

33. Do you recall feelings of insecurity, inferiority, or low self-worth? What triggered those feelings?

34. Write about your fears concerning emotional risk-taking.

35. Discuss the role of irresponsibility in terms of the way you treated yourself and others.

36. What would you call “right-sized” human needs?

37. Discuss how your fear of being alone manifested itself in your acting out pattern.
38. Discuss how your fear of intimacy manifested itself in your acting out pattern.

39. How do you think pride and willfulness had hidden yearnings of a lonely and fearful child?

40. Write about anything that you feel has been omitted.

41. How do you see the concept of compassion and self-forgiveness as necessary for a happy, useful life?

Fill out the charts for the Resentment, Fear and Sex Inventory. Suggestion: After you have finished the Step 5 questions and read them to your sponsor read the Step 4 charts to your sponsor.
**Resentment Inventory**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I am resentful at:</th>
<th>The cause</th>
<th>Part of self, hurt or threatened</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ambition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-esteem</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal relations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sex relations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pocketbook</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Pride</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual life</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My part in it</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character defect</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fear Inventory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What's the fear?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What's my part?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where have I been selfish?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Sex Inventory**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person involved:</th>
<th>Inconsiderate</th>
<th>Jealousy</th>
<th>Suspicion</th>
<th>Bitterness</th>
<th>Anything need further explanation?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My behavior: Where did I damage and/or arouse?</td>
<td>Unjustifiably</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the fear?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where were we at fault? (character defects) and what should we have done instead?</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
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**2017 AGENDA Appendix B**

**Motions and Items for Discussion**

**2017 S.L.A.A. Annual Business Meeting,**

**July 25 – 28, 2017**

**Fourth Version – July 25, 2017**
Step 5 Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs

Principles and Virtues of Step 5:

- Truth. (Candid confession to God and another human being.)
- Integrity -- Probably one of the most difficult of all the steps to face, Step 5 is also the one that provides the greatest opportunity for growth.

Books:
Chapter 4/Step 5 in the S.L.A.A. Basic Text

Recommended reading:

Books:
Step 5 in the A.A. Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions
Anorexia Focus Issue from the Journal
Pamphlets:
Sponsorship pamphlet

What Step Five accomplishes:

Frees us from isolation. Helps us trust others, ourselves and God. Teaches us humility.

Questions to consider:

1. How has ego played a part in your life? How has it helped and hindered you?
2. What are your fears about ego deflation in Step 5?
3. Describe any betrayal by trusted people in your life: Teachers, bosses, parents, friends, lovers, authority figures, government, institutions (anyone or anything that was supposed to help but harmed you). How can you learn to trust people again?
4. Discuss times in your life when you “try to go it alone” and isolate.
5. How has self-centered fear created resentments in your life?
6. Are there distressing or humiliating memories you want to keep secret and never tell anyone? What are you afraid will happen if you reveal these secrets? According to the reading, what will happen if you don’t reveal these secrets?

7. Describe how holding on to your secrets keeps you isolated.

8. Did you feel like you never quite belonged? Explain.

9. How will the 5th Step allow you to forgive yourself and others?

10. List things in your life that are difficult to forgive.

11. Where have you been: A) dishonest, B) intolerant, C) in self-pity, D) had delusions of grandeur, and E) been self-delusional? List examples of each.

12. How does reading your 4th Step to another person help with seeing the difference between your will and God’s will?

13. Do you blame others for your defects? Give examples.

14. Have you done a 5th Step before? If so, how do you feel about the process?

Read your 4th Step to your sponsor or trusted fellow.

Recommended: Read pg. 75 in the A.A. big book

After reading your 4th Step sit with your writing for one hour, pray, meditate and read over your 4th Step in that hour. Have you left anything out? Was there anything you didn’t want to say in your 5th Step? If so, what are your fears? Do a fear inventory before moving on to Steps 6 and 7.

Suggestion:

If you are single, discuss with your sponsor if you are ready to date. If so, do the dating supplement (page 25 of this workbook). If not, decide on which step you might start dating. Share from a sponsor: “It is good to have a dating plan in place early, however, many sponsors recommend waiting until after your 9th Step and having begun the first of the maintenance steps (10, 11 and 12).”
Step 6 Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

Principles and Virtues of Step 6:
- Willingness. (Choosing to abandon defects of character.)
- Acceptance -- The key to Step 6 is acceptance -- accepting character defects exactly as they are and becoming entirely willing to let them go.

Books:
Read Step 6 in the S.L.A.A. Basic Text

Journals:
the Journal, Step 6: Articles from the Journal with a focus on Step 6

Recommended Readings:
Read in the A.A. Big Book from page 66 “It is plain...” to page 76 “Ask God to help us be willing...” Read Step 6 in the A.A. Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions

1. Make a list of all of your character defects (from your 4th Step inventory and any others that you can think of). Write the opposite of those defects on a sheet of paper. Example:

List of current defects (what it is now). As you move forward handle defects with step 10.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHARACTER DEFECT</th>
<th>CHARACTER ASSET (Goal to strive for)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Listening to the addict voice</td>
<td>Listening to the recovery voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Low self-esteem</td>
<td>Good self-care/high self-esteem</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Separate the defects into categories:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Defects that made me an active threat to society (explain why you think they are a threat to society)</th>
<th>Defects that removed me from service</th>
<th>Defects that God lets me keep</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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Are any of your defects of character still serving you? Write each of them out:

2. Give 10 examples of people in your life that you see “getting away with it” (They are able to engage in character defects that you have engaged in and they don’t seem to be harmed by it). What’s probably the reality in each situation? Example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Character defect</th>
<th>Getting away with it</th>
<th>Reality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uncle Bob</td>
<td>Addict</td>
<td>Gets to get drunk all the time and it doesn’t harm anyone</td>
<td>He never had a family because of his drinking and he’s hurting himself physically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>Cheats on his wife</td>
<td>His wife won’t leave him even though she knows about his cheating</td>
<td>Both of them are unhappy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Look up humility, fearlessness and honesty in the dictionary. Write the definitions in your journal.

4. Find a copy of the St. Francis Prayer. Write it in your journal.

5. Are you afraid that others will reject you if you show them the “real” you? Write about it in your journal.

6. Make a list of personalities you have used (or “stage characters” you have played) in order to get what you want. Example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality</th>
<th>What I wanted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Played the jock</td>
<td>Adoration from the soccer community; got dates, felt important</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. Make a list of people who you refuse to accept as spiritually sick. Ask Higher Power to help you show each one the same tolerance, pity and patience that you would a sick friend. Say “Higher Power, save me from being angry.”
8. Make a list of sex ideals (pg. 70 in the A.A. Big Book).

9. Give examples of times when your natural desires for money, property and prestige exceeded their intended purpose.

   Example: Wondering why someone doesn’t call you back turns into spinning into obsessive thinking and trying to control the other person’s actions.

10. Do you have something holding you back from doing Steps 6 and 7? If so, what is it and how can you get rid of it?

11. Are there any character defects that you say, “This I will never give up?” List them and say a prayer for willingness.

12. Give examples from your life of the following: Sex excursions dressed up as romance; self-righteous anger, superiority, gossip, gluttony, envy, procrastination.

13. Look up the words “perfection” and “progress” in the dictionary. Write the definitions in your journal.

14. Write down “Higher Power reveals as much truth as you can live up to” and post it in your home.

15. Do you have any doubts that Higher Power can change you?

16. Talk about the pain that your character defects have caused. Does this make you willing to surrender these character defects?

17. Look up the word “surrender” in the dictionary. Write the definition in your journal.

18. Think about a time when you were confused about making the right decision. Write a pros and cons list about that decision. What are the character defects that come up?

19. Discuss the difference between trying to forcefully remove a character defect through self-will and surrendering the defect to God and through self-acceptance.

20. Give examples from your life of deprivation and over consumption.

21. Have you ever been a victim? Describe.

22. Describe what “becoming like the hole in the donut” means to you.

**Step 7** Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.

**Principles and Virtues of Step 7:**
Humility. (Standing before God, with nothing to hide, and asking that our flaws - in God’s eyes - be removed.)

Conscious Contact -- The spiritual focus of Step 7 is humility, asking a Higher Power to do something that cannot be done by self-will or mere determination.

Books:
Step 7 in the S.L.A.A. Basic Text

Journals:
the Journal, Step 7: Articles from the Journal with a focus on Step 7 (available in digital format – e-Journal – only)

Recommended Readings

Step Seven in the A.A. Twelve and Twelve

1. Look back at your definition of humility from Step 6. Why does Step 7 say we “humbly asked?”

2. List reasons why humility has been a) elusive, b) complicated and c) undesirable to you.

3. List the positive things in your life.

4. How can you tell the difference between self-will and God’s will?

5. List your resentments against God. Write a resentment inventory on each.

6. List character defects that haven’t been removed and are still troublesome. Why do you think God hasn’t removed them?

7. When we cease to perceive value in suffering, healing is instantaneous. Are you addicted to pain? Explain.

8. List examples of character building in your life.

9. What are your spiritual values? Do you put these before material pursuits? Explain.

10. List times (if any) when you have acted like you were honest and moral only to try to get what you really wanted.

11. What do you believe is the true purpose of your life?

12. List unreasonable demands you made upon:
13. Make a list of things that you possess that you’re afraid of losing and a list of things you demand that you fear you’ll never get.

14. Do you believe that if you do the work and if you pray that these character defects will be removed? Explain.

15. List any defects that you have some relief from.

16. Look up the Seventh Step prayer in the A.A. Big Book. Write it in your journal.

17. Read the article from the Step 6 Journal focus booklet, “I Don’t Want to Be Like This Anymore.” Do you disagree with any part of the prayer that is presented in the article? Write down your thoughts and feelings about it in your journal.

18. Buy a pack of 3x5 index cards. Write each of your character defects on a separate card. Put the cards in a drawer and for the next two weeks, when you wake up, pull out one index card. Say the 7th Step prayer for that character defect, and put the card back in the drawer. Think about that card throughout the day. When the two weeks are over, continue to take a card each day but leave it out of the drawer. When you come home at night, take a black magic marker and put a big X across the card. Say the 7th Step prayer and then tear the card up and throw it away or burn it (imagine God is removing the character defect).

19. If you don’t like this ritual (question 18) – create one of your own. Discuss it with your sponsor.

**Step 8** Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

**Principles and Virtues of Step 8:**
- Reflection. (Who have we harmed? Are we ready to amend?)
- Willingness -- Making a list of those harmed before coming into recovery may sound simple. Becoming willing to actually make those amends is the difficult part.
- Brotherly Love
**Books:**
Step Eight in the S.L.A.A. Basic Text

**Recommended Readings**
Step Eight in the A.A. Twelve and Twelve

1. Make a list of people you are “letting off the hook” because of your bad behavior (making excuses for them because you harmed them in some way).

2. Do you replay your mistakes over and over in your head to beat up on yourself and justify your unworthiness to others? Describe the thoughts and feelings of unworthiness.

3. Make a list of people to make amends to by filling out the chart:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amends I will do now</th>
<th>Amends I will do later</th>
<th>Amends I never want to do</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Is there anyone you don’t want to make an amends to because of their bad behavior? How can you begin to forgive them? Can you forgive them even if they don’t ever redeem themselves or right their wrongs? Say a prayer to forgive each of them.

5. Make a list of amends to make to yourself.

6. How will you set the record straight? (fill out the chart below:)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monetary amends (do I owe money? To whom and how much?)</th>
<th>Living Amends (Don’t contact the person—I will do things differently—describe)</th>
<th>Direct Amends (In person or by letter—How will you find the person? What will you say?)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. List your fears about making each amends. For any overwhelming or nagging fears, do a fear inventory.
8. Are you willing to ignore the harms done to you and apologize for your part? If not, pray for the willingness.

9. Are there still people you wish you could change or get even with? List them and pray for the willingness to let it go.

10. Is there anyone who may not know of the harms you have done to them? (an affair or slander etc.) Is there any criminal activity that you engaged in? Make a list of each and discuss how to proceed with your sponsor.

11. Write the prayer from the top of page 92 (S.L.A.A. Basic Text) in your journal. Say this prayer for 1 week

**Step 9** Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

**Principles and Virtues of Step 9:**
- Amendment. (Making direct amends/restitution/correction, etc.)
- Forgiveness -- Making amends may seem like a bitter pill to swallow, but for those serious about recovery it can be great medicine for the spirit and soul.
- Justice

**Books:**
Step Nine in the S.L.A.A. Basic Text

**Recommended Readings**
Step Nine in the A.A. Twelve and Twelve

1. Fill out the chart below (from your 8th Step list).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person to make amends to</th>
<th>Could it harm them in any way?</th>
<th>Will it harm anyone else relative to them?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
2. Take one of the more difficult amends that you need to make and write a story about it.

   A. How will you contact them?

   B. Do you think they will readily agree to meet you?

   C. Where will you meet?

   D. Write the script of what you will say.

   E. Give 3 scenarios of how they could react (storm away, cry, hug you?)

   F. How would you feel about each scenario?

   G. How do you think you would react in each scenario?

3. Take your list of people to make amends to and write down any names you think might react badly to your amends. Write a fear inventory on each (see chart page 17).

4. Do your direct amends as soon as possible.

5. Write letters to anyone you can’t contact directly and put the letters in your God box. If Higher Power could respond to this amends letter what do you think your Higher Power would say?

6. Make a budget and timeline for when you will pay monetary amends.

7. Have you made amends before? If so, describe a happy outcome and also an amends that went bad (if any).

8. Do you have any excuses for not making any of your amends? List them all.

9. Is there anyone else you should consult before making any of your amends? Explain.

10. Say a prayer for willingness to make amends in any cases where you are procrastinating.
Step 10 Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

Principles and Virtues of Step 10:

- Vigilance. (Exercising self-discovery, honesty, abandonment, humility, reflection and amendment on a momentary, daily, and periodic basis.)
- Maintenance -- Nobody likes to admit to being wrong. But it is absolutely necessary to maintain spiritual progress in recovery.
- Perseverance

Books:
Step 10 in the S.L.A.A. Basic Text

Recommended Readings

Step 10 in the A.A. Twelve and Twelve

1. Have you experienced emotional hangovers recently? How often?

2. Describe an example of a time you displayed an excess of negative emotion. How could you have made it a more positive experience? Is there something you could have done immediately to correct it or make amends?

3. What is a spot check inventory? Whenever you get tangled up in fear/resentment, do a spot check inventory.

4. Describe a recent situation where you practiced/should have practiced self-restraint. Do an honest analysis of what was involved. Were you willing to admit if the fault was yours/willing to forgive if the fault was elsewhere?

5. Look up the word “tirade” and write the definition in your journal.

6. Has a tirade or snap judgment ruined any relationship of yours? Explain.

7. List examples of times you have experienced justifiable anger. Can you let these go just as you would resentments that are not justified?

8. Make 30 copies of the chart on the next page and fill one out at the end of each day for 30 days. Read them to your sponsor.
Today’s Date ________________________________

Secrets

Resentments
Did I do a spot inventory (inventory charts from Step 4)? Yes_____ No_______

Fears
Did I do a spot inventory? Yes_____ No_______

Did I act like I accepted something today that I shouldn’t have? Describe ________________________________

Things I’ve done well (good intentions, thoughts and acts)

Did I flirt/intrigue with anyone or did they flirt with me? Write about the situation. ________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>mistakes</th>
<th>motive</th>
<th>How might I have done better?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I’m sorry I hurt ___________________________________________________________________________________

Do I need to make amends?
Step 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.

Principles and Virtues of Step 11:

- Attunement. (Becoming as one with our Higher Power.)
- Making contact -- The purpose of Step 11 is to discover the plan God as you understand Him has for your life.
- Spirituality

Books:
Step 11 in the S.L.A.A. Basic Text

Recommended Readings

Step 11 in the A.A. Twelve and Twelve.

1. Make a list of things you have trouble entrusting to God and why. (e.g. Decisions about who my partners are — because God will choose someone ugly for me.)
2. When you pray, do you pray for Higher Power to give you things or solve problems? Do you believe there is a God listening? Can you pray even if you don’t believe?

3. For a full day, pray for Higher Power’s guidance in all matters, both major and minor, spiritual and mundane. Write down everything you prayed about and anything you discovered. Read this list to your sponsor. From now on, practice praying for Higher Power’s guidance throughout the day.

4. Research 4 meditation practices. Write descriptions of each in your journal.

5. A. Get a book on meditation and a guided meditation tape or mp3. B. Go to a group meditation (outside of S.L.A.A.). C. Go to an S.L.A.A. meditation meeting (If there isn’t one in your area, get a group together and have at least one meditation meeting). Write any observations in your journal.

6. What style of meditation do you like best? For how long will you meditate each day? Write down what you can commit to for daily meditation.

7. Ask fellows to share their experience with meditation and prayer.

8. Do you believe meditation and prayer can get you through any hardship?

9. Define love. How does this compare with your definition of love before program?

10. Write down the prayer from Step 11 in the A.A. Twelve and Twelve. How do you feel about saying this prayer?

11. Have you found intimacy with yourself, intimacy with Higher Power and intimacy with others? Explain.

12. For one week, fill out the self-forgetting chart below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Times and people I comforted rather than seeking comfort</th>
<th>Situations where I sought to understand rather than be understood</th>
<th>Situations and people I forgave rather than seeking to be forgiven</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
13. During the week, did you encounter any situations where you couldn’t comfort, understand or forgive? Describe the situation and where you are blocked from self-forgetting. Pray to work towards the ideal.

14. Why can’t we go straight to Higher Power with a specific and troubling dilemma and secure from God sure and definite answers to our requests?

15. Describe some of your well-intentioned unconscious rationalizations.

16. For one week, fill out the morning pages on the next page.

Suggestion: Read Step 11 to your sponsor before moving on to Step 12.
Today’s Date ______________________________________

The day ahead:

Work to do:
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

Where I can be useful and helpful:
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

Special problems today may bring:
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

(Prayer for Higher Power to reveal Higher Power’s will with each problem.) Do I want to make specific requests to Higher Power? (list each):
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

Does each request have merit? Explain:
Say the prayer, being sure to say, “...if it be your (Higher Power’s) will.”
Step 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.

Principles and Virtues of Step 12:
- Service. (Awakening into sober usefulness.)
- Daily Practice -- For those in recovery programs, practicing Step 12 is simply "How It Works."

Books:
Step 12 in the S.L.A.A. Basic Text 
Finding, and Starting to Work With, Other Sex and Love Addicts (Chapter 6 in the S.L.A.A. Basic Text)

Pamphlets:
Measuring Progress pamphlet

Recommended readings:
Books:
Step 12 in the A.A. Twelve and Twelve
Working With Others (Chapter 7 in the A.A. Big Book)

Pamphlets:
Reread the Sponsorship pamphlet

1. Describe your spiritual awakening.

2. How does this Step rely on all the other Steps?

3. Do you believe the following statement? “Our usefulness as channels for healing was a direct result of our experiences in sickness, as well as recovery.” Explain.

4. List the values that have emerged through your recovery in S.L.A.A.

5. Describe your career. Have you exploited your career mainly for material security at the expense of self-fulfillment? How can you work to change that? What else would you like to do? Would you change your way of going about your career or let it go? Ask S.L.A.A. fellows if their career life changed with recovery.
6. List ways in which self-serving power and prestige were driving motives:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional</th>
<th>Personal</th>
<th>Social</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. How do we discover a whole new experience of sexuality as a non-addictive medium and come to no longer rely on sexual expression to provide our sense of security and identity?

8. Do you believe that true intimacy cannot exist independent of commitment? Explain your ideas and feelings around this statement.

9. Do you have sober perspectives in the areas of trust, sex and intimacy? Explain.

10. Define what “we have the right to be a jerk” means.

11. List people and situations in your life where you can disclose your sex and love addiction story.

12. Define a “holding environment” when working with others.

13. What’s the danger in not disclosing our sex and love addiction?

14. What does the following statement mean to you? “Constant vigilance is the price we pay for sobriety.”

15. Are you a member of other fellowships? List anyone you think of as a prospect to sponsor in S.L.A.A. What are the advantages/disadvantages of talking to them about S.L.A.A.?

16. Why don’t people flock to S.L.A.A.?

17. What can we do to carry the message?

18. A. Do a longer share at an S.L.A.A. meeting. B. Raise your hand at a meeting when they ask if anyone is available for sponsorship, if they don’t ask, share during open sharing that you are ready to sponsor. C. Give your number to a newcomer after a meeting and let them know you are available for sponsorship or just to talk.

19. Is it a sponsor’s fault if their sponsees don’t get/stay sober? Explain.

20. Why is sponsorship free?

21. Fill out the service chart below:
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional (I am of service in my place of work)</th>
<th>Personal (I am of service to my family/partner/close friends/society/community)</th>
<th>Program (commitments to meetings, sponsees, intergroup, FWS)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

22. Describe what your life will look like when you are practicing the principles in every area of your life.

23. What principles have you acquired that you did not have when you started the steps?
Sponsorship (Am I ready?)

Worked all 12 Steps with a sponsor? □ Yes □ No. I’m on Step _______.

After what step do I feel I would be ready to sponsor?______________________________

I have an S.L.A.A. sponsor right now. No. I have a recovery partner in S.L.A.A. right now □ Yes □ No.

My bottom lines are:
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
I have ________ months/years of sobriety.

I have never/sponsored _____ times before.

My idea of a Higher Power:
____________________________________________________________________________________

Sponsorship beliefs: (e.g. I am not in charge, God is. I only share my experience strength and hope)
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

Times per week I am available for a ________ minute phone conversation: ________. Set time?

________

Times per week to meet (usually 1 for 1 hour-except during 4th Step). _________

Where am I and the sponsee comfortable meeting? Park, coffee shop, my home, their home?

__________________-

What does prospect want in a sponsor (their sponsorship beliefs)?
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

Can prospect respect boundaries?

What should happen if boundaries are crossed?
____________________________________________________________________________________
Can I hear complaints about my sponsorship? What will I do about them? (e.g. Tell sponsee to write resentment inventory about me).

___________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________

Do I have any requirements for sponsorship? (e.g. That the sponsee break up with the qualifier or not date until after Step 5, etc.) And if so, should I have these requirements?

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

Reasons to break up a Sponsor/sponsee relationship:

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

**Dating supplement**

**Books:**
Building partnerships chapter (S.L.A.A. Basic Text)

**Pamphlets:**
Romantic Obsession pamphlet

1. What is the difference between a closed and open system in relationships?

2. What are your hobbies and interests? Are you comfortable in solitude?

3. Are you having new life experiences as a result of your sobriety in S.L.A.A.?

4. Are you self-supporting through your own contributions?

**Before Dating:**
Suggestion: Finish your Step 5 (at least- some say Step 9) before dating.

A. How do you feel about online dating? (fears/concerns). Talk to at least 3 fellows about their experiences with online dating.
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B. Read the article “With S.L.A.A., I Give Love (and Dating) a Good Name” from issue #146 of the Journal (available in digital format only) Discuss it with your sponsor — What did you like/dislike about the article? What suggestions would you follow?

Dating plan:

Sample dating plan:

L’s sponsor gave her this dating plan and G agreed to try it. L writes: “We knew each other as friends for about a year in Nicotine anonymous (a small regular Tuesday meeting with fellowship afterward) we had been friends with phone calls for a couple of months before G asked me out for coffee, which is why I suggest 2 months of friendship dates – parties, double dates etc.- Light and polite. The rules of a dating plan can be tough on the other person which is why I chose full disclosure about my process and my program with G. And I was lucky that he was willing to try something different and trust the 12-Step process. He had to know that I am a sex and love addict who needs this help. He didn’t like some of the sponsor direction but he knew I needed it. The dating plan for me was more about communication (with G, my sponsor and my S.L.A.A. fellows), listening to my sponsor, and trusting God. I had to bookend every date with my sponsor – I kept in close contact.”

L and G’s Dating Plan (only presented for discussion. May be too relaxed for some):

Date 1: coffee during the day 1 or 2 hours at the most. No physical contact. Treat it like a business meeting, light and polite, no graphic language, bonding over traumatic experiences or intriguing statements to make them stick around.

One week in between each date. We could talk on the phone but for an hour at the most once a day or so. No marathon phone sessions and not too late at night.

Date 2: At night (we went to a play) dinner or a movie. We could hold hands.

Date 3: One kiss goodnight.

Date 4: Nothing below the waist.

Date 5: We could have sex if we had a commitment, an AIDS test (We had to go together to the test.) (We had already had the STD talk.) and an acceptable method of birth control (acceptable to L’s sponsor).
The dating plan should be adjusted to fit the individual.

Discuss this plan with your sponsor: Do you like the time frame of the sample dating plan? Do you need more time between dates? How long before physical contact? Define your idea of getting sexual. How long before you get sexual with the person? List of deal breakers (I cannot continue to date this person if... e.g. he’s a smoker).

What needs to be in place before you get sexual with them? Write a fear inventory for each. Suggestion: Write out your own dating plan before you begin to date.

**Dating:**

A. Are you assigning magical qualities to your date?

B. Are you having feelings of inferiority?

C. Are you beating up on yourself for something you said or did during the date or a phone conversation?

D. Is status more important than substance?

E. Are you more interested in power struggles or achieving your potential?

F. Define safe sex.

G. Discuss your idea of viewing people as objects. What can you do in your dating life to prevent this behavior?

H. Discuss perfectionism as it relates to dating.

I. List your boundaries. (e.g. No inviting strangers to apartment. No accepting abusive behavior. No spending more money than is reasonable. No allowing manipulation.)
J. List your character defects specific to dating

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Red flags</th>
<th>Yellow flags</th>
<th>Green flags (good qualities)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Partnership:**

A. Fill out the following chart:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signs of an unhealthy relationship</th>
<th>Opposite of that (healthy relationship)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Are you trying to prevent your partner from trying new healthy life experiences?

C. How do you feel about marriage? Having children? How does your partner feel? Are there any deal breakers with this for either of you? Discuss this with your sponsor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Things I did today to make things more difficult for my partner</th>
<th>Things my partner did for me that were nice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

D. Are you trying to control or rescue your partner?

E. Is the relationship depleting your energy or is it helping you?
F. Do you double date/go to social functions?

G. Will you be OK if the relationship doesn’t work out? What actions will you take to maintain your sobriety?

H. At what point are you willing to disclose your sex and love addiction?

I. At what point are you ready to disclose your deepest, darkest secrets?
Books, Pamphlets and Journals used in workbook.

Books to help you get started:
A.A. Big Book
A.A. Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions
S.L.A.A. Basic Text

Pamphlets to help you start your new journey:
An Introduction to Sex and Love Addicts
Anonymous ....
Sex and Love Addiction 40 Questions for Self-Diagnosis
Questions Beginners Ask
Suggestions For Newcomers
Withdrawal: Gateway to Freedom, Hope, and Joy
Sponsorship: A Return from Isolation
Setting Bottom lines pamphlet (answer all the questions)
Measuring Progress pamphlet
Sponsorship pamphlet
Romantic obsession pamphlet

Journals to help to get you underway:
*the Journal*, Step 6: Articles from *the Journal* with a focus on Step 6
*the Journal*, Step 7: Articles from *the Journal* with a focus on Step 7
*the Journal*, Anorexia: Articles from *the Journal* with a focus on Anorexia
Companion
to
Chapter Four
of the Basic Text of S.L.A.A.,

Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous

25March17
Introduction

The initial draft of this short workbook was created for use in a step-study workshop that covered the Twelve Steps of Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous. The workshop was put on by a local intergroup where there was not an abundance of long-time S.L.A.A. members ready to sponsor, and was intended to introduce workshop participants to the Twelve Steps as presented in Chapter Four of our Basic Text.1

Because the authors’ intent was not to impose their personal understandings of the Twelve Steps, these questions are drawn, as closely as possible, from the experience, strength and hope directly expressed in Chapter Four, the Steps chapter of the Basic Text. You will need to have a copy of the Basic Text in front of you to answer these questions. This set of exercises came out of a belief that our Basic Text is the foundation of a successful recovery from Sex and Love Addiction, and that Chapter Four is the cornerstone of our program.

It must be acknowledged, however, that our Basic Text is not always written in the simplest of language. Also, it is sometimes helpful to be reminded of the true definitions of some key terms. A Glossary is included in the Appendix that gives definitions for many important or unusual words. Those words which are defined in the Glossary are printed in bold.

There is no one way to work the Steps, and this booklet is not presented as an exhaustive or authoritative set of Step exercises. Each sex and love addict is free to work the Steps in a way which is best for him/her, preferably in consultation with an experienced sponsor. You, or your sponsor, may choose to use these questions in conjunction with other readings from S.L.A.A. literature and/or outside literature, or along with personal practices and exercises handed down sponsor to sponsee. That may be especially helpful in Step Four, where the inventories presented may not cover all the situations in which our defects of character may have played into the bigger picture of our lives outside the scope of the disease of sex and love addiction. For those who have worked the Steps before in another Twelve Step program, the exercise may be sufficient; for others, a more exhaustive inventory, such as that found in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, may be helpful. Some may simply wish to use these questions as a “refresher,” having worked the Steps in this program one or more times before. In such instances, the questions might be answered in a way to reflect your experiences and progress in the program since the last time you worked the Steps.

It is also important to remember that although “putting pen to paper” is an invaluable part of working the Steps, true sobriety, from both an emotional and addiction standpoint, requires practicing the principles behind the Steps in our daily lives. An example of this is found in the old recovery saying that if we want God to remove our character defects, we must work to be constantly willing to stop practicing

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1 All references are to Chapter Four of Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous, Augustine Fellowship, S.L.A.A., Fellowship-Wide Services, Inc., 1986, commonly referred to within the Fellowship as “The Basic Text.”
them. It is only when we begin to manifest the transformative power of the Twelve Steps in our daily lives that we are truly experiencing a “spiritual awakening.”

Regardless of how you use this booklet, whether it be with a sponsor or recovery partner, in a retreat, workshop or at a regular Step-format meeting, we hope that these exercises help you further develop a partnership with your Higher Power and that you find yourself becoming a fuller participant in the Fellowship of S.L.A.A.

Step One Exercise

We admitted we were powerless over sex and love addiction – that our lives had become unmanageable.

The questions in this Exercise are based on the First Step Section in Chapter Four of the S.L.A.A. Basic Text, pp. 68-73. Read that Section carefully before answering the following questions. Remember that what we get out of our recovery depends on what we put into it in terms of honesty, openness and willingness.

1. On page 68 the Basic Text says: “Powerless ... means that whatever power is usually involved in making sound choices in our sexual and emotional behavior did not reside within us.” How does that apply to you?
   a. List at least three instances where you were powerless to make a good decision in your sexual and/or romantic past.

   b. In each of those instances, what “payoff” did you get from those questionable decisions (i.e., screen out the world, deaden a load of guilt, build your ego, mask fear, etc.)?

   c. How have you found yourself pursuing a sexual or romantic “solution” to the pain or problems you experience in life?

2. How did sexual and/or romantic activities or obsessions cause you to unreasonably neglect your schooling, work, family, friends, hobbies, social activities or other aspects of a healthy life? Give examples.

   a. How did you convince yourself that such neglect was okay or, in fact, what you really wanted?
3. On page 70, the Basic Text speaks of a “vague and persistent” nagging that all was not well; that “opportunities for growth and wholeness” were slipping by. How was your addiction holding you back, keeping you from being the person you truly wanted to be?

4. Did the emotional payoff (referred to in 1.b., above) decrease over time, resulting in an increase in the rate or frequency at which you would act out? If so, describe how you tried to re-attain that initial level of payoff.

5. See the last paragraph on page 70 of the Basic Text. Did you ever make efforts to stop obsessing/acting out on your own or try other strategies (such as changing your sexual or romantic behaviors or patterns) to control your sex and love addiction? Describe those efforts.

6. Did you ever try to control your sexual and/or romantic activities and obsessions only to find that such control was temporary and attempts were followed by still more or worse activities or obsessions? When? How long did that control last?

7. Think back on that moment when you first decided to walk into an S.L.A.A. meeting:
   a. What happened that convinced you that you needed to seek help?
   b. Was it your own decision or were you following the recommendation of another (i.e., friend, sponsor in another program, spouse, lover or therapist)? If someone else recommended the program, did you understand why it was recommended? If not, do you now?
   c. What were the consequences or circumstances of your sexual and emotional behavior that made your life “unmanageable?”

8. The Basic Text says, on page 73, that our decision to become “unhooked” from sexual and/or romantic obsessions and activities are “unilateral,” explaining that recovery “does not depend on the cooperation or lack of cooperation of our spouses, lovers or sex objects.” We must decide to undertake recovery for our own sake, not to save a relationship or to please another. Is there anyone, other than yourself, upon which you may be conditioning your recovery, either
Step Two Exercise

_Came to believe a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity._

The questions in this Exercise are based on the Second Step Section in Chapter Four of the S.L.A.A. Basic Text, pp. 73-76. Read that Section carefully before answering the following questions. When you work Step Two, you are invited to approach these questions with an open mind, creativity and intuition.

1. Page 73 of the Basic Text talks of the investment we had made in our addiction throughout its course. How did your addiction reveal itself in:
   a. Your career choices?
   b. Your mannerisms and appearance?
   c. Your social circles?
   d. Other ways?

2. Would you say that the addiction dictated, at least in part, _who you were_? Which of your personality traits do you believe are directly attributable to your sex and love addiction?

3. How did you compromise your ethics, beliefs or morals to satisfy your addictive desires?

4. Do you have an example of _feigning interest, empathy_ or compassion for a person or situation to attract someone for an addictive purpose, or to manipulate another’s fears or insecurities to keep them “bound in your web” (p. 74)?

5. It says on page 74 that we had used people as “drugs” to “avoid facing our own personal inadequacy.” How would you describe the “high” you experienced from your addiction? How do you believe your ego or insecurity played into your addiction or _obsessions_?
6. Looking back upon your addiction, do you now see why the Basic Text says, on page 75, that “we could not trust ourselves to be consistent in behavior or in motive?” Were you able to rely upon your own will power or intellect to relieve you of the obsessions of your addiction for any significant period? Describe the ultimate results of such efforts.

7. If, as the Basic Text says on pages 74-75, the addiction was “mind altering” and that it had “perverted our value system,” are you truly willing to accept that your thinking regarding your addiction has been flawed? How might you still be rationalizing addictive thoughts?

8. The Basic Text says that we “need to find a power greater than ourselves – something that would be at least one step ahead of our diseased intentions and give us consistent guidance we could not provide ourselves” (p. 75). If your thinking, values and actions have been negatively affected by your addiction, are you willing to accept the need for a power greater than yourself to relieve you of your obsessions and compulsions? If not, what is holding you back?

9. If you have acknowledged the need to find a reliable and consistent power, are you willing to move forward with faith based upon that need alone, without necessarily being tied to, or obstructed by, any particular conception of God (p. 75)? How sincerely do you believe, in terms of dealing with your addiction, that you are experiencing such a need?

10. We are told to look for the similarities and not concentrate on the differences when we listen to others share in S.L.A.A. meetings, even those who have bottom lines that are different than our own. Does that help you identify, on an emotional level, with the insanity of past addictive histories that you hear in the rooms of S.L.A.A. or the stories of addiction and recovery in the Basic Text? Do you see some of those members with a faith in a Higher Power “now leading, as a practical matter, more positive and healthy lives” (p. 75) and what hope does that give you that it will work for you as well?

Step Three Exercise

Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.
The questions in this Exercise are based on the Third Step section in Chapter Four of the S.L.A.A. Basic Text, pp. 76-77. Read that Section carefully before answering the following. Step Three is about making a decision that gives us hope for recovery. As you answer these questions, visualize this decision not as entering a fight against your addiction, but as a surrender to a solution that comes from outside ourselves.

1. In Steps One and Two we learned that we cannot trust our ability to make sound decisions about sex and love. If your ability to make decisions regarding sexual and/or romantic activities is questionable, what decisions can you make for your recovery?

2. On Page 76 of the Basic Text, we are compared to a cup running over “with obsession – with neediness, lust and intrigue.”
   a. Why have you held on to the negative characteristics of sex and love addiction and your destructive patterns?
   b. How does the need for control (or the illusion of control) over your life keep your “cup” full of those negative things despite unmanageable outcomes and consequences? What are you afraid will happen if you let go of control?

3. Take a moment and imagine what your life would be like if you emptied yourself of the symptoms of your disease, and rather than replacing them yourself, you instead allow yourself to be filled eventually through God’s grace (p. 76). Describe what you believe that life might look like.

4. It is suggested that we can choose to tip our “cup over and let the sickness run out of it” (p. 76).
   a. What is your state of willingness to turn over your life and your will to your Higher Power?
   b. Compose a prayer, in your own words, giving over your will and your life to your Higher Power so that you can let go of the sickness. If your willingness and faith is not yet fully developed, you can include in your prayer a request for that willingness and faith. Are there other compulsive activities or obsessions that you would like to include in this prayer?
5. The Basic Text acknowledges that if we decide “to turn over our will and our lives,” we simply cannot know what the result might be (pp. 76-77). Are you willing to turn over more than just your sex and love addiction? What might you be unwilling to turn over (e.g., some relationship or some element of control)?

6. On page 77, the Basic Text talks of using the serenity prayer as part of the way in which we can handle “challenging and potentially dangerous situations.” What does that prayer teach us regarding a connection between control, serenity and our addiction?

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**Step Four Exercise**

*Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.*

The questions in this Exercise are based on the Fourth Step Section in Chapter Four of the S.L.A.A. Basic Text, pp. 78-81. Read that Section carefully before answering the following. As it says on page 79, there is no “right way” to go about it, our goal is to “gain some real understanding of ourselves” without fear, pride or reservations (with honesty and courage).

**Preparing for our Fourth Step**

1. Describe your state of willingness, including any reservations, to open your life to the influence of a Higher Power by taking a searching and fearless look at yourself.

2. On page 78 of the Basic Text, there is reference to the new insights we begin to gain about ourselves, stemming directly from the fact that we had not been acting out. How does acting out obscure your ability to have insights into yourself?

3. Review your answers to your Third Step Exercise. Why must you “come to terms” with the Third Step (p. 79), before doing your Fourth Step? Is there any more work you might still need to do in preparation for the self-honesty of a Fourth Step?

4. What fears do you have in taking a Fourth Step? What can you ask for in a prayer to help? Compose your own prayer for willingness to do a fearless moral inventory.
5. After working Steps One through Three, do you now see the roles you played and the images you presented (p. 79) because of the addiction?

   a. What were those roles and how did they differ from reality?

   b. What were those images and how did they differ from your true self?

   c. What were your motives behind those roles and images, and what payoffs did you derive from them?

6. Before looking at the harms you had done others, how do you believe your addiction has harmed you? In answering this question, think in terms of spiritual, physical and emotional damage. What are the character defects that came into play with regards to harming yourself?

   **Our Sex and Love Inventory**

   Thinking back on your life, make a list of those who your sexual, romantic and/or emotional conduct has hurt. If there are one-night encounters or anonymous sex, it is unnecessary to remember each encounter unless there was something that sets that encounter apart from others. Otherwise they can be combined as “anonymous encounters,” “one-time partners” or however you feel best describes that group of individuals.

   Remember that your activity with one person may have also hurt another (for example, flaunting a new relationship before an ex-lover/partner/spouse with the intention of hurting him/her). Also, solitary sexual activity (porn, masturbation, voyeurism, etc.) that harmed or deprived your family members, partners or others should be listed (including possibly depriving them of financial resources and your love and/or attention). Finally, you may have hurt one person in more than one way and each cause of harm should be listed.

   Note that if you are working these steps in a group setting such as a workshop or step retreat, you may want to consider both as a group and individually whether you will read your inventory aloud to the whole group, to a small select group you are comfortable with, or to only share it privately with a sponsor or another trusted person. If you have worked the Fourth Step in this program before, you may want to focus on your behavior since your last Fourth Step; although your actions may not have been as not a destructive as it was before entering the program, focus on areas where there is still room for improvement.
A suggested Sex and Love Harms Inventory, with examples, follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>What was my behavior?</th>
<th>What were my defects?</th>
<th>What were my beliefs and motivations?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>My wife Jane</td>
<td>Cheated on her with Sue</td>
<td>Selfishness, rationalization</td>
<td>I believed that I had been deprived of the physical/emotional intimacy that I was entitled to; I believed that I had a right to find someone who would make me feel good about myself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>dishonesty, entitlement, fear of intimacy,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>Had Extra-marital relations with her</td>
<td>Selfishness, lust, manipulative behavior, dishonesty, self-seeking</td>
<td>I wanted somebody who would make me feel good about myself; my motivation was really self-seeking; trying to fill a void</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Kathy from college</td>
<td>Lead her on in a relationship long after I knew we weren't going to stay together</td>
<td>Selfishness, Pride, Co-dependency, Dishonesty, self-centeredness, Entitlement</td>
<td>I was using her to satisfy my lust and self-seeking needs, I chose to keep her available rather than risk being alone and feel bad about myself.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The inventory presented here is drafted specifically with sex and love addiction in mind. If you have never completed a moral inventory before, you may want to consider doing a more complete inventory, using one of many formats available in recovery literature.
List of Character defects commonly associated with sex and love addiction:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anger</th>
<th>Fear</th>
<th>Pride</th>
<th>Self-seeking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arrogance</td>
<td>Greed/Gluttony</td>
<td>Perfectionism</td>
<td>Shame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-dependency</td>
<td>Jealousy</td>
<td>Resentment</td>
<td>Self-sabotaging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controlling</td>
<td>Judgment</td>
<td>Rationalization</td>
<td>Condescension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dishonesty</td>
<td>Low Self Esteem</td>
<td>Self-centeredness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denial/Minimizing</td>
<td>Lust</td>
<td>Selfishness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egotism/Conceit</td>
<td>Manipulation</td>
<td>Self-justification</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entitlement</td>
<td>Objectification</td>
<td>Self-pity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In reviewing your Fourth Step inventory, what behavior patterns do you see that identify your character defects (see, pp. 79-80)? Make a list of those significant character defects that you found.

**Our Non-Sexual/Non-Romantic Inventory**

On page 80, the Basic Text says that as we “looked at our non-sexual relationships with friends, family, co-workers, and so on, we often found the same motives and character defects driving us there as well.” Looking back on your significant non-sexual relationships, make a list of those significant relationships that have been affected because of your character defects, using the same columns as above.

**Finishing your Fourth Step**

7. Do you see, as is said on page 80 of the Basic Text, that even many of the aspects of your relationships that you had labeled as “healthy” or at least “harmless” were “in fact less obvious expressions” of your addiction? Give some personal examples of those aspects of your relationship.

8. On page 81 of the Basic Text we are reminded that regardless of what we had done due to our character defects, “we also that we ourselves had often been done in. We had not consciously chosen to be sex and love addict.”

   a. Where do you believe your disease of addiction may have found its roots?
   b. How are you now better able to let go of some of the self-blame for being an addict? Describe how willing you are now to find “compassion and the first glimpse of self-forgiveness” (p. 80)?

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This is not an exhaustive list of character defects. Feel free to add any additional defects you may identify.
Step Five Exercise

Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

The questions in this Exercise are based on the Fifth Step Section in Chapter Four of the S.L.A.A. Basic Text, pp. 81-84. Read that Section carefully before answering the following. By laying the realities of our addiction bare in Step Five, we see the truths regarding our motivations and actions and develop sincere humility, the foundation of unconditional self-love and acceptance.

Preparing for our Fifth Step

1. As addicts, we divided our lives into carefully segregated compartments underscored by secrecy and confidentiality. This is true regardless whether our acting out included promiscuity, addictive romantic or emotional ties, addiction to a person or solitary sexual acts (see, p. 81).
   a. How did secrecy or confidentiality play a role in supporting your addiction? In answering this question, remember that we may have not only been dishonest about our actions, but about our feelings, beliefs and motives as well.
   b. If confronted with your dishonesty, how would you react (e.g., angrily, as a victim, or ashamed, etc.)?

2. Now that we have completed our Fourth Step inventory, we begin to realize that we only “apparently never had to deal with the consequences” of our addictive behaviors (p. 82).
   a. Looking at some specific examples from your past, what roles did denial and rationalization play in maintaining your addiction in the face of the consequences?
   b. What role did isolation play in your self-delusion?

Doing your Fifth Step and Beyond

3. Although we “are now all quite aware that the God of our understanding had known all along what we were doing,” (p. 82) how can you still include your Higher Power in your Fifth Step Process?
2017 AGENDA Appendix B  
Motions and Items for Discussion  
2017 S.L.A.A. Annual Business Meeting,  
July 25 – 28, 2017  
Fourth Version – July 25, 2017

4. In choosing the person with whom you will do your Fifth Step, you need a person with whom you can be totally honest. See page 83 of the Basic Text:

   a. What characteristics do you want in the person with whom you choose to share your Fifth Step?

   b. What motives do you have in choosing that person? Are you being completely honest and thoughtful about those motives?

5. After you have completed your Fifth Step, take some time for solitary meditation and contemplation:

   a. Is there anything that you were too ashamed to share?

   b. If so, how could holding something back eventually result in leading a compartmentalized life again?

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Step Six Exercise

*Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.*

The questions in this Exercise are based on the Sixth Step Section in Chapter Four of the S.L.A.A. Basic Text, pp. 84-87. Read that Section carefully before answering the following. In Step Six, we begin the process of truly letting go, not only of our addiction, but the thoughts and actions which supported it.

1. On page 84 the Basic Text points out that becoming aware of our defects was not the same thing as having them removed. Look at your list of character defects from Step Four and name at least three recent instances where one or more of those character defects affected your thoughts or actions.

2. One problem that blocks the willingness to let go of our character defects is that it is easy to find ourselves feeling “deprived” once again (pp. 84-85). Do you feel deprived? If so, what do you feel deprived of?

3. On page 85 the Basic Text says that we could not trust ourselves to direct the removal of character defects solely on the basis of our unaided will.
a. What qualities do you think you have that are “quite harmless, in others” that you can turn into a source of addictive return (e.g., flirting, hugging or activities that may be innocent for others)?

b. Are you capable of “putting on the con” (using contrived acts, words or actions – “devices” that attract or deceive others)?

4. What fears do you have in presenting only yourself (without addictive hooks, devices or deceptions) to others, including friends and partners or potential partners (p. 85)?

   a. How difficult is it for you to present yourself, stripped of all pretenses, false affects and masks to others on a consistent basis? If you find it difficult, why do you think that is?

5. For some sex and love addicts, pain is a central characteristic of our addiction (p. 85). Thinking back carefully on your addictive past, has this ever been true for you? If so:

   a. Did you ever equate love with pain? How so?

   b. How could the presence of pain have been comforting, or at least comfortable, to you?

6. Is your willingness to let go of your character defects blocked by the fear of “being emotionally steamrollered” by anyone you let get close to you, or the fear of winding up in inescapable isolation? Which of your character defects are a defensive reaction to fear? How did you use a strategy of distrust and isolation in your relationships, even those relationships that were not inherently hostile or antagonistic (p. 86)?

7. Has your step work so far resulted in a change of attitude, presenting at least some willingness to let go of your character defects, even if there is an absence of the ability to do so? Describe how willing (or desperate) you are to lose those defects. Does it depend on the defect?

   a. If we are unable to relieve ourselves of these character defects on our own, what “legwork” can you undertake, and what mental state can you adopt to allow your Higher Power to remove them?

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**Step Seven Exercise**

*Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.*
The questions in this Exercise are based on the Seventh Step Section in Chapter Four of the S.L.A.A. Basic Text, pp. 87-89. Read that Section carefully before answering the following. In this Step, we combine the willingness of Step Six with genuine humility to allow our Higher Power to do for us that which we cannot do on our own.

1. The Basic Text speaks, on page 87, of no longer confusing humility with humiliation.
   a. How do you see the difference between humility and humiliation?
   b. How can exercising humility in this Step help you get rid of your feelings of shame and humiliation?

2. As we enter the Seventh Step, we develop a deeper “desire to experience God’s will in all areas of our lives for its own sake, rather than for some limited, self-defined objective” (p. 87). We enter this program to stop acting out; why do you think you need to apply this step to behaviors other than just acting out?
   a. If you are still struggling with some bottom-line behaviors, how do you think removing shortcomings, less directly related to the addictive behaviors, will help?

3. The Basic Text asserts, on page 88, that “like it or not, we belonged to God by default.”
   a. What solutions might that statement imply when you experience discouragement, disillusion or pessimism in dealing with your character defects?

4. Step Seven says we ask God to remove our shortcomings, yet on page 88 we are reminded that God is a great “allower.” If your Higher Power will allow you to practice your character defects, what does Step 6 remind us about the removal of character defects, and what can you do to help God, as you understand God, remove the defects?

5. The Basic Text describes the need to form a “partnership” with our Higher Power, neither that of a protective parent nor omnipotent (all powerful) dictator.
   a. A partnership is based upon an agreement between two partners to carry on a venture or business together; what are you willing to agree to? What promises do you want in return from your Higher Power?
   b. What type of communication do you believe will be required for this partnership to work?
6. On page 88, the Basic Text describes how we can ask to have the shortcoming of impatience removed, only to find it was not removed by practicing patience, but instead by getting honest about our self-centered willfulness.

   a. What can you do to become more willing, one day at a time, to accept your character defects and avoid falling back into a state of rationalization and willfulness?

   b. Take each character defect you listed in Step Four and choose an opposite character strength (see below). Come up with a plan to keep each of those character strengths in your consciousness and to become more willing to practice them, rather than practice your defects (i.e., meditations, prayers, reminders etc.). Make yourself accountable by sharing that plan with a sponsor or recovery partner and update him/her on your adherence to the plan daily until it becomes a routine.

   c. How can you remind yourself as part of your plan, that you can accept, without any shame or humiliation, that you are only human and that the important thing is to achieve progress, not perfection?

List of Character Assets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accepting</th>
<th>Forgiving</th>
<th>Intelligent</th>
<th>Reliable/Dependable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compassionate</td>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>Intuitive</td>
<td>Selfless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring</td>
<td>Funny/Witty</td>
<td>Kind</td>
<td>Thoughtful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confident</td>
<td>Generous</td>
<td>Open-minded</td>
<td>Tolerant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative</td>
<td>Grateful</td>
<td>Loving</td>
<td>Trusting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courageous Empathetic</td>
<td>Helpful</td>
<td>Optimistic</td>
<td>Willing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathetic Faithfull</td>
<td>Honest</td>
<td>Patient</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendly</td>
<td>Humble</td>
<td>Persevering</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Step Eight Exercise

Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

The questions in this Exercise are based on the Eighth Step Section in Chapter Four of the S.L.A.A. Basic Text, pp. 89-92. Read that Section carefully before answering the following. In this Step, we extend our self-examination and housekeeping beyond our own character defects to our relationship with others.

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4 This is not an exhaustive list of character assets. Feel free to add any additional assets you may identify.
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We learn the crucial practice of examining our difficulties in relationships and accounting for our part in them.

1. Looking back at your patterns of defects from the Fourth Step, did those patterns affect your relationships? Take each prevalent defect and explain what consequences you believe those defects had on your relationships in general.

2. On page 90 we are reminded again that we may have ourselves been victims of emotional deprivation, physical or sexual abuse. We are also told such abuse may have turned our bitterness towards those who had abused us into self-hatred of ourselves. Have you been a victim of abuse or neglect and how did you turn your feelings about that against yourself?

3. Make a list of people who you believe harmed you, whether maliciously or unintentionally. If you have previously worked Step 8, you may wish to consider people who you missed on previous lists or have harmed you since your last Eighth Step, even if the harms were not as serious as those on your first list.

   a. Review those relationships in which you were harmed; did your character defects play some part, and how did your part contribute to the dysfunction? Make a listing of these things (understanding that a child is never responsible for having received abuse from an adult). You can include your relationship with yourself. An example follows with hypothetical answers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person who Harmed Me</th>
<th>Why I feel anger or bitterness (p. 90)</th>
<th>My harmful behavior or motive in the relationship (my part in it)</th>
<th>How did my part contribute to the dysfunction?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My mother</td>
<td>She constantly criticized me and made me feel bad about myself.</td>
<td>I rebelled and treated her with contempt in return – made her feel like I had no respect for her parental guidance; took what she gave for granted.</td>
<td>My pride and self-centeredness caused me to treat her as if it was her motive to hurt me and I rebelled and disrespected her.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. After completing the above lists, consider the statement on page 90 that you were both “victim and victimizer” and that you had used “disturbed relationships” for your “own purposes, for obtaining addictive payoffs.” What patterns do you see of your behaviors from your list?

   a. Where do you see, as the Basic Text says, there was dishonesty, manipulation, willfulness or pride on your part in these relationships?

5. The Basic Text says “we needed to forgive others for essentially the same qualities and deeds" for which we need forgiveness (p. 90). Do you see any similarities between what the people on your list had done to you and you had done to others?

   a. Does knowing that these persons were “sick and afflicted,” sometimes in the same way as us, make it easier to forgive these people you have listed above?

   b. How does empathy for them help you feel sympathy or compassion for yourself?

   c. Is understanding yourself, and having empathy for others, important in achieving effective amends? How so?

6. Keeping in mind what you have learned about your frailties in the Steps before, and about your part in things above, make a complete list, to the best of your recollection, of everyone you have harmed, listing the name of the person and the harm you had caused. Again, if you have worked Step 8 before, consider people you have harmed since your last Eighth Step, even if the harms were not as serious as those on your first list. Do not omit anyone from this list, not even those whom you should not (because it could injure them or others), or cannot (person is deceased or all contact is lost) make amends. Do not omit any person because you are convinced you will not make amends to him or her. Step Eight is only done on paper; the decision of who we make amends to will be made in Step Nine.
7. Now go through your list, person by person, and determine how willing you are to make amends (or how willing you would be if you could make amends) for each. If you still lack the willingness, are still holding onto resentment, or do not have the courage to approach him/her, what can you do to try and increase that willingness?

8. On pages 91-92, the Basic Text says that as we look at our role in things, we begin to have “a new understanding of our motives, so often a poignant mix of normal human needs for love and a meaningful life, twisted by the addiction into something ugly and harmful to others.” How does understanding that we are not responsible for the conditions that created us, but can be willing to be responsible for ourselves in the present make the amends process more acceptable?

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**Step Nine Exercise**

*Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.*

The questions in this Exercise are based on the Ninth Step Section in Chapter Four of the S.L.A.A. Basic Text, pp. 92-95. Read that Section carefully before answering the following questions. Step Nine is an action step in which we seek to set the record straight with those we have wronged. These actions take preparation and often the advice of others in the program.

1. The Basic Text warns us, on pages 92-93, that we must be careful to not use this step as a way of evading withdrawal or “fixing” addictive relationships.
   
   a. Is there anyone on your list with whom you are in danger of confusing “compassion with passion,” and for whom it would be wise for you to seek the guidance of another prior to deciding whether to make the amends or to avoid the amends altogether?

2. In reviewing your amends list, are there instances that you already know how you should go about making a simple, direct amends? Examples found on page 93 include such things as writing letters or returning heirlooms from ex-lovers. Who are those people and what are the amends?

3. In considering each person on your list, are there some people who, after a long absence or for another reason, you may not be “justified at all in gaining entrance” into their lives (p. 94)?
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4. The most important amends, according to the text, are those that we need to make directly, and in such cases, it is clear “that more is needed than an eloquent apology” (pp. 93-94).
   a. Who are those people?
   b. To make these amends, the Basic Text says we must remain accountable for the effect our amends could create. In considering the direct amends to each, are there effects that you may want to avoid?
   c. Are you ready, in each of those cases, to make “full admission to your contribution to the destructive relationships,” and to be fully honest, if appropriate, about how you had been “living as a sex and love addict” (p. 94)?
   d. Are you ready to make the amends without self-justification, and without expectations as to what conclusions the other party would draw? How do you rid yourself of such expectations or justifications?
   e. Considering each case individually, are there instances where your sense of vulnerability or other factor prevents you from being truly ready to attempt an amends (pp. 94-95)?
      i. If so, what can you do to work towards a state of true readiness?

5. The Basic Text warns that we cannot “rush the process” and that we cannot “be more honest with ourselves than we are ready to be” (p. 95). What do you think is meant by the statement that “our willingness often ran ahead of our readiness?” How do we maintain focus on eventually making those amends and what help can you seek to know when it is time?

Step Ten Exercise
Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

The questions in this Exercise are based on the Tenth Step Section in Chapter Four of the S.L.A.A. Basic Text, pp. 95-98. Read that Section carefully before answering the following questions. Step Ten is our
opportunity to embrace our humanity by accepting that even when we do not act out, we can fall short of the mark and, without shame, promptly set things right.

1. The Basic Text describes, on page 96, troublesome feelings and reactions to people and circumstances. Taking into consideration the character defects identified in Step Four, which troublesome feelings and reactions do you still identify with the most, and under what circumstances do you experience them? (As examples, one may react angrily and indigently when feeling challenged by a co-worker, or isolate and become avoidant when feeling hurt by his/her family members or partner).

2. When troubled by what others do, or might do, we need to make a quick assessment of our own spiritual condition (p. 96). Think back on a recent incident where you had troublesome feelings or reactions and describe your emotions and spiritual condition before, and during, those circumstances.

   a. Were you experiencing some feelings of shame, inadequacy, disappointment or something else?

   b. Reviewing those circumstances, (1) Put yourself in the other person(s)’ shoes. Does that help you gain an understanding of how they acted? (2) Now imagine if you saw someone else react as you did. Does that help you gain perspective on your own behaviors? (pp. 96-97)?

   c. Does turning everything around, as in b., above, make it easier for you to recognize your part in the circumstance, and help you have empathy and understanding for the other(s)? Does it help you “flag your own frailty”? What, if anything, have you discovered about your part?

3. Make a quick checklist of your most frequently experienced lapses. Carry that checklist and apply it against your daily activities at least once a day. An example of that checklist could look something like:

   ____ Was I resentful?  ____ Was I dishonest?  ____ Was I judgmental?
   ____ Was I selfish?  ____ Was I afraid?  ____ Was I manipulative?
   ____ Was I lustful?  ____ Was I objectifying?  ____ Etc.

   Now decide, for each instance, whether there is some change you need to make, some action to
4. On Page 97, we are reminded that we may still hide feelings of disappointment, hurt, fear, or anger and we are instructed on page 98 to “get current” with others to process our emotions or reactions. If you haven’t done so before, get current with your sponsor or another program member on a troublesome situation. How does that help you gain perspective?

5. Through these Steps, we are reminded to concentrate on our own faults and failures and the fact that we are powerless over the deeds and motives of others. Thinking of your life today, is there still anyone, whom you may still try to control their deeds and motives? Someone with whom you engage in unhealthy *intrigue*? Describe those relationships. Think of some exercise which you might use to continually remind yourself of your powerlessness over their thoughts, motives and behaviors (For example, writing the word “humility,” on a rubber band and wearing it on your wrist.) Are you willing to try such an exercise?

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**Step Eleven Exercise**

*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.*

The questions in this Exercise are based on the Eleventh Step Section in Chapter Four of the S.L.A.A. Basic Text, pp. 98-101. Read that Section carefully before answering the following questions. Step Eleven is where we seek to further build upon our *partnership* with our Higher Power and maintain our spiritual condition daily. We also find that the need(s) we were trying to fill with our sex and love addiction can only be filled by spirituality.

1. The Basic Text speaks of a *provisional use* of our Higher Power on page 98. Indeed, most of us relied upon a God of our understanding to stop acting out. Considering your relationship with a Higher Power:

   a. Under what circumstances do you still most often fail to rely on the God of your understanding?

   b. Is your reliance on a Power greater than yourself conditioned upon any circumstance, situation or set of emotions?
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2. On page 99, the Text describes a progression of our view of a Higher Power, starting as something to “bail us out of scrapes,” then as an “overseeing caretaker,” to finally developing a “sense of being in conscious partnership” with a God of our understanding.

   a. How has your view of a Higher Power changed over time? Do you find yourself sometimes still visualizing that Power as any of the following, and if so, under what circumstances?
      - As an angry parent?
      - As a benign ruler?
      - As a critical taskmaster?
      - As a distant, detached being?

   b. Refer to your answer to Question 5a. in Step Seven. Is there anything you would now change in your Partnership Agreement with your Higher Power? If so, take a moment to write out a revised agreement.

3. The Text reminds us that many S.L.A.A. members have encountered “many a painful, growth-fostering situation” along the course of our sobriety, which God had either been the architect of, or at least had allowed to occur (p. 99).

   a. Are there painful situations in your past for which you are still holding your Higher Power responsible? What are they?

   b. How can you come to see, as the book suggests, difficult situations furthering your relationship with a God of your understanding (p. 99)?

4. Pages 99-100 discusses our inability to separate “worldly security” from feeling right with ourselves, which comes from participating in our relationship with God. Putting a God of our understanding first, per the Basic Text, is necessary before committing ourselves to our careers, personal endeavors and attempts to reach our personal, social and professional goals.

   a. Is there anything in your life, whether professional, social or personal which you still put before your partnership with God, as you understand God?

   b. Are your relationships with others built upon your relationship with a Higher Power? If not, how could you make them more so?
5. On page 100 the Text reminds us that God’s grace is available to us, not only in the significant, but in the mundane. Why is it important to maintain our relationship with a Higher Power in trivial matters and not only when we have a crises or major decision?

6. The Basic Text suggests there are many ways to maintain conscious contact with a power greater than ourselves. What things are you willing to do to maintain that contact, and how can you keep yourself mindful of that commitment?

7. Has your current relationship with your Higher Power changed your perception of love? How could a change in your relationship with a God of your understanding make the meaning of non-addictive love more apparent to you?

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**Step Twelve Exercise**

*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 principals in all areas of our lives.*

The questions in this Exercise are based on the Twelth Step Section in Chapter Four of the S.L.A.A. Basic Text, pp. 101-103. Read that Section carefully before answering the following questions. In our addiction, we lived from a place of self-centeredness; in recovery, we awaken to the spiritual condition of sobriety and helpfulness to others.

1. The Basic Text speaks of continuing to “affirm our recovery by working with other sex and love addicts.” Also, “the effectiveness of our efforts to help others would be directly related to the level of our ‘spiritual awakening’.” (p. 102).

   a. What is the difference between your spiritual condition upon entering the program and now?

2. The Text describes, on page 102, how, “minus the guilt,” our experiences in addiction are transformed into “lessons for living.”
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a. Have you let go of the guilt and shame enough to share your story freely with other sex and love addicts? What things are you reluctant to share and how can you discern between holding back for reasons of sensible discretion rather than shame or guilt?

b. How do you believe your story would be helpful to other sex and love addicts? What distinct aspect(s) of your story do you believe might be of special help to others (For example, if abused as a child, your story might be especially helpful to others who have experienced a similar abuse)?

3. On page 102, we are told that “our usefulness as channels for healing was a direct result of our experiences in sickness, as well as in recovery.” How can you use that correlation between experience and helpfulness to further forgive yourself, and move beyond the losses caused by your addiction?

4. The Basic Text reminds us that our new-found principals gained from working the Steps are not “window dressing”, and personal and professional situations “which could not affirm these spiritual values were expendable” (p. 102). What personal situations (besides acting out) and/or professional situations have you changed for the sake of your recovery? Are there any such situations you still need to change or let go?

5. What skills, talents, and characteristics do you have that might be helpful in S.L.A.A. service, whether at the group, intergroup or Fellowship-Wide level? What service are you willing to give?

6. The Basic Text refers to the “experience of sexuality as a non-addictive medium,” and no longer needed “to be relied upon for nearly all of what we considered to be our identity.” It also cautions us that discovering a new freedom and joy from sexuality is a potential we realize only gradually (p. 103).

   a. If we accept what the Basic Text says, that sexuality is a by-product of sharing and cooperation, do you still hold onto any illusions about sex or romance that are inconsistent with that view? If so, what might those illusions be?

   b. Are there times when your own spiritual condition affected (positively or negatively) your ability to help someone else?
7. The Basic Text informs us, on page 103, that sexuality can become “an expression of what was, already, in the partnership.”

a. Are you still putting sex and/or romance ahead of the more spiritual aspects of your partnership or seeking a partnership based primarily upon sexual attraction and romance?

8. What have you learned about yourself from working these Steps that might help you change your perspective on your present and future relationships?

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**Appendix**

**Glossary of Terms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accept/Acceptance</td>
<td>To endure without protest or reaction/the act of accepting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affect</td>
<td>A set of observable manifestations of a subjectively experienced emotion. To fake sympathy for an individual’s condition, when in reality you don’t care, would be an example of a “false affect.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antagonistic</td>
<td>Marked by, or resulting from, opposition and confrontation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compartmentalize</td>
<td>To separate into isolated compartments or categories. It is often linked to rationalization and the ability to live a dual existence, a life hidden from others and/or to separate thoughts from feelings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compulsion</td>
<td>An irresistible persistent impulse to perform an act.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contrived</td>
<td>Having an unnatural or false quality.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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5 All definitions come from the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary except where modified to explain specific context.
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Decision
A determination arrived at after consideration.

Denial
Denial is outright refusal to admit or recognize that something has occurred or is currently occurring. In extreme cases, denial can result in self-delusion, or perversion of one’s thinking.

Empathy
Relating and feeling another’s feelings for yourself.

Expectation
Without expectation, in terms of making an amends, means not expecting something in return for the amends, whether it be a mutual apology or an expression of forgiveness.

Expression
An act, process, or instance of something; by “expressions of our addiction,” the Basic Text is speaking of behaviors and motives that arise out of our sex and love addiction.

Feign Interest
Give a false appearance of being interested.

Frailty
A fault due to weakness, especially of moral character.

Grace
In spiritual terms, it is unmerited assistance from a Higher Power given to people for their renewal and spiritual strengthening.

Higher Power
For some, this is a God of their understanding, for others it may be the program of S.L.A.A. or some other concept; as stated on page 75 of the Basic Text, whatever we choose, it is “something that would be at least one step ahead of our own diseased intentions, and give us the consistent guidance we could not provide for ourselves.”

Humiliation
The state of being reduced to a lower position in one’s own or other’s eyes.

Humility
The quality or state of not thinking you are better than other people; the quality or state of being humble.

Insight
An insight into ourselves includes a discovery into the inner nature of our thoughts, choices and actions; why we do the things we do.
### Intrigue
In terms of romance, “intrigue” is to make someone want to know more about you with an intention of causing that person to become romantically or sexually interested in you.

### Manipulation
The act of changing by artful or unfair means so as to serve one's purpose; using actions and devices to attempt to control the reactions of others.

### Obsession
A persistent disturbing preoccupation with an often-unreasonable idea or feeling. An obsession in this program could be with another person, fantasy, sexual act or fetish, or even a romantic ideal.

### Partnership
A relationship involving close cooperation between the partners and having specified rights and responsibilities for each partner.

### Payoff
The advantage or benefit that is gained from doing something.

### Persistent
Continuing or inclined to go on resolutely or stubbornly despite efforts to stop or avoid it.

### Poignant
Painfully affecting the feelings.

### Pretense
A claim that is made or implied that is not supported by fact, or an inadequate or insincere attempt to attain a certain condition or quality.

### Provisional
Serving for the time being; temporary, based upon certain conditions.

### Rationalize
A way of thinking in which behaviors or feelings are explained in a seemingly logical manner to avoid the truth (also known as “making excuses”).

### Self-delusion
The act of fooling oneself, often the result of rationalization and denial.

### Self-Justification
The act or an instance of making excuses for oneself.

### Surrender
To give oneself up into the power of another. In Step Three, that other is a Higher Power of our understanding.
Sympathy

Sympathy is a state of compassion for the tribulations and/or pain another is suffering.

Unilateral

Done or undertaken by one person or party.
Healthy Relationships: Romantic and Committed Partnership

What to Expect from the Pamphlet?

This pamphlet is to be used as a compass on one’s recovery journey and does not suggest that simply finding an engrossing new direction in life with another person is enough for a contented life alone. “An outcome of sexual and emotional sobriety—Partnership? Or Living Alone?”

This material is a blueprint of our experience, strength and hope, as well as summaries and interpretations from Chapter 8 of the S.L.A.A. Basic Text. It is not an inquiry into how our early family dynamics shape our adult patterns of love, why our partners often drive us mad, and how to handle this inescapable fallibility of the human heart with gentleness and self-compassion. This piece of literature is about looking at the stages of what can constitute a healthy relationship which can be a rallying point of clarity, presence, and balance with ourselves and another.

Healthy relationships, especially long-term, committed partnerships are complicated and are frontiers for deeper exploration along the recovery journey. “It is very hard to achieve a healthy relationship if you keep the emergency brake on, and the emergency brake is the fear of abandonment,” as stated by a seasoned S.L.A.A. member. There is hope for those seeking a healthy relationship…read on.

An Unconscious, Familiar Relationship Pattern?
Often we believe we are seeking happiness in love, but we confuse sex with love and what we are really after is familiarity. We are looking to recreate, within an adult relationship, the very feelings we knew so well in childhood and which were rarely limited to just tenderness and care. The love most of us have experienced early on came entwined with other, more destructive dynamics. For example, we may have a habit of wanting to help an out of control adult to the detriment of our own needs. Or we may have had an uncomfortable fear of rejection due to our inability to navigate intimacy.

How logical, then, that we should, as adults, find ourselves rejecting certain “love candidates” not because they are wrong but because they are a little too right—in the sense of seeming somehow excessively balanced, mature, understanding, and reliable—given that, in our hearts, such rightness feels foreign and unearned. Often we chase after more exciting people, acting out with multiple partners, or staying “committed” to the right kind of partner attempting to battle the urge to act out which only increases a sense of entitlement, resentment and displaced anger. These patterns grow not in the belief that life with them will be more harmonious, but out of an unconscious sense that it will be reassuringly familiar in its patterns of frustration. We believed in excitement rather than in the reality. We long for love as a feeling by which we were overwhelmed, instead of a committed thoughtful decision.

Living Alone or in a Healthy Partnership?
Many of us that have journeyed this often long and sometimes painful road towards sexual and emotional sobriety are seeking to learn how to have a healthy relationship with ourselves and a partner. We have a choice and this recovery choice—to experience a healthy partnership or to live alone—is personal.

As we come through and out of the withdrawal phase of recovery, we are confronted with the possibility of changes in our life circumstances. For many of us, the most challenging and potentially fulfilling changes are in the area of rebuilding and reconciling a relationship, starting a relationship with another, or living a life in solitude.

Am I Ready?
After our battle with withdrawal is over, and we are feeling better about our ability to invest in a healthy committed relationship, how do we know we are ready? Since many of us have never experienced a healthy, romantic partnership, the fear of ending up in a
similar situation like the one that got us to S.L.A.A. to begin with is great. Some of us found it helpful to ask ourselves the following questions:

• Am I done with withdrawal and available?
• Have I completed the Twelve Steps of S.L.A.A.?
• Do I have a relationship with my Higher Power?
• Do I have a healthy, intimate connection with myself?
• Am I still actively attending meetings in S.L.A.A. and doing service?
• Do I have the blessings of my sponsor to begin dating?
• Do I have a written dating plan in place?
• Do I have bottom lines for my behaviors?
• Do I have deal breakers (unacceptable characteristics or red flags in the process of getting to know possible romantic partners) in my dating plan?
• Do I check in with my sponsor and recovery partners when I see red flags?
• Can I support myself by disconnecting from someone when I feel uncomfortable?
• Do I have a support system in place so that when I get triggered I can get healthy, honest feedback?
• Do I practice top line behaviors on a daily basis?
• Am I comfortable with being alone?

**Entering a Healthy Partnership**

If we have found someone to share the experience of being in a romantic partnership, how do we soberly navigate this new territory in a safe, healthy way? How do we keep a balance with our S.L.A.A. program with our new romantic endeavors?

Consider these questions to determine your part in participating in a healthy, romantic and committed partnership:

• Do I practice direct communication?
• Can I pause and reflect when angry, hurt, sad or scared?
• Do I have a habit of checking in with recovery partners and my sponsor?
• Are both partners evenly invested in the relationship, is contact and commitment reciprocal from both?
• Can I apply the spiritual principles of the steps and the traditions in all my relationships?

Now, more than ever, our connection with recovery and our Higher Power needs to be front and foremost in our lives. The following is a checklist of qualities of an unhealthy relationship versus a healthy relationship:
## Unhealthy Relationship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>We have feelings of clinging and neediness. We think we will die if we don't have this person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>We do not match energies with our partners. We give too much or too little to the relationship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>We stuff and withhold feelings of anger, fear, and sadness and then lash out with destructive behaviors such as raging, brooding, silent treatment, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>We act out feelings of anger, fear, and sadness in an attempt to manipulate our partner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>We act willfully and do not align our will with God’s will.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>We give in order to get and/or to manipulate our partner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>We are crushed when we do not get our partner’s approval.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>We see a decline in self-care and participation in our own activities. We experience a loss of self.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>We blame our partner for their inadequacies and focus on their side of the street.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Healthy Relationship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>We feel comfortable when we are apart from our partner. We feel secure in the connection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>We match our partner’s energy. Our connection is fluid and reciprocal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>We feel our feelings of anger, fear, and sadness as they arise. If helpful to the relationship, we communicate these feelings to our partner in a direct, loving, emotionally sober way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>We take regular inventory of our words and actions and make amends when we have caused harm to our partner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>We recognize our willfulness and refrain from acting on it. We turn the situation over to our Higher Power.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>We freely give and receive gifts of time, service, and resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>We derive feelings of self-worth from participating in hobbies, nurturing our friendships and working our program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>We maintain self-care and stay engaged in our own lives. Our sense of self is intact.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>We keep the focus on ourselves.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Maintaining a Healthy Partnership

As mentioned in the S.L.A.A. Basic Text (pg. 159), “Those of us who have persisted along the partnership road can only add that we have emerged from the coping period onto a new plane of human experience, which we had never previously known. This experience is, we suspect, the experience of authentic living, and loving.” To this end we ask ourselves:

Maintaining an intimate relationship with a Power Greater Than Ourselves:
- Am I willing and able to live in the now, in reality, and surrender fantasy and obsession to my Higher Power?
- Do I have a regular practice of prayer and meditation, seeking a Higher Power’s will for me?
- During conflicting moments with my partner, do I ask, “Where is Higher Power in this?” or “What is the God of my understanding’s will in this conflict?”
- Am I coming from a place of compassion and acceptance for what is?

Maintaining an intimate relationship with self by continuing to work all aspects of my program and practice regular self-care:
- Am I maintaining a recovery-based relationship with myself and utilizing my tools?
- Do I regularly practice the 10th Step, especially when conflicts arise in my relationship?
- Do I continue to practice my S.L.A.A. Program by participating in meetings, giving service and sharing my experience, strength, and hope with other members?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unhealthy Relationship</th>
<th>Healthy Relationship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 We expect our partners to make us happy.</td>
<td>10 We take responsibility for our own happiness and share it with our partner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 We feel lonely and isolated in the presence of our partner.</td>
<td>11 We experience feelings of warmth and intimacy with our partner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 We obsess over our partner and the relationship. We harp on problems and arguments and push issues with circular no-win disagreements.</td>
<td>12 We ask for a time out when discussion turns destructive. We learn to let go and let God.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Maintaining a loving, supportive, romantic and committed partnership, while employing our whole new relationship strategy:

- Do I use what I have learned in Step Twelve and apply it to the situations that arise in my relationship?
- Do I continue to work my Twelve Steps as they relate to the day-to-day maintenance of my interactions with my partner?
- Do I practice the traditions and concepts, respecting my partner when communicating with them?
- During a conflict, am I able to ask for a time out, giving myself time to pause when agitated?
- Am I able to establish boundaries or agreements when needed?
- Do I avoid dramatic exits or behaviors, by attempting to solve issues if I am hungry, angry, lonely or tired (“H.A.L.T.”)?
- Am I upholding the notion that we are allies on the same team?
- Do I express my feelings, using “I” statements, instead of remaining silent, or abandoning my feelings and needs?
- Do I use program tools, like simple responses, to employ a new strategy when I disagree with my partner? Here are some response examples:
  - You may be right, let me think about that.
  - I hear what you are saying.
  - I understand that it probably seems that way to you.
  - I should look into that.
  - You have a right to your opinion.
  - That’s a good point.
  - Let me understand what you said [repeat what you heard word for word].
  - Wait a second; I’m not sure I’m comfortable with that. Let me get back to you.
  - I need to think about this.

In closing, we hope this pamphlet gives you insight and support while on your recovery journey. Please take what you like and leave the rest. To keep the program simple, no matter what your circumstances, we suggest using the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, The Serenity Prayer, the slogans, the Journal, and service work to continue your recovery. There is a spiritual principle behind each of our Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions and Signs of Recovery. To better understand the program’s spiritual principles,
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see the table at the end of this document. As expressed in S.L.A.A.’s Twelfth Step, “... we practice these principles in all areas of our lives.”

As this quote found in “My Continuing Sobriety” from The Journal July-August 1995 puts it so eloquently: "The next relationship, whatever it is, will surely happen with some kind of healing."

We suggest applying this pamphlet to your recovery journey in combination with the S.L.A.A Basic Text, especially Chapter 8 “Building Partnerships.” The last two paragraphs of Chapter 8 are quoted below.

“The truth is we feel we are ‘on to’ something big. We don’t know where it will lead us. We just don’t know what the upper limits of healthy human functioning are. In any event, our hunch is that we are but newcomers to this larger experience of living, this wider arena of life. If all we are capable of doing here is to convey to you our sense of hope, and our conviction that a new life of fulfillment, richness and mystery surely awaits you as you move into sobriety, then we are meeting our task.

May each of you, as you embark on this adventure, discover your share of the golden braid: that unfolding wonder of which we are all a part. We are with you. We are all joint travelers on destiny’s path, and we all have much to learn from each other.”

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.

This table is a list of “commonly accepted” spiritual principles behind our S.L.A.A.’s Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions and Signs of Recovery as applied to a healthy,
romantic, and committed relationship. Please use your Higher Power’s guidance for interpretation of these principles.

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<th>Twelve Traditions</th>
<th>Signs of Recovery</th>
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<td>10 Perseverance</td>
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<td>11 Awareness</td>
<td>Anonymity</td>
<td>Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Service</td>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>Normality</td>
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ATTACHMENT Part #1- THE DRAFT OF THE UPDATED VERSION OF THE 40 QUESTIONS FOR SELF DIAGNOSIS OF SEX AND LOVE ADDICTION

ATTACHMENT Part #2- WHAT ORIGINAL 40 QUESTIONS REMAINED IN THE UPDATED VERSION OF THE 40 QUESTIONS FOR SELF DIAGNOSIS OF SEX AND LOVE ADDICTION?
ATTACHMENT Part #1- THE DRAFT OF THE UPDATED VERSION OF THE 40 QUESTIONS FOR SELF DIAGNOSIS OF SEX AND LOVE ADDICTION

The following questions are designed to be used as guidelines to identifying possible signposts of sex and love addiction. These 40 questions are not intended to provide a sure-fire method of diagnosis, nor can negative answers to these questions provide absolute assurance that the addiction is not present. Many sex and love addicts have varying patterns, from obsession to avoidance. If you have answered yes to several of these questions you may find the program of Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous helpful for you.

Yes [ ] No [ ] 01) Have you said to yourself “If I have sex with this person, then he/she will love me”?

Yes [ ] No [ ] 02) Have you found it difficult to stay faithful in a committed relationship?

Yes [ ] No [ ] 03) Do you lose track of time looking at or searching for pornography on the computer?

Yes [ ] No [ ] 04) Have you had sex with someone you just met, online, on the first date, at a bar, park, bookstore or public restroom?

Yes [ ] No [ ] 05) Do you find yourself seeking out and engaging in sexual or romantic situations that could jeopardize your health, family, job or reputation?

Yes [ ] No [ ] 06) Do you feel you need to hide your sexual or romantic activities from others – spouse, friends, family, co-workers, counselors, etc.?

Yes [ ] No [ ] 07) Have you had uncomfortable feelings from sexual experiences that led you to sexual anorexia (i.e. abstaining from sexual activities)?

Yes [ ] No [ ] 08) Do you get a "high" from sex, fantasy and/or romantic situations?

Yes [ ] No [ ] 09) Have you gone out of your way to stare, follow or stalk someone?

Yes [ ] No [ ] 10) Do you have sexual content sent to your mobile phone or computer?

Yes [ ] No [ ] 11) Do you deliberately put yourself in situations where close physical contact with other people is possible?
Yes [ ] No [ ] 12) Do you have secret files on your computer, phone or on social media for your private behavior that you fear someone will discover?

Yes [ ] No [ ] 13) Have you lost count of the number of sexual partners you've had? Have you or do you keep a list of sexual “encounters”?

Yes [ ] No [ ] 14) Are you isolating from friends and family because of your current relationship?

Yes [ ] No [ ] 15) Do you find yourself in a sexual or romantic relationship that you cannot leave or stop?

Yes [ ] No [ ] 16) Are you looking for a new partner before you leave the old partner?

Yes [ ] No [ ] 17) Do you feel lonely, purposeless or like something’s missing in your life without a romantic or sexual partner?

Yes [ ] No [ ] 18) Do you feel as though the right partner can “fix” you?

Yes [ ] No [ ] 19) Do you have inappropriate, romantic and/or sexual fantasies about people you don't know or just met?

Yes [ ] No [ ] 20) Are your fears of not being in control, being abandoned or hurt keeping you from engaging in a relationship?

Yes [ ] No [ ] 21) Do you engage in the practice of exposing your body in public?

Yes [ ] No [ ] 22) Do you often have sex simply because the other person wants to have sex?

Yes [ ] No [ ] 23) Have you felt that you had to have sex or need to have sex in order to stay in a relationship?

Yes [ ] No [ ] 24) Have you wished you could be less needy or emotionally dependent in a relationship?

Yes [ ] No [ ] 25) Have you watched, filmed or photographed a person in a sexual situation without them knowing?

Yes [ ] No [ ] 26) Do you have multiple or deceiving profiles on dating sites or on social networks?
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Yes [ ] No [ ] 27) Are you afraid that deep down you are un-loveable?

Yes [ ] No [ ] 28) Have you been arrested or stopped by the police for sexual behavior?

Yes [ ] No [ ] 29) Are you more concerned with your sexual performance than you are with other aspects of the relationship?

Yes [ ] No [ ] 30) Do you use phone apps that identify sexually available people in your area?

Yes [ ] No [ ] 31) Are you ashamed of your sexual thoughts, fantasies or actions?

Yes [ ] No [ ] 32) Do you send sexually based messages or pictures to others?

Yes [ ] No [ ] 33) Do you feel that being in a relationship is all that really matters?

Yes [ ] No [ ] 34) Do you use sex to escape stress, anxiety or life’s other problems?

Yes [ ] No [ ] 35) Do you feel uncomfortable about your masturbation because of the frequency, the fantasies you engage in, the props you use, and/or the places in which you do it?

Yes [ ] No [ ] 36) Have you manipulated or encouraged an individual to engage in sex against their will?

Yes [ ] No [ ] 37) Are you unable to focus on other areas of your life because of fantasy, compulsive sexual or romantic thoughts?

Yes [ ] No [ ] 38) Have you thought of having numerous sexual experiences in one day as a goal?

Yes [ ] No [ ] 39) Are you emotionally destroyed when someone doesn’t call or doesn’t want to interact with you anymore?

Yes [ ] No [ ] 40) Have you ever said to yourself “I have to stop this” ?
ATTACHMENT Part #2- WHAT ORIGINAL 40 QUESTIONS REMAINED IN THE UPDATED VERSION OF THE 40 QUESTIONS FOR SELF DIAGNOSIS OF SEX AND LOVE ADDICTION?

**Key**- Original Questions are listed as “OQ”

Revised Questions are noted as" Revised Q”

1. Original Question (OQ)- 1.) Have you ever tried to control how much sex to have or how often you would see someone?
REVISED Question (Revised Q)- #38) Have you ever thought of having many sexual experiences in one day as a goal?

2. OQ-#2- Do you find yourself unable to stop seeing a specific person even though you know that seeing this person is destructive to you?
REVISED Q- #15) Do you find yourself in a sexual or romantic relationship that you cannot leave or stop?

3. OQ- #3.) Do you feel that you don't want anyone to know about your sexual or romantic activities? Do you feel you need to hide these activities from others – friends, family, co-workers, counselors, etc.?
REVISED Q- #05) Do you find yourself seeking out and engaging in sexual or romantic situations that could jeopardize your health, family, job or reputation?

4. OQ- #4.) Do you get "high" from sex and/or romance? Do you crash?
REVISED Q- #08) Do you get a "high" from sex, fantasy and/or romantic situations?

5. OQ- #5.) Have you had sex at inappropriate times, in inappropriate places, and/or with inappropriate people?
REVISED Q- #04) Have you ever had sex with someone you just met online, at a park, bookstore, bar or public restroom?

6. OQ- #6.) Do you make promises to yourself or rules for yourself concerning your sexual or romantic behavior that you find you cannot follow?
REVISED Q- #40) Have you ever said to yourself “I have to stop this”?

7. OQ-# 7.) Have you had or do you have sex with someone you don't (didn’t) want to have sex with?
REVISED Q- #22) Do you often have sex simply because the other person wants to have sex?

AND
REVISED Q-#01) Have you ever said to yourself “If I have sex with this person, then he/she will love me”?

8. OQ-# 8.) Do you believe that sex and/or a relationship will make your life bearable? 
REVISED Q-#34) Do you use sex to escape stress, anxiety or life’s other problems? AND 
REVISED Q-#18) Do you feel as though the right partner can "fix" you?

9. OQ# 9.) Have you ever felt that you had to have sex? 
REVISED Q-#22) Do you often have sex simply because the other person wants to have sex? AND 
REVISED Q-#01) Have you ever said to yourself “If I have sex with this person, then he/she will love me”?

10. OQ# 10.) Do you believe that someone can "fix" you? 
REVISED Q-#18) Do you feel as though the right partner can "fix" you?

11. OQ#11.) Do you keep a list, written or otherwise, of the number of partners you've had? 
REVISED Q-# 13) Have you lost count of the number of sexual partners you've had? Have you or do you keep a list of sexual “encounters”?

12. OQ-# 12.) Do you feel desperation or uneasiness when you are away from your lover or sexual partner? 
REVISED Q-#33) Do you feel that being in a relationship is all that really matters? AND 
REVISED Q-#14) Are you isolating yourself from friends and family because of your current relationship?

13. OG-# 13.) Have you lost count of the number of sexual partners you've had? 
REVISED Q-#13) Have you lost count of the number of sexual partners you've had? Have you or do you keep a list of sexual “encounters”?

14. OG-#14.) Do you feel desperate about your need for a lover, sexual fix, or future mate? 
REVISED Q-#33) Do you feel that being in a relationship is all that really matters? AND 
REVISED Q-#17) Do you feel lonely, purposeless or like something’s missing in your life without a romantic or sexual partner? AND 
REVISED Q-# 18) Do you feel as though the right partner can "fix" you?
15. OQ-# 15.) Have you or do you have sex regardless of the consequences (e.g. the threat of being caught, the risk of contracting herpes, gonorrhea, HIV/AIDS, etc.)? REVISED Q-# 05) Do you find yourself seeking out and engaging in sexual or romantic situations that could jeopardize your health, family, job or reputation?

16. OQ-#16 Do you find that you have a pattern of repeating bad relationships? REVISED Q-# 15) Do you find yourself in a sexual or romantic relationship that you cannot leave or stop?

17. OQ-# 17.) Do you feel that your only (or major) value in a relationship is your ability to perform sexually, or provide an emotional fix? REVISED Q-# 01) Have you ever said to yourself “If I have sex with this person, then he/she will love me”?
AND REVISED Q-# 29) Are you more concerned with your sexual performance than you are with other aspects of the relationship?

18. OQ-# 18.) Do you feel like a lifeless puppet unless there is someone around with whom you can flirt? Do you feel that you're not "really alive" unless you are with your sexual /romantic partner? REVISED Q-# 29) Are you more concerned with your sexual performance than you are with other aspects of the relationship?
AND REVISED Q-# 33) Do you feel that being in a relationship is all that really matters?
AND REVISED Q-# 23) Have you felt that you had to have sex or need to have sex in order to stay in a relationship?

19. OQ-# 19.) Do you feel entitled to sex? REVISED Q-#36) Have you ever manipulated or encouraged an individual to engage in sex against their will?

20. OQ-# 20.) Do you find yourself in a relationship that you cannot leave? REVISED Q-#15) Do you find yourself in a sexual or romantic relationship that you cannot leave or stop?
AND REVISED Q-#39) Are you emotionally destroyed when someone doesn't call or doesn't want to interact with you anymore?
AND REVISED Q-#24) Have you ever wished you could be less needy or emotionally dependent in a relationship?
21. OQ-# 21.) Have you ever threatened your financial stability or standing in the community by pursuing a sexual partner?
REVISED Q-# 05) Do you find yourself seeking out and engaging in sexual or romantic situations that could jeopardize your health, family, job or reputation?

22. OQ-# 22.) Do you believe that the problems in your "love life" result from not having enough of, or the right kind of sex? Or from continuing to remain with the "wrong" person?
REVISED Q-#17) Do you feel lonely, purposeless or like something’s missing in your life without a romantic or sexual partner?
AND
REVISED q-# 29) Are you more concerned with your sexual performance than you are with other aspects of the relationship?
AND
REVISED q-# 02) Have you found it difficult to stay faithful in a committed relationship?

23. OQ-# 23.) Have you ever had a serious relationship threatened or destroyed because of outside sexual activity?
REVISED Q-# 05) Do you find yourself seeking out and engaging in sexual or romantic situations that could jeopardize your health, family, job or reputation?

24. OQ-# 24.) Do you feel that life would have no meaning without a love relationship or without sex? Do you feel that you would have no identity if you were not someone’s lover?
REVISED Q-# 33) Do you feel that being in a relationship is all that really matters?

25. OQ-# 25.) Do you find yourself flirting or sexualizing with someone even if you do not mean to?
no exact revision for this question however we think this is an updated version of the question, not using the word- flirtng
REVISED QUESTION- #26) Do you have multiple or deceiving profiles on dating sites or on social networks?

26. OQ-# 26.) Does your sexual and/or romantic behavior affect your reputation?
REVISED Q-# 05) Do you find yourself seeking out and engaging in sexual or romantic situations that could jeopardize your health, family, job or reputation?

27. OQ-# 27-) Do you have sex and/or "relationships" to try to deal with, or escape from life’s problems?
REVISED Q-# 34) Do you use sex to escape stress, anxiety or life’s other problems?
28. OQ #28.) Do you feel uncomfortable about your masturbation because of the frequency with which you masturbate, the fantasies you engage in, the props you use, and/or the places in which you do it?

REVISED Q-# 35.) Do you feel uncomfortable about your masturbation because of the frequency, the fantasies you engage in, the props you use, and/or the places in which you do it?

29. OQ-# 29.) Do you engage in the practices of voyeurism, exhibitionism, etc., in ways that bring discomfort and pain?

REVISED Q-# 21) Do you engage in the practice of exposing your body in public?

AND

REVISED Q-# 11) Do you deliberately put yourself in situations where close physical contact with other people is possible?

AND

REVISED Q-# 25) Have you ever watched, filmed or photographed a person in a situation without them knowing?

AND

REVISED Q-# 32) Do you send sexually based messages or pictures to others?

30. OQ-# 30.) Do you find yourself needing greater and greater variety and energy in your sexual or romantic activities just to achieve an "acceptable" level of physical and emotional relief?

No corresponding revision, this question was not used in new pamphlet

31. OQ-# 31.) Do you need to have sex, or "fall in love" in order to feel like a "real man" or a "real woman"?

REVISED Q-# 33.) Do you feel that being in a relationship is all that really matters?

AND

REVISEDQ-# 17.) Do you feel lonely, purposeless or like something’s missing in your life without a romantic or sexual partner?

AND

REVISEDQ-# 18.) Do you feel as though the right partner can "fix" you?

32. OQ-# 32.) Do you feel that your sexual and romantic behavior is about as rewarding as hijacking a revolving door? Are you jaded?

No corresponding revision, this question was not used in new pamphlet

33. OQ-# 33.) Are you unable to concentrate on other areas of your life because of thoughts or feelings you are having about another person or about sex?

REVISED Q-# 37) Are you unable to focus on other areas of your life because of fantasy, compulsive sexual or romantic thoughts?
34. OQ-# 34.) Do you find yourself obsessing about a specific person or sexual act even though these thoughts bring pain, craving or discomfort?
REVISED Q-# 37) Are you unable to focus on other areas of your life because of fantasy, compulsive sexual or romantic thoughts?
AND
REVISED Q-# 34) Do you use sex to escape stress, anxiety or life's other problems?
AND
REVISED Q-# 07) Have you had uncomfortable feelings from sexual experiences that led you to sexual anorexia (i.e. abstaining from sexual activities)?

35. OQ-# 35.) Have you ever wished you could stop or control your sexual and romantic activities for a given period of time? Have you ever wished you could be less emotionally dependent?
REVISED Q- #40) Have you ever said to yourself “I have to stop this”?
AND
REVISED Q- #24) Have you ever wished you could be less needy or emotionally dependent in a relationship?

36. OQ-# 36.) Do you find the pain in your life increasing no matter what you do? Are you afraid that deep down you are unacceptable?
REVISED Q-# 27) Are you afraid that deep down you are un-loveable?

37. OQ-# 37.) Do you feel that you lack dignity and wholeness?
REVISED Q-# 27) Are you afraid that deep down you are un-loveable?

38. OQ-# 38.) Do you feel that your sexual and/or romantic life affects your spiritual life in a negative way?
No corresponding revision, this question was not used in new pamphlet

39. OQ-# 39.) Do you feel that your life is unmanageable because of your sexual and/or romantic behavior or your excessive dependency needs?
REVISIONS Q-# 31) Are you ashamed of your sexual thoughts, fantasies or actions?

40. OQ-#40.) Have you ever thought that there might be more you could do with your life if you were not so driven by sexual and romantic pursuits?
REVISION Q-#40.) Have you ever said to yourself “I have to stop this”?
Anorexia Recovery Tools
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Booklet Introduction

The Anorexia Recovery Tools booklet offers recovery ideas and hope to anyone who identifies with anorexia – sexual, social, or emotional. The tools and suggestions are likely to be found relevant to anyone in recovery, and our hope is that many members of S.L.A.A. find the thoughtful awareness, suggestions and sensitivity encouraged within this booklet helpful.

This booklet was written by recovering anorexics with careful consideration given to the needs and challenges faced by many recovering anorexics. It provides suggestions and tools to facilitate and support our work of the Twelve Steps for anorexia recovery. It is suggested that you review the tools first, then reflect and discuss how best to apply them to Twelve Step work. The Anorexia Recovery Tools booklet is intended to be used with other S.L.A.A. Twelve Step recovery literature. This booklet may also be read and discussed at meetings.

What is Anorexia?

Anorexia is a form of sex and love addiction but is often hard to detect. S.L.A.A. defines anorexia as “a compulsive avoidance of giving or receiving social, sexual, or emotional nourishment”. There are many types of anorexics. However, all of us in some important way have distanced ourselves from experiencing love. We observe the absence of closeness in certain areas of our lives and we observe that we are engaged in a policy of fear of others and a strategy to keep other individuals at bay.

Beneath the surface, anorexia consists of not doing something. Not trusting, not committing, not surrendering. Anorexia’s symptoms are often obscure, and uneventful. Whether our anorexia is social, sexual, or emotional, we awaken to the fact that we are not experiencing the giving and receiving of love that we deserve and is so precious to human life.
Possible Signs of Social, Emotional, or Sexual Anorexia:

- We may not have had sex or been in a close personal relationship in years
- We may be in partnerships but find it difficult to be emotionally close
- We may have many acquaintances but no one we are really close to
- We may have close relations with only certain people, our children, say, but keep a distance from anyone else
- We may feel overwhelmed in social settings
- We may feel incapacitated by shyness in relationships with others
- We may be emotionally invested in a relationship but remain sexually or socially unavailable
- We may have an overwhelming dread of making phone calls
- We may function well in the workplace where intimacy is not usually valued, but find we are distant with family or friends
The 12 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.
ANOREXIA RECOVERY TOOLS – Summary

This section provides a summary of the tools and ideas presented in the remainder of the booklet.

**Emotions**

We give great attention to our emotions and we take time and space to process and elaborate on them. Knowing what we are feeling is important for us; it is an essential guide to our recovery.

**Tenderness**

We are gentle with ourselves. We learn to recognize and lovingly provide for our needs, as if we are the person that we love most on the Earth.

**Go at Our Own Pace**

We go slowly in doing things that are healthy for us, knowing that we can be overwhelmed by the emotions, whether positive or negative, caused by our healthy actions. By going slowly, we can more easily follow our heart, our Higher Power, and not be misdirected by our own fears or the expectations of others. This helps us decide for ourselves if our behavior in a situation is healthy, and when we need to go slowly, to run, or to stop.

**Self Care**

We take tender care of our body, our food, our possessions and clothes, our desires and dreams, our fun, our vacations, and our emotional and sexual needs. We dedicate time and energy to ourselves.

**Balance**

We know that our anorexia pushes us toward extremes, therefore we look for balance in our recovery and in every part of our lives.

**Authenticity**

Being true to our heart, provides our special path to recovery. We dare to be healthy in our own way.

**Spirituality**

We develop, day by day, our own way of staying in touch with a Power greater than ourselves, which can lead us and gently support us in our recovery.
Gratitude
We thank life and our Higher Power; whenever we can.

Service
Through balanced service, we experience freedom from the anorexic self by giving back to the S.L.A.A. community what we continue to freely and lovingly receive.

Friendship
We enjoy the closeness and the affection of our friends, and we nourish our relationships with them, one day at a time.

Sponsorship
Our sponsor is an S.L.A.A. member who has worked the Program, may be anorexic, has some recovery, and wants to share it with us. Our sponsor can be of great help with working the Steps and day-to-day decisions.

Recovery Plan
We write a plan for our recovery; we follow it and adjust it as we grow.

Steps
We follow the spiritual Program of the 12 Steps with confidence and openness.

ANOREXIA RECOVERY TOOLS

Emotions

We give great attention to our emotions and we take time and space to process and elaborate on them. Knowing what we are feeling is important for us; it is an essential guide to our recovery.

Getting in touch with our emotions is very important for us. Many of us are unable to feel our own emotions. Often, they are buried under our thoughts, our value systems, others’ opinions, and the demands of everyday life, or because we are numb to them. We have learned that getting in touch with our emotions is key to discovering a suitable, gentle, and safe life.

Many of us find great relief sharing our emotions with others. Having reliable friends to share with, who listen from the heart in silence, can open our souls. The simple act of sharing of our emotions, or sharing about the confusion we feel about them, can help us identify and accept our emotions.
Often, we do not need suggestions or advice. Rather, we need a friend who listens to us with his or her heart. Being able to count on a friend who is available for us to share on a regular basis can be helpful and comforting.

In the past, our sexual activity, whether alone or with others, may have kept us from feeling our emotions. Some of us may find healthy sexual intimacy to be helpful in recovery. After a period of withdrawal, we can better identify and practice a healthy way to be sexual with ourselves and with others going forward. How does one recognize healthy sexual activity? It is an action that makes us feel good and, once finished, leaves us nourished and satisfied.

In contrast, sexual behavior that is “acting out” behavior has a lot of negative emotions related to it, such as feeling guilt or shame, or of having the sense that our vital energy is vanishing. These negative emotions can knock us off center. For those of us who never engage sexually with ourselves or others, we may also feel negative emotions. Guilt, shame, or unpleasant memories may prevent us from pursuing sexual pleasure. We may feel we don’t deserve sexual pleasure. Whatever the reason, the avoidance of doing something can be “acting in” behavior. By not doing something, we can avoid feeling the emotions we have associated with that act.

Each of us looks for our own way to stay connected with our emotions. We may prefer to walk, dance, play sports, write, pray, meditate, cook, or simply lay in silence and get in touch with ourselves. No matter how we choose to act or not to act, staying connected and working through our feelings is vital to our recovery.

**Tenderness**

We are gentle with ourselves. We learn to recognize and lovingly provide for our needs, as if we are the person that we love most on the Earth.

Many of us are used to expecting a lot from ourselves. We judge ourselves, set very high goals, or don’t give ourselves enough time and space for entertainment and joy. Harsh judgment and unrealistic expectations are very powerful allies of anorexia. Kindness and tenderness are key traits to allowing ourselves a long-lasting transformation.

By being gentle with ourselves, we change our perception of ourselves, of our Higher Power, and of life. In this way, we learn to accept anorexia as part of our lives. We start to give ourselves short goals to gently recover from anorexia, one day at a time. When we start being tender with ourselves, other people may also start to be more tender with us as well.
When we make a mistake, we remember that we are human, and that making mistakes is normal. We take time to determine if our mistake has caused any harm, perhaps checking in with a sponsor or recovery partner to get a different perspective. We make amends, as needed, and refrain from punishing ourselves in thoughts, words, or actions for being human. We forgive ourselves.

Go at Our Own Pace

*We go slowly in doing things that are healthy for us, knowing that we can be overwhelmed by the emotions, whether positive or negative, caused by our healthy actions. By going slowly, we can more easily follow our heart, our Higher Power, and not be misdirected by our own fears or the expectations of others. This helps us decide for ourselves if our behavior in a situation is healthy, and when we need to go slowly, to run, or to stop.*

Often, we want to have everything and have it right now. We want to reach our goal immediately. The process of recovering from anorexia takes time. How beautiful it is when we allow ourselves to go slowly forward in a comfortable way for us, without anxiety, without running. If we are not able to do something today, we don’t do it. If an activity seems too heavy, we do what we can and then continue it on another day. Anorexia is an illness of "not doing." We find that starting to do actions can feel very fearful or stressful.

Most of our emotions stayed frozen inside us. We’ve learned that with every healthy action we take, lots of emotions can surface, even emotions from the past we thought were gone. So, it is important for our recovery that we take action at the pace that feels right for us. Then we give ourselves time to process our emotions before taking another action. Especially in love or friend relationships, we have found it is very important to allow time to take care of ourselves, so that we do not get overwhelmed, and do not overwhelm our partner.

Sometimes internal feelings or external situations, such as events in the workplace, starting new activities, or beginning healthy relationships, can compel us to make quick decisions and to “run.” We can run if it’s appropriate. However, our goal is to no longer be driven by fear or emotion. Instead, we take the time to decide how slowly or quickly we want to move in any situation.

Often if we believe something to be simple, such as dating, and we begin at “full speed,” we might become overwhelmed, feel guilty, and then stop the activity altogether. Instead, by practicing slowness and practicing patience, such as going on a short date, or waiting a week or two in between each date, we are more able to accomplish the healthy balance we seek.
Self Care

We take tender care of our body, our food, our possessions and clothes, our desires and dreams, our fun, our vacations, and our emotional and sexual needs. We dedicate time and energy to ourselves.

Anorexia can exist in many areas, quite possibly in every area of our life. We can, one day at a time and with the help of our Higher Power, allow behaviors that bring recovery into every one of those areas if we wish.
For instance, we can organize or engage in physical activities that we like and that nourish us, such as gymnastics, yoga, dance, sports or martial arts. Physical exercise and good nutrition can be critical to help us recover from anorexia. We may start to exercise and then develop other routines. We might commit to improving our nutrition, finding time to cook good food for ourselves, and buying food we like that will nourish us. A large part of our recovery is connected to “feeling comfortable in our skin” and in our bodies.

We can take time for ourselves, like a weekend off or a short vacation. While on vacation, we can learn to relax by meditating or being quiet. This gives us time to become comfortable with who we are and what we need. Finding our personal way to practice tenderness and self-care will nourish our bodies with energy and health.

It is also very important for us to keep our desires alive, to be faithful to our dreams, and to not let the web of anorexia hide or limit these aspirations. Discovering our life’s passion or figuring out how to have fun is sometimes half the battle. We ask ourselves: When was the last time you had fun? Do you have a dream or desire to pursue? We can be happy and keep the flame of hope alive by listening to our intuition, thus letting our Higher Power guide us.

We can now enjoy making time to play and have fun in our daily lives, and to relax and be ourselves in this world, with full awareness, while on vacation or at home. Anorexia tends to make us regard such moments as useless or impossible, but they are in fact very important elements of a balanced life. Taking a break from our lives, whether for an entire day or for only 5 minutes, can give us just the amount of energy we need to feel complete again or to face a difficult situation without emotional overload.

Relationships with friends and loved ones are an important part of our well-being. We develop and nourish these relationships one day at a time. We don’t worry if we make mistakes or if we are inconsistent. It is more important to continue taking small actions to cultivate these connections.
One of these connections may grow into an intimate, committed relationship. However, as this happens, we continue to stay open emotionally to all our friends and loved ones; we do not cut them out of our lives. Devoting ourselves to the first person who expresses interest in us is not recovery. We keep our options open, both emotionally and sexually.

For many of us, being in a committed relationship is one of the most important goals of our recovery and our lives. If we do not achieve it, it is just as important for us to find a way to satisfy our emotional and sexual needs on our own, to nurture ourselves.

Some of us find our financial circumstances to be a concern. We may go from one financial crisis to another, struggling to make ends meet. We may undervalue our abilities and services, and feel that we do not deserve a good salary. We may not use our time wisely to support our vision and goals. Whatever the case, we accept our anorexia in all its shapes and forms. We understand it is important to be gentle with ourselves so we can begin to realize that we are enough, and we start to value ourselves and our contributions.

Some of us have found that positive thinking and visualization helps us to see ourselves in a healthier way. We deserve the best and we can attract the opportunity to receive the best, thanks to our Higher Power.

For some of us, getting enough sleep is a challenge. Defining the correct time to go to sleep and/or to wake up can be crucial. If we cannot fall asleep, we might explore things that could help us to fall asleep. We can use ear plugs, darken the room, meditate, read, do breath work, or listen to soothing music. We can also explore what helps us to wake up in the morning, such as exercising, eating, relaxing, or listening to music.

We might satisfy our spiritual needs in various ways, such as using prayer or meditation. It is important for us to find our own way to stay in touch with our Higher Power and with our heart. A spiritual connection can be comforting. We might find that attending 12 Step meetings, whether face to face, on the computer, or on the telephone, helps us. Wherever we find the support and relief we need, we will likely return.

As anorexics, it can be hard for us to be consistent and stay focused on something that is good for us. This is another reason for us to be gentle and kind with ourselves. If we start an activity and stop it, with the help of our Higher Power we will go back to it when we are more comfortable.

We do what we can. And it is enough.
Balance

_We know that our anorexia pushes us toward extremes, therefore we look for balance in our recovery and in every part of our lives._

In the past, we never guessed how nurturing life could be for us. We blindly walked through life being pushed into doing things by different emotions. We were compelled to do, or more often, compelled not to do, things without being conscious of our actions.

We seemed to live our lives at one extreme or the other; feeling strong and powerful or feeling very weak. One day we were very busy, planning to do a lot, and the next we passed the entire day watching TV or playing video games. One week we spent a lot of money, and the next week we didn’t have enough money for food.

One month, we might be very busy seeing lots of people, and the next month we didn’t call or see anyone. Either we felt like a social butterfly or we felt very isolated and lonely. We did not call or see our friends. Many times, our friends were new and we had not cultivated healthy, loving friendships. At times, we desperately sought sex and obsessively fantasized about sex or romance, while at other times we compulsively avoided sex for months or years.

We did not know how to set healthy boundaries at work. Sometimes we worked all day and night unnecessarily, and at other times we avoided work for days, or sat in front of the computer for hours without being productive.

Our cooking and eating habits changed with our moods. Sometimes we prepared wonderful, healthy meals. At other times, we ate only easy-to-prepare meals or fast food that was not healthy for us.

Our emotions also fluctuated widely. Sometimes we were very happy, and sometimes we were very sad. When we were happy we were ecstatic; we couldn’t imagine becoming sad again. Similarly, when we were sad it seemed that our life was awful. Some of us sank into depression and deep despair.

Curiously, we had no memory of our past feelings. When we were happy our entire life seemed an amusement park; past, present, and future. Likewise, when we were sad our life up to now seemed unfulfilled.

Today, we know that the path of recovery is one of balance. Day by day, with the help of our Higher Power and our friends in the Program, we learn how to be balanced, how to let go of extremes, and how to walk with ease and comfort down the middle of the path. When we stay focused on the middle, we do not forget our past feelings or stay stuck in
the current emotion. Instead, we move forward accepting who we really are, and accepting life on life’s terms.

If we work the Twelve Steps of S.L.A.A. and use the tools of anorexia recovery, we can be sure that, as our recovery proceeds, slowly but surely our lives will become more and more balanced. To do this, we have only to start accepting that balance exists, and that we want it and deserve it. Our Higher Power and the Program will help keep us on track.

We can now face each new day with the help of our Higher Power and with a feeling of peace. We do not fear anything. Our Higher Power is constantly by our side. There is no reason to fear, and no reason to be in a hurry.

As we learn how to work effectively, balance time efficiently, and manage our priorities, our mind becomes more clear and present. We feel more comfortable when buying, preparing, and eating healthy food. We also enjoy sharing ourselves with friends and relatives. We see that our healthy sexual and emotional relationships are growing. We also notice feeling more present in our body and with our needs. We feel good in our own skins and with sharing our feelings. Our lives are expanding. We are now able to make the right choices and find balance.

We can follow in the footsteps of our Higher Power, right down the middle of the road.

**Authenticity**

*Being true to our heart provides our special path to recovery. We dare to be healthy in our own way.*

Because we are the only ones who can accomplish lasting change in our lives on a daily basis, discovering our own path is very important.

As anorexics, we often forget our own mission and our own spiritual connection. We rarely follow our own personal path, or pursue our own ideas and passions. Our sense of self is sometimes non-existent, and often very negative.

Moreover, we ignore our own needs and instead blindly follow what other people think and say. We lack an awareness of our habitual need to please others or to rebel against them. All we know is that our reactions are detrimental to our well-being; we often don’t know why or how to change them.

We can learn how to listen for and hear our own inner voice. We begin to realize that we must look inside for inner truth, rather than outside of ourselves. We may turn to
S.L.A.A. meetings, meditation, prayer, therapy, or whichever tools work to quiet the ongoing chatter of our minds. As we discover our inner truth and follow the direction of our hearts, we come to understand our own personal path and how to balance it with the Program. We learn to follow the advice and insights that come from within by having faith in our Higher Power. Over time we learn to trust our intuition.

In addition to listening to our intuition, we find that developing honesty, openness, willingness, and freedom are crucial to our recovery. We ask ourselves: Am I honestly letting go of my bottom-line behavior and other old habits that do not serve me? Do I trust my Higher Power in all areas of my life, not just in some? Am I willing to listen to others’ experience, strength and hope, and let it guide me?

Working the Program opens us to look for new things and actions that work for us. We are willing to try new behaviors and to let go of unhelpful behaviors. Following our intuition, we start pursuing what we really like and want. We enjoy a new freedom from what other people think and do. We bravely and peacefully follow our authentic path of recovery. Above all, we are very gentle and tender with ourselves, because our heart can only speak to us through kindness and love.

**Spirituality**

*We develop, day by day, our own way of staying in touch with a Power greater than ourselves, which can lead us and gently support us in our recovery.*

We anorexics may have lost, or never had, the belief that a Power greater than ourselves could take care of us. For some of us, the confidence to face life every morning was lost, or maybe was never present. With Step 1 we admit our powerlessness in life. Next, we begin our search for help.

For some of us, the search for a Higher Power might be associated with a sense of victimization or mistrust. For anorexics, a patient and understanding sponsor can be very helpful. At moments when we lose our faith, we can turn to the Serenity Prayer to reassure us that there is a chance to feel something again for this Higher Power:

**Serenity Prayer:**

God, grant me the serenity

To accept the things I cannot change;

Courage to change the things I can;

And wisdom to know the difference.
Some of us deliberately put this Higher Power to the test, and then found that "it" worked. Others of us turned to a Higher Power only at the moment of desperation, because we felt we had no other choice. One way or another, we have each come to the conclusion that this Higher Power not only exists, but firmly sustains us and will never abandon us.

Sometimes, we forget or lose the path of trust. Fortunately, our faith is like the door of consciousness; once the door is opened, it cannot be shut. Faith is already ingrained in us, and we begin to grow out of anorexia with the help of our friends in the Program. Our faith grows naturally, sometimes without us even realizing it. On occasion, we feel the desire to pray before an event, and when we experience success, we may instinctively express our gratitude, thanking our Higher Power.

In this way, prayer is a request for help, and prayer is an expression of gratitude. Faith leads to gratitude, and gratitude leads to a stronger faith. Before long, we realize we have established a daily relationship with our Higher Power. In the morning, we pray for support to carry us through the most critical moments of our day. In the evening, we thank our Higher Power for not having abandoned us during the day.

We repeat the Serenity Prayer in the morning. Throughout the day we might pray again for help and gratitude. Our Higher Power stays by our side like an ever-present friend; we are never alone. Our faith continues to grow.

**Gratitude**

*We thank life and our Higher Power; whenever we can.*

Many of us anorexics used to consider ourselves not worthy of receiving gifts, approval, friendship, or love. Even though caring and attention were offered to us, we immediately refused them, feeling we did not deserve them. For us it was hard to understand what being grateful really meant.

Accepting our limits is the first stage to accepting ourselves. We are each worthy of love in this very moment as the imperfect human beings that we are. We don’t need to reach high goals, to be powerful, or to be loved by many. We don’t need to change ourselves to be worthy of love. We just need to be loved by ourselves and by our Higher Power. This is enough.

When we feel self-love, we can feel more connected to life. We thank our Higher Power for the beauty of life, for the simple gift of being alive. We have found that focusing on life’s happiness helps us let go of negative thinking or of self-sabotaging behaviors.
We now see the glass as half full, and not half empty. When the day is over, we express our gratitude. We allow ourselves to see the beauty in our life, and the grace of our Higher Power. We are now capable of making better decisions because we feel safe and accepted. We see the difference in our new life and in our recovery. The results are right in front of us when we close the day and make our Step 10 review. We feel nurtured by being thankful for our home, our friends, the good food we ate, and our consistent desire to recover from anorexia. We are grateful for all the times we were able to say "thank you" throughout the day.

**Service**

*Through balanced service, we experience freedom from the anorexic self by giving back to the S.L.A.A. community what we continue to freely and lovingly receive.*

Extreme isolation, negative thinking, and unhealthy self-talk take over many anorexics’ lives. Most of us were in a great deal of pain when we finally decided to walk into a Twelve Step meeting. When we sought refuge in S.L.A.A. meetings, we quickly learned the importance of doing service. Meetings happen because S.L.A.A. members volunteer to do service work.

At first, our disease often froze us in place, telling us it was not safe to be noticed, let alone speak up during an S.L.A.A. meeting. Reading meeting scripts, making coffee, sharing feelings, or welcoming newcomers were all foreign concepts to us. We avoided helping out because we were too shy, too busy, too scared, too alone, or too whatever. We sometimes thought, “Better him than me; let her be courageous today; I don’t know what to do; or I can’t trust these people.” The result for some anorexics was a silence that grew even more powerful over time. Breaking that anorexic sound barrier was more daunting with each passing second. As wounded children, we thought staying safe meant cautiously watching and hiding, or remaining detached and isolated.

As S.L.A.A. newcomers, we hoped somebody else would offer to help first. When we finally pushed beyond our silent comfort zone to help in meetings, most of us found that this action marked our earliest achievement in recovery. No matter the type of service we provided, we had finally let go of our personal problems just long enough to support the S.L.A.A. group. By supporting the S.L.A.A. group, we were learning to heal together on a daily basis.

We discovered that the point at which we chose to participate, we became “part of the Solution” rather than part of the problem.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, some anorexics found that they volunteered for service so often that they didn’t have time to look at our own feelings or participate in our
own recovery. Maybe our habits of multi-tasking or staying busy were interfering with our new-found desire to recover. Our thoughts sounded like this: "If I don’t do service, no one else will volunteer. This meeting always runs late so I need to host it myself. Let’s skip reading the script and go straight to sharing. If I don’t help this person, they won’t recover without me.”

For some, our desire for doing things perfectly always kept us from doing our best, just for today. For instance, if we did not know how to run a phone meeting, we would listen to others fumble through the script before we found the confidence to volunteer to read. Sometimes we would avoid having the script ready before the meeting because we were afraid to commit to sharing in our own recovery journey.

Growing up, we may have thought that the best way to avoid pain was to avoid taking personal responsibility, to control our environment, or to always be needed by others. In this last case, our own need to be of service to others had ironically gone far beyond our need to be of service to ourselves. We had forgotten that our Higher Power was forever in charge and could work wonders if given the chance. We needed to learn how to turn over to our Higher Power the entire S.L.A.A. group’s needs, including our own personal habit of volunteering. Together with our Higher Power, we can find balance in this area of our recovery by being selective about where, how, and why we give service.

Maintaining a healthy balance between doing too much or too little service is the key. For example, how do we know when to volunteer? We can figure out the answer by slowing down to meditate and pray. We think back over the past week or month; how often have we helped? If we are not doing any or very little service, we can offer to help today. Our support is greatly needed and will be appreciated.

If we are volunteering for multiple positions, supporting numerous sponsees, attending too many meetings, or providing service even when we do not have the physical energy to do so, then we can slow down and let others help instead. Sometimes it is healthier not to do service, but rather to trust in the Higher Power of the group to find a solution that is not in our hands alone. If the meeting ends early or does not go as planned, our achievement of balanced service today will teach us how to accept the things we cannot change and to heal with Grace.

Balanced service really is freedom from the extreme isolation, negative thinking, and unhealthy self-talk that made our anorexic silence so deafening and our chaotic lives so confusing. Working the spiritual tools of the Program to the best of our ability, we can give back what we have been given. We look for ways to help at meetings, such as being a secretary, chairperson, or spiritual timekeeper. Eventually we discover the rich lives and the healthy perspectives we may offer others in the Program.
Thankfully, many of us are learning one day at a time that sobriety is a service we give both to ourselves and to the S.L.A.A. group as a whole. It can be useful for anorexics to attend regular S.L.A.A. meetings, where a large pool of diverse recovery and deeper community exist. In meetings, we describe our journey and explain how it feels to withdraw from unhealthy habits. Some of us enjoy attending the same weekly meeting to give back what we’ve freely received ourselves. We are developing deeper and more meaningful relationships in that regular meeting. In doing so, we are also making sure that our same weekly meeting exists for us when we have a special need for it.

Giving service to ourselves may also include simply being present and listening intently. Being gentle with ourselves shows how our Higher Power is working in our lives. Being kind to ourselves may give another anorexic the first inkling of a spiritual lift. By identifying and avoiding bottom-line behaviors, we can see the positive changes in our lives and gently accept where we are in our recovery today.

As we share our recovery in meetings and with sponsees, our Higher Power is working within us and through us on a daily basis. As we gradually grow stronger we become shining beacons of hope, forever more capable of giving back to the S.L.A.A. community what we lovingly received from those who came before us.

Friendship

We enjoy the closeness and the affection of our friends, and we nourish our relationships with them, one day at a time.

True friendship starts at home, with our self and our Higher Power. In S.L.A.A., we gradually understand and accept our need for tenderness, openness, and being kind to ourselves. Working the Program provides the fertile ground in which a true friendship with our self, and healthy bonds with others, can grow.

A friend can be someone we feel a special affinity for, someone who wants to spend time with us, or someone who shares our interests. With love and caring at its core, friendship can help speed our spiritual recovery.

Yet anorexia often inhibits us from developing friendships or remaining friends with someone.

Some of us had no friends at all; anorexia isolated us. Although we might have felt safe, we were often very lonely. We needed to follow a gentle path forward. Recovery invites us down this path, opening our own mind, heart, and soul to the warmth of a friend or even a stranger. We learn to initiate contact with others.
For most anorexics, becoming more social requires time and courage. We do it, but it is not easy. Invariably our anorexia continues to inhibit and overwhelm us. We instinctively want to return to our own comfort zone; being alone.

Gradually by working the Program we start to attend social events, sometimes only for half an hour. We may find a club or an activity we like. We invite, with much emotion and fear, someone to go out with us. We begin accepting the invitations we receive. We benefit from the loving support of our S.L.A.A. friends and of our sponsor; they help us to keep taking steps forward.

We are careful not to pressure ourselves to change too quickly in order to prevent ourselves from feeling overwhelmed. For example, we might start by going out for short periods of time and then return home in order to feel more safe and serene. Each time we go out, we continue to feel more comfortable and self-assured. Over time we change, and we do it with healthy momentum and the help of our Higher Power.

We are grateful when a new acquaintance calls us first. We take small steps with this person by gradually sharing more of ourselves. We let the friendship develop naturally. We listen attentively, accept eccentricities, offer our support, and celebrate one another’s successes. We slowly build a strong foundation from which we can be vulnerable and speak honestly. We manage the amount of time we spend together to prevent feeling overwhelmed and to avoid isolating again. Just as a flower needs water to grow, we learn that our friendship needs loving care and attention to bloom.

For those of us with many acquaintances and no close friends, we may need to break free of our old routines and thinking. Some of us were used to moving on from a relationship, and found it much more challenging to stay and develop true intimacy and reliability. Others of us found it easy to meet people but difficult to make long-term commitments. When somebody got too close, we limited our exposure to that person or found another friend, interest, or job to keep us busy and to avoid intimacy. We learn how to commit to spending more time with a friend, so that we can gradually grow closer.

In the past, we may have shared only with people in Twelve Step recovery, or only within our families, or only with those of one sexual orientation or gender identity, because we felt safer with a particular group. Choices we made to survive or to feel safe earlier in life may now be limiting our growth. As we learn in S.L.A.A. to accept ourselves and why we avoided certain groups or situations, we find it easier to let go of the past and of our rigid patterns. As we release our fears and recognize our Higher Power’s presence in our lives, we find greater wisdom and serenity. One day at a time we open ourselves up to new experiences, perspectives, and spiritual connections.
Some of us struggled to find a balance between two extremes: a social feast or famine. When we had energy, we spent time with too many friends. This was often followed by a period of isolation with no friends at all. Our Recovery Plan helps us to work through these ups and downs.

In S.L.A.A., we learn to honestly share our feelings and to respect the needs of others. We now give others the time and space they need to grow, just as we ask them to do the same for us. Friendships are not about equal giving at all times; we all go through tough times and need support. However, over time, if caring is not reciprocated, then expectations and resentments can emerge between even the closest of friends. We have learned to weed out unhealthy relationships and harmful habits. We end or take a break from friends when undesirable behaviors transform the friendship.

In the Program, we discover new levels of intimacy with S.L.A.A. friends by continuing to reach out, staying present while listening to others at meetings, developing recovery relationships, and striving for resolution on various types of problems. We reveal our vulnerability to recovery partners by sharing our deepest feelings, our goals, desires, needs and wants as well as our triumphs. In turn, we can be a loving presence with recovery partners through supporting their goals, and by responding to their wants and needs. The Program invites us to trust again and to set healthy boundaries. Ultimately, all our recovery gifts flow into our relationships outside of the Program.

We naturally apply our new communication skills to all relationships, even the most difficult. Over time we learn how to nurture non-S.L.A.A. relationships by truly caring for others, empathizing with their pain, and affirming their value, as well as our own. We learn to value the qualities of a mutually supportive friendship, such as vulnerability, honesty, presence, empathy, forgiveness, balance in giving and receiving, self-care, commitment, trust, and reliability. Our once-barren land has grown into a beautiful garden. We thank our Higher Power and ourselves for our courageous recovery.

**Sponsorship**

Our sponsor is an S.L.A.A. member who has worked the Program, may be anorexic, has some recovery, and wants to share it with us. Our sponsor can be of great help with working the Steps and day-to-day decisions.

Sponsorship is as unique as each person’s recovery path. For anorexics, the sponsor/sponsee relationship may require more consideration from both parties. Our needs and preferences for interactions with a sponsor/sponsee, or how we work the Steps can differ widely from the non-anorexic. When an anorexic sponsee and a non-anorexic sponsor choose to work together, reading this section on sponsorship can be helpful. The anorexic sponsee can identify how he or she agrees or differs from the ideas discussed, and the sponsor can better understand the anorexic’s needs.
For example, choosing in advance which topics to talk about or to avoid might encourage the anorexic sponsee to feel safe enough to explore their feelings. Setting healthy, specific boundaries can often satisfy an anorexic’s need to feel safe and comfortable in a relationship.

We suggest you read all three sections below, whatever your role is in the sponsor/sponsee relationship.

For Sponsors

It may take a long time to figure out which of the suggestions in this booklet, and in S.L.A.A. literature will be helpful to the anorexic sponsee. As sponsors, we learn to be patient and sensitive to the needs of the sponsee. Some anorexics move through Step work much more slowly than others. As sponsors, we simply listen from the heart; silently without judgment, and frequently with very little feedback. When sponsoring an anorexic, we avoid giving unsolicited feedback or changing the topic until the anorexic is ready.

Many anorexics need someone who is willing to do a lot of listening; some anorexics need to control a situation to feel safe. An agreed-upon delay before receiving feedback can give the space necessary for an anorexic to get in touch with his or her feelings. Anorexic sponsees often need flexibility in how much and how fast they respond to suggestions from sponsors, temporary sponsors, co-sponsors, and recovery partners.

We encourage the anorexic sponsee to explore different kinds of recovery relationships. Some anorexics like the security and confidence that a traditional sponsor/sponsee relationship can offer. For best results, the sponsor needs to adapt to the anorexic sponsee. Over the course of their recovery, an anorexic may choose to switch to a more mutual support structure, such as that found in a co-sponsoring relationship.

Some anorexics need time before they open up or continue sharing. This pause does not mean that a topic is completed, nor that the listener is free to switch to a new topic. The listener may sensitively and gently inquire if the speaker is finished, but should not make a decision to continue without the anorexic speaker specifically indicating that they are ready to move on. Crying, too, is an important part of the recovery process. If the other person cries, the listener should avoid interrupting or trying to end the crying. Providing a safe time and place to cry is one of the many wonderful ways of doing service.

Sometimes a sponsor may want to dismiss an anorexic sponsee, simply because the sponsee is unable to be as productive as the sponsor would like. This is an example of a sponsor/sponsee relationship that does not fit. While some anorexics need ninety
meetings in ninety days, others can only handle a full-time job and one meeting per week. For yet others, two or three meetings a week can be a balanced recovery Program. While some anorexics write their answers to Step questions every day, others of us can only write one or two questions each weekend. Similarly, some anorexics may want to talk about their Step work on the day they do it, while others prefer to share Step work after some days or even weeks.

On the other side, some anorexics have side-stepped sponsoring others. Maybe we are trying to avoid feeling responsible for another’s recovery, we want to honor other priorities, or we find making a time commitment is too difficult for us. Whatever the reason, when we realize that our Higher Power is working through us, in meetings, on outreach calls, and during sponsorship, we learn to rely on our Higher Power to guide us and those who have asked for our help.

Instead of giving advice about how to solve a problem, we share our experience, strength, hope and commitment to the Program. We can only give away what we have received. We share our vulnerability and Step work with others by letting them watch us recover, using the same tools available to them, such as phone calls, meetings, literature, and all the anorexia recovery tools.

For Sponsees

We may find a sponsor who has recovery experience with anorexia, or we may choose to work with a sponsor who has no anorexia experience. Either situation can be good. Finding a permanent sponsor that fits for us can take months or years depending on our capacity for slower or more rapid recovery.

Many of us find that a mutual sponsor/sponsee relationship, such as co-sponsoring or recovery partners, works better for us because it promotes a greater sense of equality or companionship. Others prefer the stability and security that the traditional relationship provides. No matter whom we choose to help us work the Steps, we have faith that our Higher Power will provide what we need exactly when we need it.

For those of us who cannot find co-sponsors, we find recovery partners in meetings or through outreach calls, who may be willing to help us work the Steps and Traditions. Thinking of the person listening to us as a co-sponsor or as a “temporary sponsor” can provide us with the short-term, critical support we need as we continue our Step work and as we look for a more permanent sponsor. These options can give us more breathing room, more flexibility, and less co-dependency in our recovery support relationships.
As anorexic sponsees, we may need a sponsor who is flexible and who can help us adapt a recovery process using the Steps differently than the ways that work well for others. Our recovery path might ask us to be “brave” and dare to do things that would be risky or even wrong for others in the Program. For anorexics who tend to “block” or “delay”, taking courageous action, even making mistakes, is better than staying quiet and immobilized. For the anorexics with patterns of “continually trying to do something” or “fighting to succeed but never quite reaching the goal,” recovery is more about staying quiet, and finding the correct balance between self-will and the will of our Higher Power. Whatever path we choose in this process, we continue to turn over our recovery to our Higher Power and to ask for support and guidance.

Developing true intimacy, as well as listening without giving any feedback, may not be strong skills for many sponsors. Some anorexics need a specific environment to feel open to share. For example, the anorexic sponsee may need to set healthy boundaries with their sponsor, such as “Please do not give me feedback unless I ask for it.” In this case, the sponsor does not respond until the sponsee indicates that he or she is ready to hear what the sponsor has to say.

We learn how to balance our needs with those who are accompanying us on our recovery path; we can each grow stronger as our relationship slowly matures. Figuring out what works for you may take experimentation. Follow your heart and your emotions, and communicate your needs clearly to your sponsor.

For Both Sponsor and Sponsee

In the Program, we discover together with our Higher Power’s help how to move forward in a balanced, supportive manner. Sometimes the sponsee and sponsor need to take a break. Sometimes this means letting go of a sponsor, co-sponsor, sponsee, or recovery partner. We ask for our Higher Power’s help to make a gradual transition when letting go of this relationship. In the traditional sponsorship structure, the anorexic sponsee may need our support temporarily while they are looking for a new sponsor. We help with the anorexic sponsee’s search only if our actions will not jeopardize our own recovery. Our Program is only as strong as we are, so our own recovery must come first.
Recovery Plan

We write a plan for our recovery; we follow it and adjust it as we grow.

A Recovery Plan is a proposal you write to recover from anorexia, which lets you define some top line goals you want to change in specific areas of your life.

Ideas for your plan may come from many resources, such as a book, discussion with a sponsor or recovery partner, meeting with other members of the Fellowship in an action group, feedback within the S.L.A.A. community, or from outside the community.

The process of writing a Recovery Plan is quite simple. Here are a few ideas:

• Analyze where anorexia is present in your life

• List the areas of your life impacted by anorexia such as love, sex, nutrition, work

• For each area, identify the behaviors that are anorexic such as not cooking for yourself, buying unhealthy food, not taking time off from work

• For each behavior, set up a specific realistic goal such as cooking for yourself twice a month, or buying more fresh vegetables

• Continue to review your recovery plan

• Acknowledge your progress

Not everything has to be written. You might find writing very helpful, or you might discover new ideas for your recovery plan while talking about certain issues and topics with others in the Program.

Some suggestions:

• Go slowly: It is easy to be overwhelmed; this is how anorexia works. So go slowly, there is no need to rush.

• Go gently: Follow your own pace and be very loving with yourself. You are the most important person in your recovery.

• One area at a time: Focus on one area at a time. It is easier to meet related goals.
• Set up easy goals: Take small steps by setting up easy-to-reach goals. You can improve and refine the goals later.

• Be brave and unconventional: Your recovery is different than everyone else’s. You must be fearless to discover those actions that serve you best. Break your old habits of thinking.

• Continue celebrating: Recognize the progress of your recovery and any little healthy actions taken.

If you want to reference your Recovery Plan to Twelve Step work, the following ideas may be useful. Please remember that you can write your plan during any moment of your recovery, no matter which Step(s) you are working at the time.

• Accept deeply, in your heart and mind, your anorexia. (Step 1)

• Feel you can receive the power to solve your issues, as a gift. (Step 2)

• Rely on this Faith. (Step 3)

• Look into the areas of your life where anorexia is present. Define those areas more clearly and accept your weaknesses. (Step 4)

• Share what you find with your sponsor, a friend in the Program, or someone outside S.L.A.A. (Step 5)

• Pass through the stages of grief. You are grieving the loss of your old behavior and habits. You might pass through denial, bargaining, anger, and sadness. In time, you will arrive at the final stage of acceptance. (Step 6)

• Decide to go on, to humbly change your behavior. Decide if you really want to be free and healthy. You will need to replace old habits with new ones, and only your Higher Power can remove your shortcomings. (Step 7)

• Examine your list of unhealthy behaviors and identify the people you have harmed with your anorexia. Your name is the first name on the list. (Step 8)

• Start replacing your unhealthy behaviors with your new healthy actions. Change can start with you, first of all. (Step 9)

• Continue to look for areas where anorexia is present in your life, and ask your Higher Power to heal those areas as well. Stay in touch with your recovery Program daily. (Step 10)
• Use meditation and prayer to better understand and nourish your recovery. (Step 11)
Share your abundant life with friends, lovers, and beloved persons, both inside and outside the Program. (Step 12)

The ideas expressed above are only suggestions; take what you like and leave the rest. For example, you could add bottom lines to your Recovery Plan such as, “No isolating at home for more than 2 days unless I am sick”. You might choose to work a few Steps together, such as Steps 4-5-6-7 on a specific issue. Some members find that a more structured approach, completing daily actions, is really useful. Members may also look to S.L.A.A. literature that provides questions for journaling. Follow whatever works best for your recovery. You and your Higher Power are the only ones in charge.

Steps

We follow the spiritual Program of the 12 Steps with confidence and openness.

Recovery is very different for each of us. That’s why we must find our own way to work the Steps. As an example, some of us best understand the Twelve Steps when taken in sequence, “working” them one by one in numerical order. Others among us prefer working a single Step by itself, understanding that each Step is part of a whole spiritual Program. Some of us might work the first three Steps all at once by trying to “Let Go and Let God,” or work Step 11 every day from the start of our recovery. Others might use a combination of methods; these are only examples.

It is very important to find our own way to move through the Steps, no matter what our beliefs and ideas about the order in which we work them. Working each of the Twelve Steps completely is very powerful for us anorexics. Below are some simple suggestions about working the Steps. Please take what you like and leave the rest.

Step 1 – We admitted we were powerless over sex and love addiction — that our lives had become unmanageable.

In Step 1, we admit and accept our anorexia. We cannot do everything like other people. We know that some areas of our lives have become unmanageable. For example, we may make an excuse to avoid going out, or socializing with others. It is okay; we are anorexic and we are ready to accept this.

It is important to deeply accept our anorexia. By embracing it and admitting the feeling of powerlessness, we can really open the route to recovery.
Step 2 – Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

In Step 2, we open ourselves to the possibility of change. We can change with the help of a Power greater than our strength alone, one who cares for us, who can help change our thoughts and habits, and who can transform our lives one day at a time. We might refer to that power as our Higher Power, just as the Program does.

It is new for us to be open to the idea that we can succeed and be happy. With the help of a Power greater than ourselves, we can solve those problems that have been blocking us for so long. It is possible. We can do it.

Step 3 – Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.

For many anorexics, trust is not a skill. However, in Step 3, we are asked to trust in our Higher Power. We can practice this one day at a time. When we accept there is a loving Higher Power caring for us, we learn that we are safe in social or sexual situations. We learn to trust that God is taking care of us through these situations. We begin to feel more at ease to express ourselves, to open our hearts and begin to live authentically.

With time and support of the Program, we eventually trust that we will be guided to loving relationships that feel comfortable and safe.

This understanding and acceptance will become the foundation on which we will build our recovery.

Step 4 – Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

In Step 4, we try to identify our behaviors that caused suffering. It is not always easy to do, because anorexia is so confusing and difficult to define.

We might start by looking at our lives and noting the areas in which we lack love, satisfaction, and richness. This could include emotional connection, sex, love, spirituality, food, sleep, friendship, money, job, and so on. In what areas of life do we lack nourishment?

We gently notice the areas where we “act in” as anorexics. After that, we define the behaviors we are not able to do, where we have limited ourselves, and where we keep others at bay. What actions do we avoid in these areas? For instance, if I am not able to cook for myself, then I also may not be able to cook for my partner or children. If I am not able to experience life in depth, others close to me will not receive all the love and satisfaction they deserve from me.
Identifying the character defects and payoffs received from these anorexic behaviors is very useful for many of us. Very gently we begin to see and feel grateful that these areas are being revealed to us, thus opening the door of recovery for ourselves and for others.

**Step 5 – Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.**

In Step 5, we acknowledge our thoughts and emotions, accepting what has happened in our lives with a profound new awareness of ourselves.

We share these thoughts and emotions with our sponsor and Higher Power, who has helped us along our path. We feel that we are not the only ones that suffered, and that we are not alone. Our Higher Power can embrace us and heal our painful feelings and sorrows.

We share these pieces of our lives with friends in the Fellowship. We now have friends who are able to listen without judging, without suggesting, without answers...friends who simply listen to our histories and keep them safe. Simply sharing with ourselves, with our Higher Power, and with friends in the Fellowship, can give us great relief. We continue to share, to speak, and to remain open to ourselves. We open our hearts to our friends and sponsor about what happens in our lives and about how we feel. We dissolve an entire mountain of emotions, one day at a time.

**Step 6 – Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.**

Now we are able to change old behaviors by taking small steps. We might start thinking that some old habits are no longer needed. We may have found staying quiet to be useful and safe in the past, but now with our Higher Power, our friends, sponsor, and our Program, we can dare to change our behaviors. We dare to think we are happy with a lot of love, peace, and joy in our hearts. We dare to think of ourselves as lucky people.

In Step 4 we came to realize that unhealthy habits or thinking may now actually be harming us. In Step 5 we grieved the loss of the old life. On the way, we may have passed through denial, bargaining, anger, and sadness, before arriving at the early stage of acceptance. We need to replace old habits with new ones. Old habits die hard. We are not perfect. The old behaviors may happen again and again. However, if we find healthy solid replacement behaviors, the old, unhealthy patterns will melt away more easily.
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Fourth Version – July 25, 2017

We ask for help from our Higher Power and remain ready in our minds and hearts for our inner force to remove all these limitations, all these things that prevent inner joy and loving life. With our Higher Power we can change our behavior by letting go of destructive habits and thoughts from our lives, one day at a time.

We write a Recovery Plan that includes the actions needed for our recovery. Next, we gradually start to take some of these actions. We are entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

**Step 7 – Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.**

We now commit to change. Healthy change can be very useful for ourselves and for others. We are doing great. But we do not know when the change will happen; if it will be quick or slow, continuous or sporadic.

When inspired, we ask our Higher Power to free us from our inadequacies. If we sincerely accept our powerlessness and ask our Higher Power for help from the heart, and if we keep doing so, hope starts to emerge. Our Higher Power can do what we are not able to do by ourselves. This change is more powerful than our own attempts of the past; we can trust it.

Our continuous prayer needs to be humble in order to be effective. But what does humility mean? We are learning that humility is not humiliation. We may have struggled with low self esteem and thought humility was the same. On the contrary, low self-esteem is a strong ally of anorexia; they both kept us locked away inside ourselves. Humility is simply seeing ourselves as we are, our virtues and our faults alike, and being open to receiving help. Humility is being spiritually open to change, and remaining aware that we need the help of our Higher Power and friends. Ours is a new life being born.

**Step 8 – Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.**

In Step 8, we think about all the people we have hurt or pushed away with our unhealthy behavior. We might start by writing down our own name. Anorexia is an illness that blocks and damages us first.

By identifying the areas where anorexia is present in our lives, such as in sex, love, food, clothes, finance, or in taking care of the body, we can begin to heal the pain we have caused ourselves. We might want to make amends to ourselves for our behavior. We ask our Higher Power to guide our amends process. We continue praying to our Higher Power to have all these defects and shortcomings removed.
Anorexia can harm our relationship with God, too. For example, I might feel I do not deserve the joy of a connection with my Higher Power because I think I am not good enough, or I have made too many mistakes. Making matters worse, we might feel ashamed or guilty about this lack of connection to God. However, with time and patience, we learn to connect to our Higher Power. We know that we each deserve the best possible relationship with God.

Sometimes our anorexia harms other people, too. For example, we may have emotionally injured a partner by constantly being blocked or shy. We may have hurt our friends by not being able to enjoy socializing with them. We may have offended or confused our colleagues or bosses by not being focused while at work. Or we may have upset our children by not being able to share love and joy with them, by not protecting them, or by not modeling healthy behaviors, and so on.

We might hide our authentic selves in social situations by smiling or being too kind, or by not letting our friends know how we really feel and who we truly are. This behavior may cause confusion. We may have built a wall to protect ourselves from our own emotions and from other people. This may have made others feel like we were rejecting them.

These are only some examples. Understanding exactly how anorexia affects us can be valuable. That is why we make a list of all the people in our lives who we have emotionally impacted. If we put the list in a place where we can look at it often, it’s easier to commit to our recovery again and again, every time we look at it. We are recovering for all of the people in our lives, not only for ourselves. And we will succeed with the Grace of our Higher Power.

Step 9 – Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

As we start Step 9, the Program helps us establish long-lasting change and serenity.

When considering all the amends to be made to ourselves, to God, and to other people, it is important that we be gentle with ourselves. We move slowly and take care of our emotions and feelings as we go. We ask for the presence and light of our Higher Power to walk with us during these precious moments.

We are open to the help we receive from our sponsor and our friends in the Program.

We are not alone and we do not have to rush. In making our amends, we follow our heart and proceed slowly. In Step 8, we looked at the areas where anorexia is present in our lives. Now we can begin by making the first direct amends to ourselves.
Our amends to ourselves might start by doing little things that won’t overwhelm us. With confidence and faith, we can face one amend at a time. For example, we could start with a one-day holiday or we could cook a simple meal for ourselves. Choosing to take these actions represents our desire to change; they are the start of a new way of thinking for ourselves.

If we kept our Higher Power away from us in the past, as an amend we might choose to keep our Higher Power close in our hearts, one day at a time, starting today.

If so moved, we might create a ritual to give honor to this moment with our Higher Power. Doing something that we appreciate for its spiritual significance is more important than the type of ritual we use.

Making amends to other people also requires us to go very slowly and to be gentle with ourselves. We look at the list we made in our Step 8 and we decide to start with one person. We ask for the help of our sponsor and recovery partners in the Program to determine the best way to make an amend.

Sometimes the best amends we can make is a real change in our behavior. In other words, we give that person whatever we were not able to give previously because of our anorexia. This “living amends” might be the best gift possible. Sometimes choosing a little symbolic action can represent our willingness to change and show our new understanding. For instance, I might speak with the person I harmed and apologize for my actions or inactions, or give him/her a little gift.

There is no correct way to make an amends. We can only hope that our actions make us and the people we have hurt feel better, lighter and happier. We take one step at a time.

Step 10 - Continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

In Step 10, we can celebrate and be proud of ourselves; we have strengthened many parts of our lives and we have grown a beautiful garden we now tend daily. The flow of life is growing much stronger in our hearts, bodies and minds. We are ready to keep the process going on a regular basis, and protect our recovery.

We continue to look for areas where anorexia is still present in our lives, and with our Higher Power, heal those areas as well. We stay in touch with our recovery Program daily. Are we following it and if so, how? Where are we lacking? Can we feel the presence of our Higher Power in our lives?
When we find ourselves recovering, we are grateful for the satisfaction that we feel. When we continue to find ourselves lacking, for example, not having intimacy in our relationships, we accept and embrace ourselves. We pray to our Higher Power to help us release our character defects.

As we continue to take daily personal inventory, we may find other character defects directly related to anorexia. For example, we might act or feel superior to another person due to our new-found recovery, or we might forget our friends altogether. When we find we are wrong we quickly admit it: to God, to ourselves, and to those we have involved. We then make amends as quickly as possible, thereby keeping our emotions as clean as possible. We do not go faster than our healing allows.

Most importantly, we follow our hearts and the inspiration of our Higher Power. Our recovery is neither a race nor a marathon. Rather, it can be compared to a stroll along the beach. Occasionally we stop to sit and look at the sea. We calmly listen to the waves and to our hearts. In this way, we stay in touch with ourselves, our lives and our Higher Power.

Step 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.

Sometimes we feel alone, get lost in our problems, and are unable to solve a situation we are facing. At other times, we feel really good, full of joy and positive self-esteem. In both situations, we ask to know God’s will for us, because it can give us a broader perspective, or a simple, clear path forward.

After we understand God’s will, we keep praying for the power to carry it out because we know how easily we can change our minds and thoughts.

Discovering all the possible ways to commune with our Higher Power is part of the process, so we encourage you to figure out what makes you feel closest to God. Some people like to pray while enjoying nature, at the roots of a big tree, on the shores of a lake, or in a field of just-cut grass. Others like to listen for the thoughts that come from their hearts and minds at a particular moment.

Some in the Program prefer to use early prayers from the religious tradition to which they belong. Others may prefer more current prayers, written in modern-day language to stay current with the times. We all pray when we get in touch with our Higher Power.

Meditation offers yet another way to get in touch with our Higher Power. Meditation may provide a connection without us asking a specific question. Rather, we are simply feeling and experiencing the stillness within us. Discovering the silence of the mind helps to clear the space within so that our inner selves, our Higher Power, can take root in it.
There are many meditation techniques, prayers, and paths to connecting with a Higher Power in this big world. We can choose meditation, prayer, or whatever spiritual path that fits for us today. Pick one and if you like it, use it consistently. If that stops working, try something else.

Choose your spiritual tools, discover yourself, and move closer to your Higher Power.

Step 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.

By Step 12 our hearts are much lighter, our minds are more open, and our lives are much fuller. We enjoy this brand new state of mind and that is helpful. Lonely thoughts and acts are transformed by intimate meetings and feelings. Dark feelings and fears are replaced by hope.

Active anorexia gives way to serenity. Day after day and season after season, our Higher Power grants us Grace. Our life is now full of events, people, richness, and love. We can trust in these changes.

Recovery is possible and reliable, simply by following the loving, quiet way of letting go of anorexia. Daily the broken parts of our hearts have been continuously healed, and now the torn garment of our soul has been repaired. For all this we humbly and gratefully thank our Higher Power. We also honor our spiritual continuity and enlightened hope.

Looking at the different areas of our lives, we recognize how much we have grown and where recovery is still needed. In the past, it was hard to nurture our body and soul. Indeed, sometimes it still is hard to do so. But today it is becoming easier and easier to love, care for, and nourish ourselves.

We continue to use the Program to bring health to all areas of our lives; love, sex, friendship, family, work, entertainment, food, and money. Any area of our lives can be touched by anorexia, and any area can be restored to health.

Now it is only natural for us to want to share what we feel and how we live. We carry our message during our S.L.A.A. meetings, and with our friends and sponsees. We enjoy sharing our experience, strength and hope with newcomers and long-time S.L.A.A. members whenever we get the opportunity. We spontaneously offer what we have found when providing service locally, nationally, or internationally. There is no difference between serving other members and serving our soul, our Higher Power.
We take note of where we need to intensify our effort. We add to the list of areas we made in our Step 4 and follow our Recovery Plan. We continue celebrating the progress of our recovery. We now have friends to travel with. The landscape we see from the window grows greener and greener. We just need to keep doing what we are doing, one day at a time, in service to others and ourselves.

Conclusion

We now find ourselves at the end of a long list of ideas and suggestions. They have helped us, anorexics and others, to find recovery. Some of these tools may not work for everyone. As members of S.L.A.A., we have both similarities and differences. Each of us must choose the tools from this booklet that will help us in our own recovery. The tools that don't work for us may help someone else.

Look, try, and see what is helpful for you. You have all the experience, love and Grace to continue your journey in life with a new perspective. We, the Fellowship members, will always be here for you with all the gentle and loving support that S.L.A.A. can provide. Your Higher Power will guide you perfectly. Just keep trusting and keep coming back.
17n13/17-05 Attachment to Item For Discussion on Meditation Book

Conference Literature Committee (CLC)

DRAFT: January 2, 2017
Not Conference-Approved
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A State of Grace
Daily Meditations

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January 1

GRACE

As we contemplated our changing lives, we actually felt longing for a future time in which we might once again come to experience the magnificence of our own solitude, and come again to know directly that well-spring of inner dignity and wholeness which was filling us, and which was now to flow, through us, on into our lives in the world outside. We knew we had experienced a Grace. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 115

For me, Grace was hearing the Characteristics of Sex and Love Addiction for the first time. It was the calm that settled deep within me as I realized that I had this thing. And not only did I have it, but that it could be defined, that I was not alone, and that others were recovering from the pain of withdrawal, which was excruciating. Grace came to me in many forms, in finding a sponsor, in relating to literature, in helping others once I was out of withdrawal. It was the realization that I could be emptied out and rebuilt into the design my Creator had originally envisioned, which had become warped and damaged into unrecognizability by my love and fantasy addiction. My whole life strategy had created a miserable human being. And here, in these S.L.A.A. meetings, I was told I could empty that cup of misery and find recovery, solace and healing. This was truly grace.

The Grace of recovery is fully available to me. I need only ask my Higher Power for the willingness to be honest and open-minded.

January 2

ABUNDANT LIFE

Today I have hope that I can have a life as full and free as I’ve always wanted. – S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 189

It’s not that I don’t lack things in my life. I just try to avoid focusing on and complaining about it. I am grateful for what sobriety has given me. Addiction had backed me into a corner. I had a lonely life of going back and forth between my apartment and work and nightclubs. Some might think nightclubs are glamorous, but not when you’re trapped in your own addictive thoughts! Living a free life means that I am free (one day or one minute at a time) from the negativity and obsession that used to plague me. And a full life, to me, means taking risks for healthy intimacy. I go on double dates and to parties where I connect with people, usually other S.L.A.A. members. It means meditation, fellowship, long walks in nature, going to the theatre, advancing my career; I could add to the list infinitely. And that’s my focus in sobriety: Getting to know and take care of me instead of focusing all my energy on the object of my affection. It’s much better to live in this world.

I feel happy to be alive and I will look for ways to enhance my life.
January 3
IDENTIFICATION
I spent much time comparing rather than identifying. Listening to others share their experiences brought up many feelings and memories. I could no longer avoid them through acting out… I found a tremendous amount of support in the Fellowship, from people who were going through the same pain and from those who had gone through the same feelings. – S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 175
A member of S.L.A.A. always advises me to get out of judgment and to identify with people’s shares. It can be transporting and transformative. Identifying with people’s shares has brought me into contact with my deepest inner self. Often, the people I would judge or wouldn’t relate to, ended up giving me the skills I needed to look at the parts of myself that I’ve been avoiding. Once I heard an S.L.A.A. member share that he wished he could tell his grown children he was sorry for not being present. I’ve waited my whole life for my dad to say these very words to me. It felt like it was my dad talking directly to me and a shiver ran down my spine. It was so healing. I have heard many times from other members that they have had similar experiences. When I concentrate on the feelings being shared I usually realize that I’ve felt that way before. I look for the similarities and forget about the differences. I find intimacy in the rooms when I do this. We are all fighting a battle together.
I will identify with others today, knowing that I don’t have to battle this disease alone.

January 4
WITHDRAWAL
Despite the grueling qualities of dealing with outer temptations and inner insecurities, we began to experience withdrawal not as deprivation, but as self-enrichment. – S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 113
Withdrawal is a painful process. It is disorienting and confusing to transition from a life spent indulging every addictive impulse to one in which we reject these impulses and feel our feelings. Our entire system of living must be cast away to gain the gift of sobriety. For some, the process is every bit as painful, if not more so, than withdrawing from drugs or alcohol. As we struggle through this period of abstaining, it seems that opportunities begin to pop up everywhere for us to slip back into addiction. It would be so much easier than facing the gut wrenching experience of withdrawal. We listen to the experience of our fellows at S.L.A.A. meetings and hear them describe the pain they endured as they withdrew from sex and love addiction. Some even acted out on their bottom-line behaviors during the process, and had to start again. Not everyone gets through withdrawal without acting out once or twice. But when we do make it through to the other side, we realize it is possible to abstain from acting out.
I will ask my Higher Power to help me stay sober throughout my withdrawal and develop a healthy support system during this difficult time.
January 5
THE FIRST STEP
We admitted we were powerless over sex and love addiction - that our lives had become unmanageable. - S.L.A.A. Core Documents, “The Twelve Steps”
To admit that we are powerless over our sex and love addiction is a difficult and humbling process. Many of us have not been willing to admit that we lack power in any aspect of our lives. We believe that admitting this is tantamount to failure. Our perfectionism tells us that if we can’t do something then we are deficient, unworthy, or broken. True freedom comes from surrender, a paradox that is difficult to wrap our brains around. If we give up, we are taking the first step toward success in arresting our addictive behavior. It is okay to be imperfect. Addiction is not a personal failing. It is a spiritual dis-ease that may only be overcome with a spiritual solution. Have our lives become unmanageable? Are we sick and tired of being sick and tired? Recovery is possible if we are willing to open our minds to new possibilities and give up on living life on our own terms. Only we can make this decision for ourselves. No one else can force us to let go.
I am ready to surrender my whole life strategy of the pursuit of and obsession with sex and love. I am willing to try a new way of living.

January 6
SHARING
We had to remember that even if our sex and love addiction stories fell on deaf ears, recounting them continued to put us in touch with our own experience, which in turn deepened our resolve. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 118
When I first arrived in S.L.A.A., full of pain and hopelessness, sharing my experiences for the benefit of others was the farthest thing from my mind. I desperately needed relief and felt I had so little, perhaps nothing, to give. Later, it gave me relief to think that all my pain might have value if it was to prove useful someday in some way to help another. And getting current often helped me find an answer to some troublesome problems. Sometimes people came up to me after the meeting and gave me insight or shared their experience, strength and hope. I found much needed support. Sometimes just hearing myself say something out loud gave me insight into what I should do. Now I know in sharing the story of my life of sex and love addiction, with all its painful consequences, I’m the one who benefits. I am humbled and grateful for the miracle my Higher Power has given to me - a life transformed.
My Higher Power works through me to help others as I am helped. By serving others I strengthen my sobriety, ever grateful for my progress.
January 7
RESOLVE
“Success” in handling temptation was measured only by the outcome. The fact that I did not succumb, rather than the gracefulness (or lack of same) with which I resisted temptation, was the payoff. – S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 32
Once again, my hand rests upon the phone, that overwhelming urge to call my unhealthy ex-lover eating away at my resolve. We’ve all felt that way. We forget that we are calling someone who isn’t capable of being there for us emotionally. We are aware that this is all a part of our sex and love addiction, but still cannot rid ourselves of that urge to call and don’t have the strength to stop ourselves. What are some recovery tools that we could utilize during times like this? We could choose to phone or e-mail a program friend instead. We could pray to have the strength not to call. We could, at that very moment, write about the urge in our journals. We could take a walk, go for a drive, get involved in something we are interested in. We could do some service work and help someone else.
Higher Power, help me to remember the recovery tools I have available to me and to use them when I am not so strong.

January 8
LEAVING A RELATIONSHIP
A prospective partner’s inability to accept us as we were would confront us with a choice. Either we would have to tailor ourselves to meet our prospective partner’s expectations, or we would have to recognize that the raw material for partnership was not to be found with this particular person. – S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 154
For many of us, choosing whether to leave an unhealthy relationship or not can feel like one of the most excruciating decisions we’ve ever had to make in our lives. We may point to healthy aspects of the relationship and inflate them into reasons to stay. But, for our recovery, we need to leave. We fear and dread the loneliness. Will our self-esteem be able to endure the feelings of rejection when they don’t call and beg us to come back? Many sex and love addicts are also fearful of doing without sex during the abstinence period. These issues can be a part of making a choice to end an unhealthy relationship and they can be painful. But the most difficult experience is making that decision. After the decision is made, the pain eases somewhat and a calmness washes over us in its place. Many of us have found that a no contact rule helps bring us to this place of serenity. We give ourselves a chance to grieve the relationship without the chance of scheming to manipulate the person back into our lives. We can make better decisions when we’re not face to face with our previous partner.
I pray for Higher Power to provide me with the strength to get through that first wave of healthy pain that will lead to the calm, still waters of recovery.
January 9
THE FIFTH CHARACTERISTIC
We feel empty and incomplete when we are alone. Even though we fear intimacy and commitment, we continually search for relationships and sexual contacts. - S.L.A.A. Core Documents, “Characteristics of Sex and Love Addiction”
It’s a running joke in movies when a single person walks into a restaurant that the server hastily clears everything off the table except one glass and a lonely set of silverware, shaming the lone diner in the process. Society often tells us that we are incomplete if we are alone. We have a big hole of emptiness that only Higher Power can fill. Being alone in my apartment with my insane thoughts was intolerable in my first year of sobriety, but we don’t have to be alone when we have a meeting and fellowship to go to or even outreach calls. We may fear intimacy and commitment. After all, being vulnerable in intimacy usually got us into painful situations in the past. And commitment sounds like prison to a sex and love addict. But interaction with fellows and our sponsors and service commitments can help us practice and get more comfortable with both. In S.L.A.A. we have come to find that a continual search for relationships and sexual contacts yields nothing but insanity, while a search for conscious contact with a Higher Power yields serenity.
I don’t need to fear intimacy, just as I don’t need to fear being alone. Today I will pray and meditate when I feel lonely and know that I will be fine with Higher Power by my side.

January 10
SEXUAL PREFERENCE
What we were increasingly “hearing” was the pulse of our common humanity, transcending all lines of gender, gender preference, or specific sexual aims. We were all fish in the same ocean. – S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 146
Those of us who were gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered were so isolated in our disease. Not only did we feel bad due to our out of control acting out, but we were also told we were bad by the society we lived in. It was a terrifying realization that we needed help and the ones who were likely to help us were part of that same society. So, with great trepidation we went to our first S.L.A.A. meeting. When it came time for us to share, we were in so much pain that we let it all out, including our sexual preference, as it is such an undeniable part of who we are. We expected to be doubly rejected, both for the terrible deeds we had done and for whom we loved. But others nodded in agreement and understood us. They accepted us. After the meeting, they came up to us and welcomed us. Meeting after meeting, we shared who we were and found unconditional acceptance. Finally, we have found the family we always wanted that loves us no matter our sexual preference or the color of our skin. We no longer need to hide who we love. We are all in this together, loving and helping each other recover. We have come home!
I will courageously work this program, holding nothing back. Being courageous is how I recover. We are all fish in the recovery ocean and the water’s great!
January 11
HIGHER POWER
Our relationship with God was indeed a personal one. It did not need to be consistent with the definition of any religious institution or the experience of any other person. In fact, we didn’t have to define our Higher Power even for ourselves. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 100

To some of us it may seem that spirituality is out of reach. Maybe we never knew a Higher Power. Many of us grow up with an idea of God imposed upon us. This world is filled with so many different interpretations of a Higher Power. There is no reason why each of us cannot have our own concept. I realized part of my resistance to turning over my life and my will was that I had superimposed my father onto God. I did not want a version of a Higher Power that I could never live up to or never please. When I could separate my view of my father from my concept of God, I got a sense that there is a more loving, giving, and tolerant Power in the universe; that’s the God that I build a relationship with today.

I will continue working on my conscious contact with my Higher Power today.

January 12
REGRET
The guilt of prior deeds and passions or missed opportunities gave way to the deepest, most pervasive guilt of all: that of having left life unlived, of having turned our backs on the possibility of fulfilling a meaningful destiny. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 70

I’m sad today as I reflect on the high body count I left behind in my addiction; so many failed marriages, so many broken hearts. Yet to stay stuck in regrets of the past is a waste of the life I can have. Recovery for me today is not lingering too long in the regret, for that would defeat the very purpose of working the steps. I need to be watchful, for these feelings can turn into shameful remorse. Instead, I can genuinely feel the sorrow, and join with my Higher Power in the sacred act of letting go. I can learn to be loved and 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 so many 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.

Today I genuinely feel my feelings including sorrow, and search to find strength in the letting go, in Higher Power’s will, and time.
January 13
“WE” PROGRAM

A fellowship of others who can truly say, “Yes, I understand - I felt that way too” is a vital part of what makes recovery possible in each avenue of addiction. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Preface, Page vii

When we reach out to others we realize that we are not alone. We are so situated to be extremely helpful to another addict when we have gone through the same experiences and found our way to sobriety. The Steps say “we” for a reason. Many have recovered before us by using the tools of the program. When we hear our story in a meeting, we can usually identify. Even if we don’t, we can know that the speaker is going through struggles as we are or have experienced. We can identify with the pain of the addiction and see others who have found a way out. They usually are of service and give us a hand in climbing out of a dark pit of despair. There is hope in the rooms and much needed support. Instead of living in a closed relationship, relying only on one person to fulfill our needs, we have fellows. Speaking our truths in a meeting full of people and hearing others share on the same topic can be a relief and can bring about healing. Watching someone do service work for the meeting for fun and for free shows us that we are in a caring, helpful environment. Everyone pitches in to keep our “we” program alive and thriving.

I will go to meetings, be of service and listen when others share. I will remember that I am not alone.

January 14
SOBRIETY

We were living in the immediate present, and discovering that we could indeed make it through an hour, or a morning (mourning!), or a day. And we were discovering that there was a joy to be had in successfully negotiating our way through each twenty-four hour period. – S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 109

Some of us began our journey in S.L.A.A. by going cold turkey. We weathered our way through the storm of withdrawal, turning to our sponsors when we needed directions. Some of us had to hit one pothole after another, picking up desire chips on a regular basis until we were finally able to stay on a straight and sober course. No matter which path we take, it is important that we keep our eyes on the road, be open to asking for help and be gentle with ourselves. A long road trip must be made one mile at a time, just as sobriety can only be obtained one day at a time. We need not worry ourselves by wondering why we haven’t gotten as far as others have, comparing our insides to their flashy, sports car exteriors. Recovery is not a race. The more bumpy, slow-going, and rough the road we trudge in maintaining our sobriety, the more fulfilling the breakthrough to smooth cruise control when we finally turn the corner. Persevering in open connection with our Higher Power means that while our journey may be difficult, there will also be some pleasant surprises around the bend.

I am sober today by the grace of God and will continue to do my Twelve Step work and reach out to others.
2017 AGENDA Appendix B
Motions and Items for Discussion
2017 S.L.A.A. Annual Business Meeting,
July 25 – 28, 2017
Fourth Version – July 25, 2017

January 15
HITTING BOTTOM
I had reached the point which is the prelude to change for most addicts: I was at my bottom. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 217
Why is it only by experiencing devastating pain that we begin to see clearly that change must come? Wouldn’t it be more pleasant if we could simply act on the fleeting thought that perhaps this sexual encounter, or this emotional intrigue, could have disastrous results? Once we truly hit bottom, we are confronted with two choices: we either keep digging to self-destruction or we surrender. If we are able to surrender and fully accept our powerlessness, we are able to push ego and self-will out of the way and make room for our Higher Power. As we work each step in our recovery process we begin to see we have choices. With help from our Higher Power, others in the program, our sponsor, and the Steps, we begin to steer clear of our bottom-line behavior and the pain of finding yet another, deeper, bottom. We find it difficult to go through this ego-puncturing, but know that the alternative is worse. We may not survive another acting-out episode.
Today I choose to use the tools of the program to help me stay free from the pain of my bottom-line behaviors.

January 16
CHARACTER DEFECTS
What would our lives be like, we wondered, if we were really to empty our chalice of disease and refrain from refilling it again ourselves, and instead let it be filled eventually through God’s grace? - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 76
Sometimes we may go to a meeting and find ourselves face to face with a mirror. She’s talking about the way she beats herself up or he’s talking about putting off talking to his sponsor. We may recoil. We may judge them. We might even find ourselves asking, “How could they do that?” With a little self-reflection, we may find that the faults we point out in others are the very faults we despise in ourselves. As the old saying goes, “You spot it, you got it.” Taking someone else’s inventory keeps us from having to look at ourselves. But if we are rigorously honest and fearless in our fourth steps, we may come to realize the inherent imperfection in everyone. And knowing that we don’t have to be perfect opens the door to self-acceptance. Slowly but surely, we come to love ourselves and others, “warts and all.” The Fifth Step allows us to be vulnerable with another human being without being judged. When we work Steps Six and Seven, we take an active role in letting go of those character defects that have gotten in the way of our usefulness to God and others. We ask our Higher Power to remove our shortcomings with the knowledge that it may be a long and painful process. It is only when we become willing to let them go that God can take them away.
I will ask and become willing to have Higher Power heal my character defects.
January 17
STATUS
In relationships with others we let go of self-serving power and prestige as driving motives. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 102
Before S.L.A.A., I wasn’t really in relationships with others, they were objects to be manipulated to meet my needs. They didn’t have thoughts and feelings. Self-serving power and prestige were the point of the relationship. Why would I want to let that go? When I listened to others share, I saw how pointless and dramatic it had all been. Most people sought power by going after the powerful partner, but I sought power by having control over my partner. My driving motives were always to seek out attractive partners and do all kinds of crazy things to get them. I needed good-looking partners to validate my self-worth. I remember a friend saying, “How did you get him? He’s so good looking, even I’d go out with him.” I was so proud of myself. In sobriety, I’ve learned to be myself and see if I am compatible with another person. Today my partner and I are equals. I no longer feel the insecurity that leads to the need to control.
I will not think about status today, I will stick to my side of the street and see where I can be of service to another.

January 18
THE SEVENTH TRADITION
Every S.L.A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions. - S.L.A.A. Core Documents, “The Twelve Traditions”
I went to a Debtor’s Anonymous meeting once. I saw so many familiar faces there that I thought I was accidentally in an S.L.A.A. meeting! Being self-supporting can be a struggle for addicts. We wasted so much money and time on our addiction. I never got the college degree that would have given me my dream high-paying career. It can be a badge of honor to a sex and love addict when they ensnare the rich rescuer who makes all their money fears disappear. Why struggle with dead-end jobs and dingy apartments when my addiction could give me world-wide travel and mansions? The one in charge of the checkbook has control. Being self-supporting brings self-esteem because we don’t have to answer to anyone but God and ourselves. That goes for S.L.A.A. groups as well. This is the reason we decline outside contributions. We have a prudent reserve and running expenses from our own members and we don’t accept donations over $20,000 per year from individuals. Following these principles helps S.L.A.A. focus on its primary purpose: to help the addict who still suffers.
I will have gratitude for the ability to support myself today, knowing that I am not alone in my efforts to grow.
January 19
WISDOM

The time-honored Serenity Prayer became a part of our daily repertoire for handling challenging and potentially dangerous situations: God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference. Thy will, not mine, be done. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 77

Growing up, my dad always told me I was very intelligent but had no street smarts. I thought, “If he only knew about my secret life.” But he was right. I had no experience handling challenging situations because I always ran from them into mind-numbing addiction. I had no knowledge because if I could use sex to escape the consequences of my mistakes, I did. Good judgment eluded me. The Twelve Steps and my spiritual experience changed that for me. I no longer had to rely on myself to make decisions. Prayer and meditation often showed me the correct path to take with challenges. I learned to avoid potentially dangerous situations and practice self-care instead. The difficult part is having the wisdom to know the difference between the things I can change and those I cannot. Hearing people’s stories in the room, being in contact with my feelings and listening for Higher Power’s will have all helped give me wisdom. We can’t battle this disease without it!

I will say the Serenity Prayer daily and hopefully grow in wisdom and strength.

January 20
DENIAL

If we were able to manage the maze of intrigue without discovery, or could keep the one we were dependent on from knowing our true feelings, then we apparently never had to deal with the consequences of our actions. We could even deny to ourselves that there were such things as “consequences.” - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Pages 81-2

The word “denial” has so many meanings and I suffered from all of them. I like the acronym D.E.N.I.A.L.- Don’t even know I am lying. That’s what it was for me in my first few years of working the Steps. I either hid behind my character defects or didn’t know I was engaging in them. When sponsors pointed them out in my Fifth Steps, initially I got angry and believed they were wrong. But after careful consideration, I realized I was in denial. Relationships before S.L.A.A. were all about assigning others magical qualities. I wanted the perfect partner but was usually with an abusive or disinterested partner. So, the only possible way to stay in that situation was by living in denial. This character defect was always a large part of my infidelities also. When in danger of getting caught, I would deny, deny, deny. This usually left me juggling all sorts of untruths and patting myself on the back for being intelligent enough to keep my stories straight. But this was a high-anxiety way to live. I also denied my needs in bad relationships. Before finding healing in S.L.A.A., I believed my only choices were to continue living this confusing life full of all sorts of denial, or to kill myself. Thank God the Program gave me another way of life!

I will not live in denial today. I will keep conscious contact with Higher Power and check my motives with other sober S.L.A.A. members.
January 21
HIDING OUT IN MEETINGS
[We had] tremendous incentive...to stay closed and not reveal our true selves to anyone! But in continuing to “go it alone” we were suffering from emotional and spiritual constipation, unable to make constructive use of our experiences and emotions. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 82
I will often go to meetings and refuse to share. I sit in the back of the room at large meetings and run out the door as soon as the meeting ends. I don’t allow people to get to know me. I fear they won’t like me because I’m different or they can’t relate to me because I’m a porn addict and they are love addicts. But I see people share all the time who are unique and they get a lot of love and support from the Fellowship. My sponsor always told me, “If you feel isolated, it’s because you’re not taking contrary action: outreach calls, sharing and greeting people.” I had to get to the meeting twenty minutes early and talk to someone new. I had to get the phone list and actually call people. I needed to take every opportunity to share, even if my addict voices were telling me not to. The voices would say, “You don’t have anything good to share. People will dislike you. You shared last week, so just be quiet this week.” Those are just old tapes from childhood, trying to keep me sick and alone. When I participate in my recovery, I reap the rewards. I’m surrounded by a supportive community even during difficult times. I will stay open and reveal my true self today, letting people into my life.

January 22
HUMILITY
In humility, we understood that we were only being asked to get out of God’s way, so that, with our cooperation, God’s work could be done in our lives. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 87
I always thought humility meant putting myself down in front of others even if I didn’t really believe it. Fellows in program said that it’s an honest appraisal of oneself and our place in life -- being a worker among workers -- not being below the ground underneath everyone else or high up in the sky above everyone. When we put ourselves down, we’re saying Higher Power made a mistake and when we’re grabbing for the brass ring we’re ignoring our purpose (to be of service). Before my 12-Step induced spiritual experience, I thought God was out to get me, or at least just inept when it came to my life. He wasn’t doing it right, so I had to take over. I couldn’t get out of God’s way. I wanted what I wanted, when I wanted it. All Twelve Steps, done in order, showed me how to cooperate and do God’s work. I’m not always willing because my addict voices whisper to me that I’m better than this. But when I go to a meeting, I’m reminded of where I could be and that the Steps are working in my life. I need to give back in order to keep it. I will pray for guidance and the willingness to do Higher Power’s will today.
NEWCOMERS
Each of us in...(S.L.A.A.) knows the confusion and difficulty of walking into the first few meetings, feeling like a newcomer in new surroundings. Whether we took this courageous step out of pain and hopelessness, sought relief from longing and emptiness, or were directed to attend, we move toward recovery by being here. - from the “Welcome” pamphlet

What is it like to enter a meeting for the first time? Some people are scared. Others are pissed off. There are also those who walk into a meeting simply to please someone else. There are even a happy few who are able to walk into a meeting, both proud and relieved to be there. It is important to remember those feelings. When someone new walks into a meeting, we can put ourselves in that spot again. What would be important to hear from the group as a newcomer? What will help keep them coming back? It has been said that the newcomer is the most important person in the room. It is our primary purpose to carry our message to the sex and love addict who still suffers. When that person walks in the door and we hear them tell their sad story, we see ourselves the way we were not so long ago. Nothing puts our recovery in perspective like hearing the fresh pains of addiction. We are reminded of how far we’ve come. And we have the responsibility and the privilege to share our experience, strength, and hope. We do it for them because someone did it for us.

I will be mindful of the newcomer today and try to make them feel welcome. I will remember what it felt like to be new to the rooms of S.L.A.A.

MAGICAL THINKING
My earliest memories [are] of...dreaming of this or that girl in school who would save my life...and the transforming magic of losing myself in the fantasy of loving. All at once the turmoil in life seemed to stop and the fantasy was enough to temporarily obliterate pain. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 197

I wanted so badly to believe that I was going to get what I wanted from the guy that I was obsessed with, that I turned him into the ever-elusive unicorn. I thought my brain was that powerful - that if I thought about it enough I could change reality. I once heard a speaker change the words of the A.A. 12 steps. He replaced the word “drinking” with “thinking.” He said, “We try to manage and control our thinking.” I get lost in magical thinking, especially when I can’t handle the reality of my life, or when I want something desperately. That’s probably why video games are so popular. But no one gets back up after you kill them in real life. That’s the danger of getting lost in the fantasy world. And sometimes I don’t even know I’m doing it because when there’s another person involved, it can seem like reality. My qualifier and I thought we were in love and going to live a dream life. But while we focused on the fantasy, we didn’t notice the complete devastation of those around us.

I will not get lost in magical thinking today. I will focus with meditation and prayer.
January 25

THIRTEENTH STEPPING
Each lonely addict, hungry for fellowship, and trapped in the compulsive need for some specific indulgence that only increases the yawning void within, is in a kind of pain which he or she feels only someone who has similarly experienced it in his or her form of addiction can truly understand. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page vii

We need to have a boundary we don’t cross when it comes to making program friends. Twelfth Step work and fellowship are some of the best parts of the program. I know from experience the desperate need to find a partner in crime. I found that someone in the rooms of S.L.A.A. Most people think of thirteenth stepping as some lurking predator who preys on any newcomer who walks through the door. But predatory behavior can be subtle. In my case, it was the late-night talks after the meeting (about God) and the fellowship “dates” (He would even order my food for me!). Before he showed up I felt like a kid again in fellowship get-togethers and connected to the program. But as soon as he showed up my addiction was off and running. We are told to make outreach calls and go to meetings and work the Steps. But when that person is the only one we want to talk with, the situation has crossed over into addiction. It’s good to make program friends who can help you through withdrawal but if that spark starts it’s better to shut it down than to get stuck in the mud of thirteenth stepping.

I will make healthy program friends and if I start to think of anyone as “the one” I will share with someone and take a step back. I know that I am worthy of real love and don’t have to engage in predatory behavior.

January 26

THE ELEVENTH SIGN
We learn to value sex as a by-product of sharing, commitment, trust and cooperation in a partnership. - S.L.A.A. Core Documents, “S.L.A.A. Signs of Recovery”

Learn to value sex? Why would I have to learn that? I always thought I did value sex above all else. But like the Basic Text says, when it’s a “rapid consumption commodity on an open market” it has no value. And when it’s a means to an end, and done out of desperation, it has even less. When I first heard this Sign of Recovery, I thought it impossible that sex could ever be a by-product of anything. It takes center stage in our society. It sounded like it would become an afterthought and that horrified me. Sex was always an easy way out of problems in a relationship. Why should I have to work so hard at sharing, commitment, trust and cooperation? I was never good at those things. Trust was not attainable after all that people had done to me. And cooperation means compromise and I was too fearful for that. I felt that if I compromised, I would lose myself. Compromise, to me, meant always doing what the other person wanted. But I can honestly say that after all my work in S.L.A.A. and reliance on a Higher Power, I have seen this Sign come true in my life. Instead of the boredom that I thought I would have felt, I have a life affirming dignity that I wouldn’t trade for anything. I will value sex as a by-product instead of using it as a tool to get what I need. I will open up in my partnership today.
January 27

POSITIVE THINKING
We were coming to know that our own attitudes and actions were the only aspects of our lives which we stood any real chance of influencing. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 98

We mirror our world, and our world mirrors us right back. If we laugh, the world can seem to laugh joyfully with us and when we’re sad the whole world seems to cloud over. This is no mere metaphor. Scientists have discovered special brain cells called mirror neurons that respond equally in action or in observance of another’s action. This means our very cells experience the world around us as if they are that world — one more reason why it’s important to surround ourselves with healthy images to build our bodies, our consciousness, and our future. When we feel that everything is going wrong, sometimes it can help to look at all the things that are going right. It might not always work and sometimes we might even need to feel bad for a little while before we feel good again. But more often than not, this is a technique that is healthy for us and a technique that works.

If I get lost in negative thinking, I will pray and make outreach calls to sober S.L.A.A. fellows. I will remember to have gratitude for little things that make my life better.

January 28

REPUTATION
We needed to find some bedrock from which to assay, without illusion, who and what we had been in the world, what we had held ourselves up to be to others and to ourselves. Furthermore, we needed to…understand the payoffs we had derived from our addiction. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 79

People deal with reputation in different ways. Some people keep their addiction very hidden, so any sign of the addiction in their outer world would be devastating. Other people act out however they please, calling their addiction a lifestyle. I’ve done both. I kept up a false front in my life and it was important that no one knew what was going on with me. I tried to hide everything. If people were starting to question or find out about my secret life, I would just pretend it wasn’t happening. There came a point where my acting out started happening so much that I just started to embrace it as a lifestyle. I started to be proud of how many people I slept with, and how sexually provocative I could be. At the same time, I was really focused on protecting my reputation. A lot of energy went into trying to control what people thought about me. I never once thought about controlling the behavior that was the cause of my bad reputation. It wasn’t until I joined program and started getting recovery that I realized what a futile endeavor it was to try to control my reputation. The only way that we can change how we are perceived is by living up to our own values, integrity, and principles.

I will take actions that boost my self-esteem today and let go of my fears around my reputation and my need to control.
LONELINESS

We found that we were forming warmer relationships with friends, coworkers, and even casual acquaintances. Today we may live alone, but we have found rewarding friendships and companionship without sex, and we are not lonely. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 140

Many people in recovery are familiar with the acronym, H.A.L.T. This is a tool for assessing ourselves; a way of taking a spot-check inventory. The “L” in H.A.L.T. stands for lonely. Loneliness is a trigger. We don’t need to be exposed to provocative images or messages from a past lover in order to be triggered. Feelings can trigger us too. Picture the addict, alone at home, with nothing exciting to occupy their time. Who wants to do the laundry or the dishes on a Saturday night? One of the most important things that we can do for ourselves when we feel triggered by loneliness is to take an action that is contrary to our feelings. My sponsor always says when I’m feeling lonely and no one is calling it’s because I haven’t been reaching out in meetings. We have a network of people available to reach out to when we are struggling. The thought of acting out may be far from our minds, but if loneliness is a trigger, it should not be ignored. Left unacknowledged, the feeling can grow into something bigger and lead to acting out down the road. If I’m feeling lonely, but I don’t feel like calling anyone, then that is exactly what I need to do.

I will use the tools of the program. When I’m feeling lonely, I will make outreach calls or go to a meeting and fellowship.
PHYSICAL ATTRACTION
We began to recognize that our disease, far from being just a way to stop the clock with pleasure and intensity, had molded our personalities in ways that would maximize our ability to get the addictive returns! Our physical appearance, our mannerisms, the way we went about our careers or other activities, many of the traits we thought of as our identifying trademarks, as who we were, had been designed to serve our sex and love addiction. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 73

Whenever I felt an attraction to someone, I would lie, cheat and steal to be with them. And if they looked good and I hated their personality, I ignored that red flag. A lot of flaws can be overlooked when distracted by beauty. And when I had a strong physical attraction, I thought it was a chemical reaction (our body chemistry matched so it must have been a match made in Heaven). I spent a lot of time and money searching for that spark. In sobriety, it's tough to find a balance between caring about my appearance to have healthy self-esteem and trying to attract someone inappropriate. Once, my qualifier started lurking around my meetings and I started wearing more and more revealing clothing, rationalizing that it was “business attire.” A fellow called me on it, saying that I was being predatory and trying to entice a spiritually sick, vulnerable person. I woke up, checked my motives and went back to normal “boring” business attire. I can dress up when it’s appropriate and my motives are clean. Sexual charm is best left to those who can handle it.

I will care about my appearance today, but will avoid obsessing.

BETRAYAL
The anger and outrage filled me, and I yelled and screamed at him, hoping that it would lessen the intense pain of betrayal that I felt…if I could…believe that he was truly an uncaring and wicked person, I could save myself the immense suffering of losing someone I really loved. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 54

Sex and love addicts often choose partners who are the type to betray us or we betray others to try and get our needs met. When we rely on other people (instead of ourselves and God) to meet all of our needs, the betrayal is more intense. And if we are doing the betraying, the consequences are more severe. We need to have a support group to rely on. But in the dredges of our disease, we can’t help it when we break trust. We are powerless. We need to have multiple partners, lie about mistakes, keep secrets, and trust untrustworthy people. Keeping our supply of sex and love is more important than any degree of honesty or dignity. S.L.A.A., through prayer and the Twelve Steps, shows us a way out. We learn to slowly shed our secrets in shares with our sponsor and fellows. We learn to be honest in our Fourth and Fifth Steps and eventually in our everyday lives. We walk with dignity and don’t have to worry any more that the house of cards will come crumbling down around us in a dramatic display of our betrayals.

I will not betray myself or anyone else with dishonesty today. I will stand tall and show those I love who I really am.
February 1
THE SECOND STEP
Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. - S.L.A.A. Core Documents, “The Twelve Steps of S.L.A.A.”

It was by a lake in a park when I had my moment of crisis. I realized that business trips and acting out were always going to be synonymous. I had read spiritual books on dealing with sin and living the overcoming life. I tried every strategy I could think of. I prayed, wept, and spent an entire vacation retreat studying what I hoped would be the victorious key. I even threatened myself with consequences, and yet here I was again. This time I had moved even further into an area that I had always believed was morally off limits. What was I doing back here again? In my shroud of shame, I hadn’t realized that this place of powerlessness was a good thing, providing I didn’t give up in despair. My only choice was to embrace the possibility that my cycle of degeneration could be broken through the initiative of a benevolent power, distinct and separate from myself. “I can’t do it,” really does mean, “I can’t do it.” Yet, this isn’t a place of despair but of hope. For when I come to the end of my hoarded resources, I find a Higher Power who is graciously willing to act.

Accepting my powerlessness moves me to see my Higher Power’s doorway of hope that has been there all along.

February 2
TROPHY THINKING
Advertisements, films, TV, magazines constantly promote the idea of attractiveness, beauty and sexual charm as the objective of our otherwise dull lives. It seemed ironic that because I excelled so well in these highly touted virtues, my life became such a mess, and finally unraveled. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 216

S.L.A.A. helped me discover that a lot of my ideas about prestige and social status were wrong. Trophy wives are attractive and smile a lot, but for all I know they could be dying inside. Trophies are given in victory or conquest and mounted on a shelf. They have no other use than to look good for the victor. They have no thoughts or feelings. Their purpose is only to feed the ego and social status of the person who won them. I always thought love was a game. So, if someone “won” me I must be a trophy. I liked the idea that I was attractive enough that someone would try to win me. But being preserved on a shelf and feeding someone else’s ego all the time doesn’t leave room for my hopes and dreams. I didn’t pursue my interests because I had to conform to the game. I had my own trophy thinking about my partner. I didn’t like him as a person, but when he showed interest, I transformed from the nerdy little girl into the glamorous girlfriend of the most popular kid in town. I spent a lot of time and money making sure I stayed attractive to him. S.L.A.A showed me that I have value outside of my appearance and sexual charm. I wouldn’t trade the freedom that this idea brings for anything.

I will not engage in trophy thinking today. I will know that I am worthy of real love and respect.
February 3
THE COMMON DENOMINATOR
We find a common denominator in our obsessive/compulsive patterns, which transcends any personal differences of sexual orientation or gender identity. - S.L.A.A. Preamble
The disease doesn’t discriminate. People in the rooms of S.L.A.A. are from all different levels of society and stages of life. We are people who would not normally mix. I have no reason to meet and talk to a Wall Street tycoon and yet sometimes I can find him sitting next to me at a meeting or fellowship. I laugh at myself when I’m shocked to find out what people do. It’s as if I forget that rich or famous people can get struck down by sex and love addiction too. Newcomers may be uncomfortable with being around people who are different. But we can’t afford to let personal differences get in the way of recovery. The Traditions help us with that. Tradition One states that “our common welfare should come first, personal recovery depends on S.L.A.A. unity.” We care about others. We practice love and tolerance and create a safe space for recovery. We don’t fight about religious or political beliefs. We stay focused on our primary purpose - to carry the message of recovery from sex and love addiction to the addict who still suffers. I will focus on unity today and do whatever I can to be of service to my fellow addicts.

February 4
CHILDHOOD FEARS
Behind this staged setting [my adult life] was a driven, scared boy who didn't believe he had any intrinsic value, whose goodies might be taken away at any moment, and whose only workable tool to handle this papier-mache world was a series of ongoing love affairs and intriguing escapades around the world. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 216
When I was young my father was called away to war. He went away for 2½ years and my mother cried every night and thought he was going to die. I’ve dealt with abandonment my whole life by being afraid of it. I got abstinent in S.L.A.A., went on a dating plan, and married my partner. Still, every time he went away for a business trip, I would feel immense abandonment. I’d be so depressed I couldn’t take care of myself and I wouldn’t be able to do my step work. I realized it was a childhood fear that I was feeling and that I didn’t have to feel abandoned. I had a program, I had support people and my sponsor to go to, and I had meetings to take me out of the childhood trauma. Most of all, I realized Higher Power never abandons me. No one can abandon me today except myself. People do leave, but it’s usually not about me. I will not abandon myself today. I will stay away from self-destructive behavior.
February 5
ENVY
I had been subjected to yet another of the now routine bouts of intense craving and desire, stimulated by still another temptation which was compounded by the agony of seeing someone else help himself to what would formerly have been “my” territory! - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 33
Envy is a defect of character that goes beyond mere jealousy. It means that I not only want what someone else has, but I also want that person not to have it. Recognizing envy in oneself can be painful. Perhaps I see a friend or family member who has the success that I desire and I resent them for it. I am unable to experience happiness for that person, because I am too caught up in what I want. I make their accomplishment into a reflection of my lack thereof. Rather than focusing on what others have, it is more productive for me to express gratitude for what I do have. If I desire greater accomplishment in my life, I must be willing to put in the work to attain it. Addiction has held me back and obscured my goals. It made me lose sight of what is truly important. Through the process of recovery, it is possible to realign my priorities and be the person I want to be. I can be happy for others while working to attain my goals and be grateful for the blessings that I already have.
Higher Power, thank you for the gifts you have given me. Help me to set aside my feelings of envy and resentment and to take pleasure in the good fortune of my friends and family.

February 6
REFLECTION
Many of us found that both daily and on a periodic basis we needed to set aside times for solitude and reflection. These times of self-overhaul provided an opportunity to touch base with ourselves and our progress, and keep perspective on our spiritual development. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 97
The dictionary definition of reflection contains the idea that we form thoughts and opinions through meditation. Before S.L.A.A., I never would have made the connection between meditation and reflection. I always thought I should draw my own thoughts and conclusions from the quiet. They were my own ideas and opinions even if they came from thin air. In the days of my addiction, I didn’t have much time for reflection. I was too busy trying to get ahead or find “the one.” And forget touching base with myself and my progress. Why sit in solitude with yourself if you’re just going to beat up on yourself all the time? I didn’t like the direction in which my life was going, never asked for God’s help, and didn’t like any of the ideas that my brain came up with anyway. With practice, I have been able to quiet those voices and be honest with myself about my progress in S.L.A.A. and in life. I sit quietly and ask for Higher Power’s direction. Anything that is revealed to me, I take to fellows to be sure it’s not my own selfish ideas. I will set aside time in my busy life today for reflection.
February 7
SAFE SPACE
The only real “safety” any S.L.A.A. group (and S.L.A.A. as a whole) can ever have is a desire to get well which is held in common by a majority of group members, and the availability of that Grace, bestowed by a Power greater than us all, which alone makes recovery possible. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 133
Safety in the rooms is so important. When I came to my first meeting, I wasn’t sure what others would think of my past behavior. I thought I might end up an outcast among the outcasts. But even in the tiny group that welcomed me for the first time, there was someone whose story was nearly identical to my own. Because he felt safe sharing the details of his past, it felt safe for me to reveal my shame and tell all the secrets that I held for so many years in my addiction. We create a safe space by sharing openly and honestly from the heart. This opens up space for the newcomer. That was a key for me, knowing that other people shared the same feelings and pain and that it’s all right to share those experiences. When a newcomer is present, I share the difficult, shame-ridden details of my acting out, because they could be just as scared as I was the first time. Maybe they’re just waiting for someone else to say what is already on their heart, so they will know that they’re in a safe space and it’s okay to be vulnerable. I no longer need to be afraid. I am with friends in S.L.A.A., people who understand me and will not judge me.

February 8
IF IT’S HYSTERICAL, IT’S HISTORICAL
All of us, without exception, went through periods during which we were extremely vulnerable to mental and emotional shocks. Often these seemed to occur as a result of coincidental meetings or contact, direct or indirect, with old addictive situations. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 111
Quite often in my withdrawal, I would come away from a situation saying, “Why did I overreact like that?” I was crying for days, or screaming at someone with no cause, or so sad that I didn’t want to do anything. On my first intimate sober date, I made spaghetti and the entire time I was cooking, a voice in my head said, “You’re doing this wrong. He’s going to hate it. He’ll never date you again.” I was a wreck by the time he came over for dinner! Later I realized that as a child whenever I tried to help my mother make dinner, I got berated for everything I did and eventually banned from the kitchen until my next attempt. This was my insanity of trying the same thing over and over again expecting different results. As an adult, I was playing those tapes in my mind from my childhood and torturing myself. When I realized this, I was able to let it go and be kind to myself. My date loved the spaghetti and asks me to make it even today. I don’t have to listen and believe my mother’s voice in my head anymore.
If I start to get hysterical in a situation, I will pause and ask myself, “Is this historical?” If so, I will give it to my Higher Power.
February 9
BEST THINKING
If our sex and love addiction was such a fundamental part of our personality…then we had to ask whether all our prior ideas about who and what we were might be incorrect or ill-founded. We had to admit to the possibility that anything, if not everything, we believed could be faulty. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 76

My best thinking got me into the rooms of S.L.A.A. My addiction was so much a part of my personality that I couldn’t separate the unhealthy addict ideas from the healthy ones. I was working towards goals that had no basis in reality and thinking that crazy schemes would fix me. My foundation for any goal was usually, “Maybe this will work.” It usually ended up making things worse. I engaged in a “glamorous” career that sometimes satisfied my need for attention and love, but gave me no real sense of personal worth or dignity. Even when I thought I was trying to help others my ideas were twisted by the addiction. Step 2 says that we “came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.” When I pray and meditate over an idea rather than running right out and trying it, I get a clearer picture of my motives and how it will affect my life. My sponsor taught me to think the idea through to its logical conclusion. I had to list pros and cons and possible outcomes. We aren’t supposed to futurize, but in this case, it’s helpful in spotting faulty thinking that is dressed up by the disease as best thinking. I will analyze my best thinking by praying, meditating, and talking to fellows before acting on anything important.

February 10
THE SEVENTH CHARACTERISTIC
We use sex and emotional involvement to manipulate and control others. - S.L.A.A. Core Documents, “Characteristics of Sex and Love Addiction”

“Why do all our arguments end in sex?” was a question my boyfriends asked often. I usually got my way. And I used emotional involvement to control my friends if I couldn’t have sex with them. I had to control everyone in my world or I didn’t feel safe. I wished the world was a stage and I could be the director. I believed the only way to control someone else was to manipulate and threaten. If someone was emotionally involved, the threat of abandonment was a powerful tool. And if they were a sex addict, the threat of withholding sex would always pull them over to my way of thinking, even if I wasn’t prepared to carry through with the threat. When I joined S.L.A.A., I had to start letting go of all of my tools of manipulation. The phrase “Let the chips fall where they may,” helped me so much. My sponsor would constantly remind me that what my partner was doing was none of my business. I had to stick to working on my sobriety and my side of the street. If someone let me down, I couldn’t manipulate to change the outcome. I had to look at the reality of every situation and take care of myself honestly. I will try not to manipulate or control anyone today. I will take care of myself within the parameters of reality.
February 11

SOCIAL NORMS
To the observer, my life was the American Dream come true: beautiful wife, two handsome children, large home, pool and tennis court, cars, travel, etc. Behind this staged setting was a driven, scared boy. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 216

I live in a city where there is no longer the “normal” family with 2.5 kids and the white picket fence. That didn’t prevent me from chasing some unknown and ever-elusive ideal. I just wanted to fit in. I thought sex and love was the way to do this. I played mind reader. I thought I knew what God and society wanted. Before S.L.A.A. I thought the point of life was to be sexy and catch the rescuer who would make me “normal” and help me fit into society. The rooms of S.L.A.A. and Twelve-Step work made me question all of that. I realized that my idea of what society wanted wasn't what Higher Power had in store for me at all. I have none of the assumed prizes: big house, career or children. My role in the world is to try to be humble and of service; I never would have thought of that or been willing to take on that role. I'm grateful to S.L.A.A. for opening my eyes to the truth.

I will not worry about what other people think of me. I will try not to take things personally today.

February 12

ANXIETY
It wasn’t too long…before the floating anxieties became anchored. I began experiencing full-blown panics, the kind that would make me grip the table to make sure I didn't float off into space…The mounting sexual activity and growing deceit had finally broken me. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 217

Usually when I feel anxiety it’s because I'm afraid of losing something I have or not getting something I think I need. Fear creates all kinds of havoc in my life. It’s one of the worst emotions, making me want to act out and numb out. And dealing with fear using sex and love addict behaviors only creates more fear and anxiety. S.L.A.A. taught me tools to deal with fear. I share my fear with others and they give me their experience, strength, and hope. Building self esteem instead of tearing it down with acting out saved my life. I saw only hospitals and institutions or suicide in my future when I was acting out. When I saw that I could stop with the help of a Higher Power and 12-Step action, I had a glimmer of hope. Over the years, that glimmer has turned into a beacon that steadies me whenever the storms of anxiety hit. It doesn’t disappear completely from my life, but it's much more manageable.

If I find myself lost in worried thoughts, I will write a fear inventory and give it to my sponsor and Higher Power, therefore releasing its power over me.
February 13
SHARING THE MESSAGE, NOT THE MESS
The Twelfth Step is the affirmation of personal recovery through accepting the responsibility to take the commitment to this way of life into action by sharing it with others. And it is here that true love, which is of God, and makes it possible for one person to touch the soul of another, is found and expressed. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page vii

For many years, I went to S.L.A.A. and couldn’t get sober. I had one sponsee that my sponsor told me to let go of because I was just sharing the mess with her. Despite this, I was still asked to do the long share at meetings. And every share was garbled. I went through a year of crying everywhere I went. Today, with many years of sobriety and many service commitments and sponsees, I always give back where I can because of all those years of sharing the mess in every meeting. Through all the pain, the people in the rooms accepted and loved me anyway. That’s what the message is today for me. I was really messed up for many years but S.L.A.A. loved me anyway, and today I’m the kind of respectable person I always wanted to be. And the old-timers who knew me back then always attest to the power of the program when they compare the old me to the person in recovery that I am today. Seeing my transformation gave them hope. I’ve seen people with completely wrecked lives recover and become leaders in the world. It’s a beautiful thing to watch people recover.
When I share, I will try to let go of ego and carry the message of recovery.
February 14

AUGUSTINE FELLOWSHIP

Augustine of Hippo – as those who have read his autobiography, Confessions, know – was probably one of us… the dynamics of Augustine’s story, the inner workings and struggles of the person himself, left us with little doubt that he would have understood, and felt welcome among us. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 130.

It was rumored that when he was young, Augustine had many affairs and believed that humans are naturally inclined to sin. His famous prayer is “Grant me chastity and continence, but not yet.”* Some might worry that naming S.L.A.A. “the Augustine Fellowship” might be considered religious affiliation. The Basic Text explains the first group’s reasons for adding “the Augustine Fellowship” to our name. Meeting places often have difficulty with any group that has the word “sex” in their title. Getting something in the mail from the Augustine Fellowship draws much less scrutiny from over-observant mail carriers and nosey neighbors than “sex and love addicts” does. Even our basic text no longer has the name on its cover. Even though most of us have been rebels our whole lives, we had to find a way, as a group, to work within society. We had to deal with skepticism and fear in an adult way. We have a responsibility to the Fellowship. When people needed reassurances in the early days of S.L.A.A. they accommodated their needs by using the Augustine Fellowship as their name, and eventually started using both names. It takes time to earn trust and respect and that’s what they did.

I will not worry about being constrained by rules today. I will have faith that God has a plan and more will be revealed if I stay on the road of recovery.

*Augustine of Hippo, Confessions, 8:7
February 15

GETTING ARRESTED

One evening I met someone, went into one of the stalls with him, and within minutes was under arrest by vice police who were watching behind a wall. In that moment, I felt totally devastated. I thought my life was over. I was now a criminal. At nineteen, I was caught… and no one in my family knew that I was gay. Not the best way to come out to your parents. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 172

25 years ago, I was arrested for public lewdness by an undercover cop. At that time, I had 10 years sober in A.A. but had done no serious 4th step work on my sexual inventory. I was seeking what I thought was a suitable substitute for love in all the wrong places. It took this first arrest to get my attention about sex and sobriety. Court ordered to S.L.A.A., I attended meetings, obtained the S.L.A.A. text, and began work on the Steps with a sponsor. Shortly after my probation ended, I attended less and less meetings and stopped working the steps. I relapsed. In 1996, I was charged with indecent exposure. I was again court ordered to S.L.A.A. and on probation for 2 years. All this to say, I qualify for this program. Today, I do not act-out on my bottom-line behavior. I attend meetings regularly, read 12 step literature, work the program, and meet with my sponsor weekly. Sponsoring others helps me remain active in sobriety. Finally, and perhaps most important, I invite God into everything I do. Without God, I am lost to my addictive nature.

It is with a grateful heart that I choose to live my life sober.

February 16

SATISFACTION

The sex and love addict would come to substitute the thrill of sexual adventure or intensity of “love” for the more encompassing satisfactions, founded first and foremost on self-respect, and later realized in family, career and community. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page viii

I used to live by the Rolling Stones’ outcry, “I can’t get no satisfaction.” I thought it made me cool to be continually on the search for more - more attention, more and better sex, etc. When my sponsor told me to embrace the boredom, it sounded like assigning myself to hell. Life without the thrill of sexual adventure made me feel like I needed to jump out of airplanes in my early withdrawal. But I was told to sit with the feelings and act like I thought a “normal” person would. It was uncomfortable for a very long time. I had to grieve my former thrilling life in order to let go of the longing for “the one.” But the self-respect I gained in return was definitely worth the effort. The freedom of holding my head up high and giving back to family and community is all the satisfaction I need. When longing for the past hits me, I will remember that ultimately no thrill-seeking feels as good as the clean feeling of self-respect.
February 17

DAILY MAINTENANCE

Time and daily consistency of action are the tools with which we fashion our release, under God’s guidance, from the tyranny of the psychic realm. This may be the last domain of the addiction to relinquish its power, but it does happen. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 111

It’s hard to be consistent with all the ups and downs of a sex and love addict’s life. Society’s view has always been that the nature of love is fleeting. A whirlwind romance, intense passion, basically a rollercoaster ride was much preferred over the boring drudgery of day to day life. It takes time to change lifelong patterns. The thing that I and my sponsees get stuck on is time. We would complain about working the Steps so thoroughly. My sponsor always told me, “You had 17 years of learned acting out patterns. What makes you think you’ll change that overnight?” I always thought my God should be powerful enough to wave his magic wand and change me quickly without any help from me. Sometimes working the Steps and going to a meeting every day can seem like sawing at metal with a nail file, but eventually it does give us freedom from addiction. Every day I wake up, read recovery literature, say a recovery prayer, journal, call my sponsor, go to work and then a meeting and that’s what works for me. Some meditate. I think the point is to find something that works and do it daily. Our disease is doing push-ups, so, why shouldn’t we?

I will use the tools of the program daily and not worry about the time it takes me to recover.
February 18
THE THIRD TRADITION
The only requirement for S.L.A.A. membership is the 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. - S.L.A.A. Core Documents, “The Twelve Traditions”
I naturally assumed that I was a pretty open-minded person. The truth is, I was like most. My circle of friends was generally made up of those who were in similar camps politically, religiously, economically, and culturally. My addiction was a game changer. It put me in a room with people with very different perspectives on life. “We are people who normally would not mix,” says the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous. One fear of beginning in meetings is the fear of becoming like one of “them,” whatever “them” happens to be. What we find when we enter the rooms are people whose worldviews, support systems, and belief structures served them well in so many ways but failed to help them stop living out a pattern of sex and love addiction. A desire to stop acting out and a common cure forged an insoluble bond. I sit across from people with whom I would never have chosen to acquaint. I have a sponsor who believes differently in so many ways. Yet, I find that as different as we are, we are not so different. We all want to get sober. We are here to help ourselves and help one another. That is more important than all the things that typically divide.
A common quest for sobriety and a way of life that truly works puts us in fellowship and transcends the things that divide.
February 19
AUTONOMY
In an [open-energy-system] relationship…the failure of the relationship would not spell “death” to the individuals involved. The loss of the individual's own autonomy, and the forfeiture of personal dignity, would be seen as being far worse. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 145

In my addiction, I was always striving for autonomy, yet, I was always so dependent. If a relationship failed, I didn't know how to live with myself or who to be. I remember thinking that I was no one without a partner. All I could do was cry and eat junk food until I found the next love interest or completely threw away my values and beliefs in order to win back the relationship. That self-defeating pattern continued into my thirties, until I got sober in S.L.A.A. I finally learned how to be a person of dignity in the world without a partner. I let go of my belief system that a person is nothing in the world without a relationship. I found interests that fed my soul (and self-esteem) that didn't require anyone else. I stopped taking everything personally and allowed myself and others to have their own thoughts and feelings. I can finally say today that I am more autonomous than I've ever been in my life. I'm so grateful for the opportunity to grow up in this program.

Today, I will remind myself of my personal worth and maintain my dignity. I will know that I am valuable regardless of whether I receive outside validation or not.

February 20
OXYTOCIN
An entrancing moment with her, ephemeral in real time, took on the qualities of eternity, and in such a moment all awareness of how my mind had been altered was lost; I was overwhelmed. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 16

The research on oxytocin is very new at this time. We know that it is a chain of just nine amino acids long, but it has big effects. It speeds child delivery and results in milk production in mothers. It is hypothesized that increased oxytocin may create the state we associate with being loved, sexually stimulated, and socially bonded, while decreased oxytocin appears to lower our desire to socially interact or be emotionally expressive. There is even the possibility that oxytocin works outside the brain, speeding wound healing and reducing inflammation. During my withdrawal experience I was shocked to find myself shaking and crying, my grief overwhelming, my anxiety spiked and my body hurt. Even if science isn’t sure, the possibility of a biological basis to sex and love addiction and or anorexia helped me believe that sex and love addiction was “real.” I know that for me I needed the 12 steps, the mottos, the tools and the supportive social network of recovering companions to produce in me the spiritual awakening and personality change needed for recovery from sex and love addiction. Too much or too little oxytocin is not too much to handle for my Higher Power, the Program, and me. Today, I will seek healthy ways to find balance through exercise and fellowship.
February 21

COMPULSIVE CONTACT

Obsession and compulsion, now our masters, meant that control over our sexual and emotional lives no longer resided with us, or within us. We had lost control, regardless of whether we admitted it to ourselves or not. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 69

My intellectual recognition of my need for contact with my qualifier, in spite of the consequences, was baffling to me. I was intelligent, educated and psychologically aware. Why would I repeatedly return to interact with a person when afterward I would feel demoralized, abandoned, and worthless? It was only through working the twelve steps that I could understand the addictive nature of this compulsion, and, with my Higher Power's help, cease listening to the relentless lies my addiction whispers to me. “Call him, you'll feel better. See him, and it will all be good.” My addiction is cunning, baffling, powerful, and very convincing. On my own I am unable to resist its seductive voice. I can recover, one day at a time, with help from my Higher Power, honesty, and regular contact with others in S.L.A.A. who have learned to reject the lies their addiction tells them. Just for today, I am free from the need to act on the lies my addiction whispers to me.

February 22

NOT ___ ENOUGH

The feelings of inferiority and insecurity, which we petitioned God to replace with confidence, were openly admitted, and as we accepted the support or the confessions of similar insecurity from others, we felt comforted. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 89

When I was told to “humbly” ask God to remove my shortcomings it became clear to me that my two most damaging defects of character were arrogance and shame. After a while I discovered that the defect of arrogance was a cover-up for my shame. It was a false sense of pride and superiority that was behind my acting arrogantly. My low self-esteem and need to be accepted fed my belief that I knew best, my way was the only way, and that I was smarter than others. Acting out my phony self-importance was demonstrated by undesirable, shameful behavior which just led me back to the core belief that I am truly unlovable and if anyone gets to know me, they will surely find out what an awful person I am and will leave me. Underneath that false power of control was shame and intense self-loathing. Without realizing it I would disrespect myself by acting out in shameful, self-denigrating ways. It seemed that I always thought I was better than or less than others, never equal to my fellows. Now, when I find myself falling back into that kind of black and white thinking I can affectionately remind myself that I’m not better than/less than and I can then ask God to restore me to a state of humility.

Today, I will heal my shame with the tools of the Program and remind myself that I am enough, just as I am.
February 23
TRUST
We came to trust the guidance that was helping us navigate away from the old addictive patterns. If God was helping us manage our external lives, it was easier to become open to clearing out the inner debris to trust God's guidance for the inward journey. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 79

Coming from an abusive relationship, it was hard for me to trust other people. I couldn’t even trust myself to leave an abusive situation. And that translated into not trusting God to protect me. When we do the Twelve Steps, we are given the tools to see that we can trust God, others, and ourselves. The Steps take us into and through the inward journey. In the Fourth Step we put down on paper the resentments of the past. Sometimes our anger was justified. But in every situation, we are hopefully able to see our part. This helps us to steer clear of situations and people in our sober life. It may be painful to look at how others have hurt us and we have hurt ourselves, but it is necessary to build up a new foundation of trust where we choose the people in our lives more carefully and give less of our power away to our sex and love addict tendencies. With God and S.L.A.A.’s guidance, we navigate away from old patterns of co-dependency, love for abusive or unavailable people, and any other character defects that made us love untrustworthy people.

I will trust myself to stay sober and not give myself away because I know God and S.L.A.A. will guide me.

February 24
LONGING
We asked to have our longing for a person or a particular sexual hunting ground removed, and found ourselves given a choice. When we voluntarily chose to avoid those places and those people, the longing eased. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 89

I used to revel in longing. I listened to all the tragic love songs repeatedly. I played every tragic scene with my qualifier over and over again in my head like a bad movie. It was a source of comfort. Even in relationships with other lovers I always secretly had this one person whom I was pining over. I would get so stuck in the mud of longing that I couldn’t get clear of my addiction and I would inevitably run back to my qualifier. Longing is about living in the past or wishing the future could be different. My sponsor made me realize that I was assigning magical qualities to my qualifier instead of facing reality. The many long years spent wasted in longing make it seem so difficult to stop, but because of my recovery in other parts of my addiction I do know that recovery is possible. S.L.A.A. taught me to live in reality.

Today I will live in reality and when longing comes up I will take responsibility for my life and do the task that is in front of me.
February 25

CO-ADDICT

Many of us had the feeling of “needing to be needed” that left us clinging to the addict, certain that if we made ourselves necessary, or “indispensable” to the addict, we would be “safe.” We...sacrificed our personal dignity and [hid] behind self-deception in order to make the relationship work. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 63

I always thought Kate from our basic text was a sex and love addict herself so the term co-addict confused me. A lot of partners of sex and love addicts end up in S.L.A.A. to confront their love addiction. Just like with my alcoholism I could point to my partner and say "They are so much more of an addict than me so I don't have to look at myself." I was so busy trying to rescue him that I didn't see my own sex and love addiction blooming. He was out there cheating on me with 3 people and getting women pregnant. Why deal with petty things like self-esteem when there are big dramas to confront?

Being a co-addict enables the addict to continue acting out with less fear of repercussions. As a co-addict, if we can't stop being an enabler, maybe we need to look at our own sex and love addiction. Co-addicts in long term recovery can help each other because they speak the same language and understand.

I will let S.L.A.A. and Higher Power heal my co-addiction.

February 26

THE SECOND SIGN

We are willing to be vulnerable because the capacity to trust has been restored to us by our faith in a Higher Power. - S.L.A.A. Core Documents, “S.L.A.A. Signs of Recovery”

Being vulnerable means allowing all of my defects and all of my fears to be seen by another human being. It means taking a chance on getting hurt by trusting someone else with the reality of who I am. Six months into my recovery, I started dating a close friend. It was the first time I allowed myself to be myself with a potential love interest. In my active addiction, the name of the game was “obscure, deflect and withhold.” I was an expert at changing myself to conform to what they wanted. I didn't realize that being myself was even a choice. In my first relationship in recovery, I opened myself up to my partner. I let her know when I was upset, even when I feared she might leave me.

Instead of being abandoned, she listened to me. Instead of anger, I received compassion and understanding. She was an excellent partner with whom I was able to test the waters of honesty. I know that if someone is unwilling to listen to my concerns and feelings, we will not be able to have an honest and open relationship.

It is okay to be myself. I can open myself up, without fear, to the people whom I trust.
THE S.L.A.A. LIFE PRESERVER
Alcoholics Anonymous grew from the principle that one alcoholic could maintain recovery by reaching out to help another one...That “carrying the message” principle of the Twelfth Step of recovery insures that lonely sex and love addicts...will have the opportunity to find that special friendship and fellowship with others which is so vital - so life giving. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page viii
The symbol of the life preserver is about someone throwing a lifeline. Members of S.L.A.A. save each other’s lives. The life preserver doesn’t work on its own. Someone has to choose to throw it into the water and the person in the water has to choose to grab it. That lifeline comes in the form of our Basic Text, Fellowship, Sponsorship and meetings. An outreach call could save someone’s life. Our message of hope is in the S.L.A.A. Basic Text, but the addict has to read it and choose to hear the message and follow the plan of recovery. Sponsors, Fellowship, and meetings are all available to help. As long as the newcomer is willing to reach out for that help, they can recover instead of drowning in addiction. The life preserver logo is on all of S.L.A.A.’s literature, chips and medallions to remind us that we are not alone. Other members are always there for support. We help ourselves by helping others. It feels good to see others recover and lead happy, more productive lives. If we can have some small part in making that happen, it strengthens us to continue on this journey of recovery.
I will reach out to my fellow sufferer today and help in whatever way I can.

TIME APART
In human relationships two individuals could be nourished by each other and also exchange energy through experiences outside the relationship. Rather than being completely dependent on each other, individuals in open-energy-system relationships might have a degree of autonomy. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 144
I used to be so self-centered that once someone left the room, it was like they were dead to me. I would either feel alone in the world, or fall into negative fantasy about life without them. They couldn’t have a life going on without me. The threat of abandonment was too great. As soon as they walked out the door, I had to call or text or have plans to see them soon. They had to be constantly doing things for me so I knew they were at least thinking about me during our time apart. If all of these elements weren’t in place, I was convinced we were doomed. This would require that I find a “back-up” partner. I would occupy myself with them (wasting their time and mine) until my real partner came back. With the help of S.L.A.A., I saw how destructive that scenario is to my well-being. I learned how to spend time apart without fear of abandonment. We can support our partner in work and other activities that we don’t necessarily share and respect their connection with friends and family as well as their need to be alone.
I will not fear time apart today, I will respect it and know that Higher Power is always with me.
LEAP OF FAITH

Where would we find even the rudiments of a faith that could carry us through this dissolving and reconstruction of our whole personality?...through contact with sober people at our regular S.L.A.A. meetings who had surmounted the need-for-faith barrier themselves. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 75

My first leap of faith was to enter the program. I didn’t know what I was getting myself into. I had a feeling that I would find all kinds of crazy things behind the doors of meeting rooms. But I walked through those doors anyway. I just knew that my way didn’t work. I had hope that I would find the answers in S.L.A.A. My second leap of faith was sticking around, getting a sponsor and doing the Steps. I had no proof that going through such pain would work for me. Seeing sober members who had recovered because of Program helped but couldn’t allay all of my fears. Not having a Higher Power made it a struggle. It’s difficult to jump off of a cliff and trust that a net will appear underneath you when you don’t think there’s anyone there to put up the net. But I just kept believing that it would work. And finally I had a spiritual experience. Since then I have had some really big decisions to make that I agonized over and couldn’t find answers. My faith that Higher Power would be there to catch me if I fell gave me the ability to attempt my best effort. I have always had great success. That may not always happen but I know I have support and love from fellows and Higher Power. Though I may lack understanding, I put my faith in my Higher Power to do for me what I am incapable of doing.

ABSTINENCE

This process of increasing awareness led eventually to a final surrender of the whole addictive pattern, and thus we were launched into withdrawal and sexual and emotional sobriety. - SLAA Basic Text, Page 105

Prior to abstinence, pain and despair lingered. A sponsor’s demand that I “cycle down” for 60 days seemed like a temporary surrender - marginal at best. To surrender to a 60-day abstinence period signals acceptance and a belief that sobriety and serenity is possible. To “cycle down” means no contact with qualifiers while avoiding unsafe places and unsafe people. It excludes spending significant time with anyone who disrespects my values and program. Over time, with patience and daily spiritual practices, feelings of loneliness and despair lessen. On sharing at meetings there are those occasions where I sense subtle reactions that spell disbelief and doubt in my fellows - especially younger men. Yet there are times when I hear shares that indicate that abstinence can be a reality for skeptics who eventually report up to 90 days of sobriety and abstinence. With five years of sobriety I am no longer drawn to inappropriate people or places. Such a way of living and thinking is awesome. Abstinence heightens awareness and brings hope and acknowledgement of personal needs, priorities, programs, and practices.
March 2
SUFFERING
As addicts we had become accustomed to pain. More often than not, pain was a central characteristic of our romantic involvements and even many of our sexual pursuits. Some of us even equated pain with love, so that in the absence of love we would at least be comforted by the presence of pain. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 85
When we cease to perceive value in suffering, healing is instantaneous. When a fellow said that to me, I got angry with him. What possible value could I find in suffering? But I was using emotional pain to insulate me from hurt and fear. My twisted thinking was, “If I can solicit anger and jealousy from my partner then he must love me.” I was in the habit of creating chaos in my relationships in order to keep my partner constantly engaged. But the reality was that I was really pushing him away with my behavior. I created distrust and partners often left me. Left with my pain, I would listen to love songs, get drunk, and cry. Sometimes I would get dramatic and lie on the floor and scream, plotting my suicide. Grieving the loss of the relationship in this way ensured that I would stay involved in it long after it was over. In sobriety, we go through suffering in order to let it go. We give our character defects to Higher Power. Hopefully they are removed, a day at a time, and we are able to build trust and intimacy in our relationships. I will let go of my old emotional habits today and rely on Higher Power to get me through hurt and fear.

March 3
ROMANTICISM
Some of us were caught up in the hypnotic intensity of sexual and romantic encounters or relationships, merging ourselves into our lovers or spouses. These experiences became overwhelmingly compelling, carrying us along with them, exuberantly at first, and then less and less willingly. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 69
For some of us, obsessive romanticism was a key aspect of our overall sex and love addiction. As a teen, my interactions with female peers became overwhelmingly focused on winning their approval of me as a sexual being. While other boys naturally developed “the hots” for this girl or that, romantic impulses in me were much more intense. Romance addiction became all-absorbing, profoundly affecting my sense of emotional well-being and capacity to function. To hide the truth from myself, I reasoned that I was only expressing true chivalry in this cynical modern age. All of this was preparing the way for full-blown sexual compulsivity as I moved through my teens. Recovery from sex and love addiction must include recovery from obsessive romanticism and relationship addiction. Once the compulsion of acting out itself has been lifted and recovery begins to expand in us, we notice that romantic idealization and fixation on imagined relationships begins to fade. How liberating it is to view others not as gods or
godesses, but simply as fellow human beings, deserving of respect, honesty and right
court from us. I thank God, who, by way of the program and fellowship of S.L.A.A.,
has awakened me from the hypnotic trance of obsessive romanticism.
I will try to stay rooted in reality today. If my mind starts wandering into romanticism, I
will pray and meditate.

March 4
SURRENDER
True surrender of our sex and love addiction meant not only being willing to take
ourselves out of the painful situation at hand. It meant, most importantly, being ready to
be free of our whole life strategy of obsession with and pursuit of love and sex. -
S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 71
It helps to remember that ours is a spiritual disease requiring a spiritual solution.
Somewhere along the way, there was emptiness, a longing that we tried to escape from
or fill in a variety of mind-altering but ultimately addictive ways. In recovery, we identify
this need as a spiritual hunger. Nothing else seems to work. We get to “give up,” say
“uncle,” surrender. We get to take inventory of our lives and realize that we have this
disease of sex and love addiction. We see that our way of living doesn’t work. And this
is a gift. Out of sheer desperation is born in us the willingness to get down on our
proverbial knees to admit that we are absolutely powerless over acting out with the
behaviors and emotions of our disease. And when we do, something happens. We
make contact with a Power greater than ourselves, which we are free to define and
redefine, that “can do for us what we cannot do for ourselves.”
Higher Power, let me be willing to surrender my disease to your loving care, that I may
be a beacon of light to those who still suffer.

March 5
THE THIRD STEP
Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood
The concept of turning my will and my life over to a power greater than myself was one
of the hardest, most confounding things that I was asked to do in this program. I thought
God should be a voice in my head, like a GPS telling me to go right or left. It was only
when I was in enough pain that I realized I couldn’t rescue myself and I became willing
to pay attention to the subtle signs of a higher power in my life. Little by little, I began
identifying these elements all around me. A power greater than myself is a room of ten
people. A power greater than myself is someone who’s got more recovery than I do. A
power greater than myself is the shifting tide and the flowers blooming. Being willing to
listen was the beginning of my developing a relationship with my Higher Power. If I pay
attention, it will reveal itself to me.
Today I surrender my will to God. I open myself up to whatever my Higher Power has in
store for me.
March 6
GIVE TO KEEP
I give all I can, in whatever way I can, so that when the time comes that I get the insane urge to throw myself away on an abusive sex or love partner, I will be saved. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 260
I never want to drive all the way across town after a long day at work to give the lead share at an S.L.A.A. meeting and participate in another hour of sharing. But I do it every time I am asked. I think of it as insurance against a slip. And carrying the message gives my life a purpose that it’s never had before: to hopefully help the suffering sex and love addict. Service commitments, sponsoring, and being present at meetings, all give back to the Program and ensures that S.L.A.A. will be there for the suffering addict in the future. The program works because newcomers come in and there are sober people to help them by sharing their experience, strength and hope. Then the newcomer becomes sober and helps others. Watching the newcomer go through this transformation also helps the old-timer remember how it works. Give to keep is a solid foundation principle in S.L.A.A.
I will share my experience, strength and hope today and hopefully gain another day sober.

March 7
THE SECOND CHARACTERISTIC
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. - S.L.A.A. Core Documents, “Characteristics of Sex and Love Addiction”
I used to pride myself on being a “tough girl, just one of the guys.” I didn’t whine like other girlfriends when my boyfriend cheated on me – I got drunk and chased him with a bat, secretly hoping I wouldn’t catch him. I stayed in abusive relationships for years, hoping something would change. But it never did. My friends all abandoned me because of the insanity of our volatile relationship. When I finally got sober in S.L.A.A., my new relationship and the intimacy of it scared me so much. I was convinced that the more he got to know the real me, the more likely he would abandon me. In the past I concealed my dependency needs by finding a “back burner” guy, smoking, drinking and eating too much (cigarettes never abandon you until you die of lung cancer). But in recovery, I had to give these up. Thank God I found that a loving Higher Power was all that I needed. And the structure of S.L.A.A. made it impossible to isolate from friends and loved ones, myself, and God. It doesn’t seem possible to isolate from oneself, but speaking from experience, it can be done. When I got so lost in a fantasy world that I
didn’t know what I truly wanted or believed, I was isolated from myself. S.L.A.A. broke me out of my delusion. And I hope I stay.
I will not abandon myself today because I have S.L.A.A. and Higher Power beside me.

March 8
FEELINGS AREN’T FACTS
Abstinence from bottom line behaviors opens us to the vulnerability we have desperately sought to avoid. Some helpful suggestions…Find a safe place/person where you can cry, rage, grieve. Avoid stuffing your feelings. Remember that feelings aren’t facts – you won’t die from them. - from the “Withdrawal: Gateway to Freedom, Hope and Joy” pamphlet.
Before I got into recovery, I was so controlled by my feelings. I would get into a state of hysteria about a relationship when I felt my emotional needs weren’t being met. I would get scared, fear abandonment, and become angry. Fear overwhelmed me. I would have so many feelings, and some of them I wouldn’t even be able to identify. When emotions ruled my life, I made up stories in my head to explain why I was upset. If I felt it, I assumed it was reality. What I’ve learned from recovery is that feelings aren’t facts. I don’t have to act on them the way I used to. It’s okay to sit with my feelings and just recognize that I have them. I can take a moment, check in with my Higher Power, read a meditation, or take an outreach call. I can slow down, identify my emotions, and acknowledge that I don’t have to act on them.
Higher Power, help me to recognize my emotions today and accept them as a temporary state of being.

March 9
SPONSORSHIP
We discovered that we could continue to affirm our recovery by working with other sex and love addicts. No experience in living was more meaningful for us than letting ourselves become channels through which healing and redeeming grace could flow. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 102
Getting a sponsor secured my investment in S.L.A.A., and helped me to become accountable to someone else. It gave me a lot of strength to share my shameful history with my sponsor, and see that he could hear that without thinking that I was a terrible person and still loved me. It helped me to feel better about myself. It has been essential to work with a sponsor because he could identify the patterns that I was blinded to. I really wanted to change, but I just couldn’t see what I was doing and couldn’t change on my own. Today I’m working with four sponsees, and have found that each time they call or we get together, I’m reminded of the importance of the program. When they call me and they’re upset because of recent frustrations or challenges, I’m reminded how I do
not want to go back to that life of confusion and suffering. When they have a positive “Aha!” moment, it's inspirational to me and reminds me of the times that I've also grown as a person. When they have a need that's not being met by the program, it spurs me into action and has encouraged me to take on new service commitments. Having sponsees and having a sponsor has been critical in making progress and staying sober from sex and love addiction.

I want to sponsor others as I have been sponsored, giving back the gift of recovery that has been shared with me.

March 10
INTEGRITY
The discovery of personal dignity and integrity has become a new standard by which we apply to our ventures. We prize a more holistic understanding of ourselves and seek to affirm this in all areas of our lives. We find that nothing short of this is fulfilling to us. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 47

Honesty and moral principles were not the focus of my attention in my acting out days. And forget about being fair. In the world of feeding my desperate desires, fairness flew out the window in favor of whatever would fulfill my needs. Honesty would just get in my way. Integrity requires internal consistency. When my addict is constantly doing battle with my healthy side, it's impossible to find stability without Higher Power and the 12 Step program of S.L.A.A. Altering my beliefs was a way of life. If one of my values was getting in the way of what I wanted, I threw it under the bus. S.L.A.A. and the Twelve Steps taught me honesty at all costs. The cost of honesty only takes its toll once and gives dignity in return. But the cost of keeping a secret can only give misery for a lifetime. S.L.A.A. helped me uncover long buried moral principles and stick to them. In the past, I never thought I could live up to them, so I thought, why even try? Being a sober person today is what I desire. Finding integrity daily helps me towards that goal. I will live in integrity today and not sell out my values for a quick fix.

March 11
RECONCILIATION
Through the deep destructiveness of active sex and love addiction, through the foreboding uncertainties of a difficult reconciliation, through a prolonged period of learning how to cope with a maze of conflicts and irresolutions, our partners and ourselves emerged onto a plane of true expansive living, in loving partnership with each other. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 153.

Reconciliation can be a difficult subject for sex and love addicts in recovery. Sober addicts wonder if they are going back to their disease if they reconcile with a partner. There needs to be a lot of soul searching before this journey is embarked upon. Were the foundations of the relationship basically good and did they have room to grow? Was it just that our disease got in the way and messed everything up? Or was the relationship fatally flawed? Can we be truly present in the relationship, without addictive distractions? If we are on solid spiritual ground and have discussed this thoroughly with
our sponsor and partner, reconciliation may be an option. We take it one day at a time. S.L.A.A. can help us stay out of fantasy and to rebuild good communication with our former partner if we use the 12 Steps, prayer and meditation. I've heard it said that addicts expect a medal for running out of a burning building. We may feel entitled to accolades from a renewed partner simply because we are sober now. Our partner may still be suffering from past harm done by our addiction. We need to be prepared for some stress. But it may be well worth the effort.

I will seek help from Program and Higher Power when considering reconciliation. I will try to stay out of fantasy.

March 12

SETTING BOTTOM LINES
The "freedom" to define our own addictive pattern could not be used in a self-serving way. Our addictions are a reality that persists regardless of any short-sighted, convenient definition. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 72

I've had difficulty setting boundaries for myself and my life, so I didn't know how to set bottom lines. I started with very clear definitions, such as “Don’t have sex with married people.” It was helpful to be specific and to work with my sponsor every step of the way. If I put “having a sexual thought” on my bottom line, I’d have to pick up a desire chip every couple of hours. But if I left off some items because I wasn’t ready to let go of them, it wouldn’t be long before I ended up back in the same pit of despair. As I grew in recovery, I became more aware of how my addiction controlled me on subtle levels. The definition of my sobriety grows with me. If I make an excuse like, “It’s not on my bottom line, so it’s okay,” what once was not a problem could become one. It’s important that I am honest with myself and with my sponsor in evaluating how I define my sobriety, whether I’ve been sober for three days or three decades.

As I make progress in recovery, I will check in with myself and my sponsor to stay mindful of my behavior and make changes to my bottom lines as necessary.

March 13

WILLINGNESS
We were willing to be available not to the next lover or new sexual fantasy, but to whatever might happen next within ourselves. Paradoxically, this was not willingness that came from strength, but from the certainty of the dire consequences of continuing on in our addiction. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 73

When we walk through the door into a meeting, we are demonstrating our willingness to face this disease and get help. Each action we take towards recovery strengthens our willingness to stay on the healing path. It also lights up the path for others. The Steps prepare us to walk the road of recovery. When we see others who have walked the road before us, we hear their message and are able to open the door to become willing. Letting go of old ideas is difficult. We may not wake up with the idea that we can stay sober that day. But prayer and meditation, even if we don’t believe in it, shows that we have the desire to stop. The Founders meeting of S.L.A.A. gives out a desire to stop.
chip. In my opinion, anyone who has the courage to stand up and take that chip shows willingness. Some of us don’t give up the addictive behavior easily. I always said that God had to hit me over the head with a baseball bat before I was willing to notice I had a problem with sex and love addiction. And being ready and able to turn my will and my life over to a Higher Power that I didn’t understand went against everything I ever believed. It took a lot of work and reflection, but God and the Program helped me through it and carries me today.

Each day I will pray for the willingness to do God’s will.

March 14
QUALIFIER
Our justifications generally sounded very convincing to us… “It feels crazy not to be talking to this person that I care about.” “I have as much right to be at a certain location or function as s/he does”… “I haven’t seen this person for several days… that must mean I’m not addicted”… The dilemma was that we didn’t realize that we were culling ‘intrigue’ from these behaviors. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 108

The first time I took a contrary action to avoid going somewhere where I thought I would “run into my qualifier,” it hurt. It hurt so badly I was in my car cringing and it was at that moment that I came to believe that this was a real addiction. At that point I went into withdrawal. Even though we hadn’t been in contact for over a year, I often wondered what would happen if he were waiting at my front door. What if he called? What would I say? Before S.L.A.A., I might have actually called and stirred up some drama. Now I can call my sponsor and confess how much I miss my qualifier. I can let my sponsor know how lonely I feel. Sometimes we think we’ve been away from our qualifier for so long we can handle it again or that they’ve changed, but we don’t need to go back to relationships that caused us pain.

I will not go back to my qualifier today. I will believe that God has something better in store for me and I don’t need to know what that is right now in order to stay away.

March 15
DIVERSITY
The experiences of addiction which bind us, in sharing, to one another in S.L.A.A. are far more compelling than the differences of gender and sexual choice which serve to divide more “normal” people. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 47

At the first S.L.A.A. meeting I ever attended, the other members included one straight woman, one straight man, and one gay man. I wondered about the possible conflicts of having both men and women in a meeting of sex addicts. I wondered about the conflicts of having gay men in a meeting with other gay men. But none of that was important enough to me to keep me from listening to what they had to say. Sex and love addiction is not isolated to any one type of person. We should always feel safe to express ourselves in a meeting, but should remember that others want to feel safe as well. For some of us, recovery from our addiction might involve getting beyond prejudices. This doesn’t mean that we need to agree with everything that someone else does, but we
can certainly make room for tolerance and compassion. The twelfth step states that we try to carry the message to sex and love addicts. We can do this by helping others feel accepted the first time they walk into a meeting. That acceptance may encourage them to keep coming back.
I welcome the diverse backgrounds and experiences of others in the program and recognize our common ties.

March 16
INTIMACY
Most wonderful of all, when we walked through each day with the sense of being hand in hand with God, as a spring of love seemed to flow from within, available to help us quench the thirst for love of ourselves and others. Thus we came to find intimacy with ourselves, intimacy with God, and the intimacy with others. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 101
Intimacy means the willingness to be vulnerable, to be honest about who we are. If we learn to love ourselves, then we can become more willing to share with others. Being intimate with another human being takes a lot of trust. Some of us have never experienced that level of intimacy. We have been too afraid to let someone see who we really are, warts and all. To attain this level of intimacy, we must let go of fear. This process takes time and patience. If the person we are partnered with truly loves us for who we are, there is nothing of ourselves that we cannot share. If we love ourselves, we no longer need someone else to provide us with validation. If we feel judged or rejected, then we may need to reevaluate that relationship. We can seek out love with someone who is a true and equal partner, and accepts us just as much as we accept ourselves. I will not let fear get in the way of being honest. I will share myself openly with those that I trust.

March 17
GOLDEN RULE
We had to conclude that it was silly and futile to let ourselves be upset at what we saw as diseased actions by others, especially if we hoped that others would continue to be tolerant of our own frequent lapses into dishonesty or manipulative behavior. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 97
“Do unto others as you would have done to you.” Reciprocity was always very important to me. If I did anything for anyone, I expected something in return. If they didn’t respond in kind, that meant they didn’t love me. If it was a stranger, that meant there was no justice in the world or that God didn’t love me (if God even existed). I wasted so much energy trying to manipulate and control others into doing things my way. I felt entitled and judgmental. If everyone would just follow the Golden Rule, the world would be a beautiful place. But not everyone is capable of that. People aren’t objects that I can move around on a chessboard. Maybe my idea of reciprocity doesn’t work for them. If I sit around getting resentful about lack of participation in my blueprint for life, I’m only hurting myself. S.L.A.A.’s Steps and Traditions taught me to be of service without expecting anything in return. Through the process, I have seen that I will never get what
I really need from human beings. I need a spiritual solution. The serenity that the Program has given me is better than any token I can receive from the physical world. I will be of service today and let go of expectations.

March 18
THE TWELFTH TRADITION
Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities. - S.L.A.A. Core Documents, “The Twelve Traditions”
Perhaps the greatest roadblock to getting help for our addiction is the fear of being found out. How can we be sure, when we walk into a meeting, we won’t see someone we know? We cannot be sure. But if we do run into the ghosts of our past, we can be fairly confident that they are sitting in that meeting because they also want relief from the pain of addiction. Revealing the identity of an addict can do a great deal of damage to their personal, professional, and social life. For this reason, we respect the anonymity of our fellows, and ask that they do the same for us. We must also maintain our anonymity for the sake of the fellowship. If we preach the wonders of S.L.A.A. at a public level, then suffer from a slip or relapse, the program itself may suffer. A.A.’s Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions states that anonymity is “humility at work.” We seek recovery for our own sake, not for recognition. As we maintain the anonymity of ourselves and others, we ensure the integrity of S.L.A.A. so that it continues to exist for the addict who still suffers.
I maintain the anonymity of myself and my fellows, as they would do for me.

March 19
MULTIPLE ADDICTIONS
[People] could not seem to understand that an addictive appetite never gets "enough," and that insanity is insanity regardless of whether it is encountered in drinking or romance. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 34
I heard in A.A. that if you’re not in more than one Twelve Step room, you’re in denial. I always blamed my sex and love addiction on my alcoholism. But when I got sober in A.A. the behavior didn’t stop. It only got worse. I knew I had another addiction to deal with. And when I was sober in S.L.A.A. and standing in the aisles of the grocery store about to blow up my healthy relationship over a food obsession, I knew I needed a Twelve Step food program. I know quite a few fellows in S.L.A.A. who had “no drinking alcohol on dates” on their dating plan and came to find they needed A.A. I can see more clearly that it’s not necessarily which way I avoid life (i.e. alcohol, sex, food, money, etc.) that I need to focus on, it’s the Twelve Steps. My spirituality will keep me sober in all areas. It’s not necessarily about which program I joined this week, it only helps point me in the right direction each time. It helps to hear people share about the same problems that I am going through.
I will use the Twelve Steps to try to stay sober in all areas of my life today. If I find myself numbing out too much in any substance or behavior, I will get help.

March 20
NO CONTACT
It is important to understand what your part is in the pattern. It may be tempting to say, “I can’t stop the affair because they keep calling me.” But that is blaming others for your behavior. What are you doing to stay in these miserable places? – from the “Setting Bottom Lines” pamphlet
For 6 months before I got sober, I tried to stick to a no contact rule with the married man that I was trying to stop having an affair with. He was also in S.L.A.A., which was a very small community at the time. I would inevitably run into him. I asked my sponsor what I should do. “No contact means no contact,” she said. “Block his phone number, don’t read his emails, if you see him in a meeting and he says ‘Hi,’ stare at your feet, mumble something incoherent and walk away. All of our addictions call out to us, but when you’re dealing with another human being it’s tangible. When I was quitting smoking, the cigarette company never called me at 2 a.m. asking me why I don’t smoke their cigarettes anymore.” I knew her words were true but it was so difficult not to read an email with the subject line “I miss you.” I would get a numbness throughout my body that was like taking a shot of whiskey. When I finally got the concept of “no matter what,” I was able to get and stay sober.
I will concentrate on conscious contact with a Higher Power and not the object of my obsession.

March 21
CHOICES
I now felt I had reached a point in withdrawal where I had been granted the Grace of choice in my sexual and romantic life. This new state of affairs was born of the long struggle between addictive temptation and personal autonomy. The balance was tipping in my favor at last, even if just barely! - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 33
For the alcoholic, the choice to drink or not disappears the moment the first drop passes her lips. For the sex and love addict, the line is not so clear. Once we have made it through the withdrawal process, we regain the ability to choose. No longer do we blindly react to our first impulse. Options are available to us and each option has associated advantages and disadvantages. Additionally, it becomes clearer what the right choice is among our options. But it’s important to define our bottom lines clearly with the help of a sponsor, and not fall into the trap of engaging in accessory behaviors because they’re not on our bottom line. It’s a slippery slope that leads us to break our sobriety. That is
why it is important to stay current with our sponsors and our fellows in the program so that we remain aware of our danger zones. The freedom to choose is precious and it takes work to maintain it. By listening to that small yet strong voice within us, we usually know what decision is best for us. Today I will make thoughtful decisions after first thinking through my options.

March 22
MY FIRST LEAD SHARE
The first time I qualified was a cleansing experience for me. It helped me to understand that I was not alone. There were people who identified with my story and with my pain. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 176
During my first lead share, I could barely stumble through a few words about how crazy my addiction was. The voices in my head told me that everyone in the room was either bored or hated me. And when I broke out in tears, I was mortified. But when I looked up and saw all the concerned faces nodding in agreement, I knew that everything was going to be okay. I realized that others had gone through similar experiences or feelings. When laughter broke out, my first thought was, “They’re laughing at me.” And then I realized they were laughing with me and I felt the calm of quiet support come over me. When my share was over, almost everyone thanked me (as if I wouldn’t enjoy the opportunity to talk about myself). Some said they thought they were the only ones who felt that way and were glad they were not alone. Some said they didn’t go through the same experiences, but identified with the feelings. I was amazed that people actually listened to me for 20 minutes! No one ever listened to me. I was always taught that children are to be seen and not heard, and girlfriends need to keep their opinions to themselves or they get hit. I could never find my voice before I came to S.L.A.A. Shares helped me discover what I really thought and felt about myself and my experiences. I will share my experience and remember that I am not alone.

March 23
WALKING THROUGH PAIN
When the pain comes now, I don’t automatically resort to a sexual thought or solution. I have time to process the feelings and to realize they can’t overwhelm me, by going to either my higher Power or a member of the S.L.A.A. Fellowship for help. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 205
Imagine a bed of hot coals. You stand to one side, your bare feet sweating in anticipation of the task at hand. Weigh the potential outcomes in your mind. You could walk across swiftly, not giving the coals time to burn the soles of your feet. Or you could make your way across the 1,000 degree heat, only to stop in the middle out of fear. If fear overcomes us while we walk through our pain, we could become overwhelmed. If we get stuck in the problems of our lives, addiction will be waiting there, ready to burn us. What drives us on to take the next step? What tools can we use to remind ourselves that there is hope, that we can press on? The resources are there for us to use. A firewalker makes it across the pit by continuing on, even when it hurts. This can’t be
done on sheer willpower alone. It takes time and confidence to brave the fiery paths of life. We each have our support team, cheering from the sidelines, telling us we can make it through. With courage, we can lift our feet up and make it to the other side. No matter what I am going through, I do not have to act out today. I have my friends in the program, the S.L.A.A. literature, and my Higher Power to guide me through my struggles and help me maintain my sobriety. This pain too, shall pass.

March 24
THE SIXTH SIGN
We become willing to ask for help, allowing ourselves to be vulnerable and learning to trust and accept others. - S.L.A.A. Core Documents, “S.L.A.A. Signs of Recovery”
I was ashamed to ask my father for help when I was suffering financially. I would have rather incurred the overdraft fees than allow myself to be vulnerable with my father. The program taught me that it was okay to ask for help, so I swallowed my pride and approached my father for assistance. As is often the case, I found that my fears were unfounded. Asking for help in those instances has given me courage to ask for help in other situations. When I am tempted to act out, I can call on my sponsor or someone else in the program without fear of being judged. My fellows in the program are always willing to help me if I am brave enough to reach out and ask. I have even built relationships with some friends and loved ones in which I can tell them that I am triggered and need to remove myself from a situation. When I admit that I am struggling, my Higher Power acts through the people I care about and does for me what I cannot do for myself. We all need a little help now and then.
I need not be ashamed of asking for help. The assistance I need is all around me.

March 25
DATING
This readiness for the possibility of a new partnership was evident in the apparently contradictory absence of feeling any particular urgency to enter a new relationship. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 153
Dating was always easy in addiction because I had a boyfriend after the first date. As the joke goes, I brought a moving van to the first date. But in sobriety, dating brought up all the fears I always tried to push down or numb out with addiction. Being truly sober means I don’t try to push those fears away with any of my ancillary addictions. I don’t eat or drink too much during or after the date. Even though flirting is healthy while dating, I watch my behavior so it doesn’t become predatory. All my old fears come up. I fear I’m not enough or too damaged for normal relationships. I’m never satisfied, and I’m uncomfortable with boredom. It’s hard to trust people and dating requires trusting another human being, ourselves, and trusting God. The dating plan that my sponsor gave me helped a lot with that. I didn’t have to overthink the process and it freed me up to enjoy it. Some of the dating plan seemed ridiculous to my date, but I chose to trust my sponsor. The person I was dating was willing to date according to the plan despite
his misgivings which showed me he was the right person to build a foundation for a relationship with.
I will have a plan while dating. I will stick close to the Program, Higher Power and my sponsor during the process. I will be honest about my feelings and motives.

March 26

AWARENESS
Disregarding how much better off we really were now, we yearned for our former ignorance. And yet we found that the door to awareness, once opened, could not be closed. We had seen-we had even felt-occasional hints of what a healthy existence could be like. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 78
Awareness is difficult for people who have based their lives on finding ways to numb out. It can be painful. It can also be unobtainable when our disease masks it so well by telling us lies. I cultivated so many multiple personalities in my disease in order to fit in and get the attention I so desperately needed. Sometimes my lies were so convoluted I didn’t even know I was lying. Steps 5 through 7 force us out of the hiding places in our minds. We bring situations to light in the Fourth Step and think about them - bringing them to the awareness of ourselves and God. And when we tell another human being in our fifth step we learn even more. Putting our character defects on paper in the Seventh Step, we are given the gift of knowing ourselves and our patterns and walking around with our eyes wide open. When I got into a relationship I had to work on my awareness even more. A healthy person is honest and has boundaries. It was painful to admit that I had made a mistake and engaged in a character defect but I wanted the relationship to continue, so I admitted and worked on changing my behavior. My sponsor always said, “Constant vigilance is the price we pay for sobriety.”
I will be open to looking at and working on my character defects today. And I am grateful for the aware person I have become.

March 27

TOP LINES
I find it more useful to keep in mind what I call my top line rather than my bottom line. My top line is what I do want for myself, my program goals…These things are beginning to happen for me. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 270
The distracting influence of addiction leaves undiscovered corners of our life left unexplored. What dreams has our addiction kept us from realizing? What might we have done with the weekends spent trolling the internet for porn, the hours spent obsessing about our qualifier? What goals did we let fall by the wayside? Recovery gives us our life back. We can pick up old hobbies, spend more time with our family, or even return to school to pursue a new field of interest. It helps to have positive goals to strive for. Too much time spent dwelling on not acting out can be intensely frustrating. Rather than constantly striving not to do something, we can place our focus instead on
what we can do to better ourselves. Recovery allows us to uncover the bright, talented,
and interesting human beings we were meant to be. What will we do with our new lease
on life?
I will explore the neglected areas of my life, growing mentally, physically, and spiritually.

March 28
SELF-ESTEEM
The addiction was affecting every area of my life. It especially devastated my emotional
well-being and self-image…I felt isolated and unworthy unless I felt I was wanted and
needed by a man. I was so absorbed in the pursuit of “love” that the rest of my life
seemed meaningless and unfulfilling. – S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 213
There is a voice inside of us that tells us we are not what we’re supposed to be, and
says we will never be enough. This voice tells us that we fall short of everyone’s
expectations, that we’re not as good as the people around us. We try to shut this voice
up by numbing ourselves with our addiction. When we remove our substance of choice,
what do we put in its place? Do we replace the negative voice with one that is nurturing
and positive? The process begins with acts of self-love. It starts when we take the first
step of recovery. We deny the self-defeating statements, and replace them with positive
affirmations. We can start the moment we enter the program. When we truly love
ourselves, we no longer need to escape from who we are. We enjoy our own company
and desire to experience life as ourselves. This is one of the many benefits of healing
and living in recovery.
I am a valuable human being. I love myself for who I am.

March 29
OUTREACH CALLS
Contact with those already recovering from sex and love addiction was also a source of
practical help in sustaining our day-to-day sobriety. Suggestions on how to avoid
addictive situations were given, and the simple act of explaining a current temptation or
situation to someone else who understood seemed to help us stay honest with
ourselves. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 75
One of the most difficult actions for me to take in recovery is to make outreach calls.
Isolation fueled my addiction. I have an anorexic side that wants to hide out and
withdraw. The more I isolate, the more I experience feelings of deprivation and
loneliness. This makes me want to act out to reduce the pain. In recovery, I directly
counteract these impulses by making outreach calls and connecting with people at
meetings. My first outreach call was very difficult. Someone gave me their phone
number after a meeting in case I needed to talk. I thought it was a ridiculous suggestion.
I didn’t want to do that. But that was my addiction talking, some part of me that feared
recovery. I used contrary action and called the person and had one of the best phone
calls I’ve ever had. They continue to be a great outreach partner in my recovery and
have helped me to reach out to others.
I will not look at my phone as a 200-pound weight today. I will try to imagine it as light as a feather when I pick it up.

March 30
FAMILY OF ORIGIN
Humbly, we turned to God. “I am not responsible for the conditions which created me, but I am willing to try to be responsible for myself,” we prayed. “Help me to be willing to make right what I have done to each and every person in my life.” - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 92

“I am not responsible for the conditions which created me, my parents are,” was my mantra before sobriety. I harbored resentment against my parents for most of my life. They weren’t the caretakers they were supposed to be. Maybe if they had taken better care of me or if my sister hadn’t been such a bully, I wouldn’t have so many addictions. But I hear people in S.L.A.A. share all the time that their home life was normal growing up and they still suffer from the addiction. Regardless of what happened in my family of origin, I need to be willing today to be responsible for myself. I need to focus on my actions and make amends for what I have done instead of blaming my upbringing. I need to rely on God to help me let go of resentment. Blame allows me to stay lazy and avoid working the Steps around my past. If I use the excuse that my childhood was messed up, I don’t have to change. Once I could put those thoughts aside, I could take action to heal.
I will be responsible for myself today and make amends for any harm I have done in the past.

March 31
REVENGE
If we had just been jilted by someone we felt was “indispensable,” surrender meant that we accepted our loss, and refused to take revenge or recriminate. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 73

Revenge is such a part of society that it can even be commended and encouraged sometimes. If I plotted revenge on a lover, I continued to feel connected to them long after the relationship was over. I could continue to obsess about them. And in my twisted way of thinking, it gave me a better excuse to stalk them. I felt entitled to this behavior because they were cruel to me and deserved it. This rationalization in order to hang on to character defects was never good for my emotional well-being. It just dug a deeper hole for my self-esteem to be buried in. My revenge plots never worked out as well as the scenario in my head anyway. Most of them just stayed as fantasies that took
up too much of my time. Accepting loss was never my ego’s strong suit. I had to be in control of everything in my life in order to feel safe. If I couldn’t control someone with sex and love, I had to do it with anger. When I surrendered my sex and love addiction, this was a difficult character defect to let go of. The no contact rule on my bottom lines helped. I prayed to stay out of negative fantasies and to deal with the pain of loss in a healthy way instead of being self-destructive. This has worked for me and my sobriety. When someone harms me, I will seek healthy coping behaviors like prayer, meditation, forgiveness, and fellowship instead of destructive actions like revenge.

April 1
HEALTHY BOUNDARIES
Early in S.L.A.A. we coined an expression, “In order to maintain sobriety, we have the right to be a jerk.” - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 116
Before S.L.A.A. I didn’t have any boundaries, I spoke inappropriately at gatherings. I went with inappropriate people and did whatever they told me. I didn’t really care about my well-being or my life. I met people in S.L.A.A. who knew how to hold healthy boundaries. I invited a fellow somewhere and I remember knowing that I was crossing a boundary with her. She simply said a polite, “No.” I was shocked. She didn’t care about my feelings or try to mitigate it. Nor did she try to explain herself so I could try to manipulate her further. She realized what I was doing and brushed it off. I thought she was a jerk but that was only because I didn’t get my little addict’s way. I learned so much from that. I started to get my own healthy boundaries and realized that it’s better to keep myself safe than to be liked by everyone. I don’t have to worry about what other people are thinking of me. I can leave that up to Higher Power. I can say “no” to something that is not good for me. The people who take the time to get to know the real me know that I’m not a jerk. I know that I’m a good person. And I’m even better now that I have healthy boundaries.
I will let go of codependency enough to maintain healthy boundaries.

April 2
THE FOURTH STEP
Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves. – S.L.A.A. Core Documents, “The Twelve Steps of S.L.A.A.”
I followed the traditional Fourth Step format from Alcoholics Anonymous, and I listed every person I had a resentment against. I wrote what they had done to make me resent them, and how it affected me. I was searching and I was fearless. But somehow, I managed to skip over the section that addressed my part in those events. When I took my Fifth Step, my sponsor pointed this out to me. It was an eye-opening experience. I’d been so focused on what others had done to me, that it never occurred to me that I
might have any blame in those situations. My Fourth Step was the groundwork for the enlightenment found in my Fifth Step, and I took this into my Sixth and Seventh Steps when examining my character defects. With the knowledge of my own faults, I was able to forgive the faults of others and carry out my Eighth and Ninth Steps. None of this would have happened without the thorough work I did on my Fourth Step. Some people say that the Fourth Step separates the men from the boys. I’d rather say that it separates those who grow from those who go.

Higher Power, help me to be honest with myself about my assets and liabilities. Lift the scales from my eyes so that I may see myself from a true and impartial perspective.

April 3

H.A.L.T.-- HUNGRY, ANGRY, LONELY, TIRED

Though abstaining from addictive, bottom-line behavior(s) is painful, the pain does not last forever. One of the tools in the withdrawal survival kit is “Don’t get too ‘Hungry-Angry-Lonely-Tired’ (H.A.L.T.).” Most of all, don’t despair! Remember – You are not alone! - from the “Withdrawal: Gateway to Freedom, Hope, and Joy” pamphlet

Three meals a day, constant resentment inventories on every little detail, a meeting every day, and 8 hours of sleep no matter what. My sponsor was like a drill sergeant when I was in withdrawal. She knew the dangers of any one of these when we’re trying to stay sober. When I’m too deprived of food, I get lightheaded and my guard is down. Old feelings come in and it becomes about cravings for other past acting out behavior. When I’m too angry, I don’t feel the conscious contact with God because I’m focused on revenge. Lonely is dangerous because I start to feel like nothing can fix me but “him.” When I’m tired, I get confused and my decisions aren’t rational. When any of H.A.L.T is in play, I’m thinking of ways to get release. And past numbing out behaviors may look like a way to get what I need. Once I get mired in that mud, it’s all the more difficult to pull myself out. That’s why I need to yell for help and tell an outreach partner or meeting that I’m experiencing H.A.L.T. They can help lift me out of the mud.

I will practice self-care today and remember to stay out of H.A.L.T.

April 4

SOBRIETY DATE

The people who recover from sex and love addiction are those who define their bottom-line addictive behavior. They start now and add to it later if necessary. They don’t act out – just for today, this hour, this moment, no matter what. This is their sobriety definition. – from the “Questions Beginners Ask” pamphlet

In the first four years of S.L.A.A., my sobriety date changed so many times that I thought, What’s the point? I used to go to meetings and say, “Sobriety time doesn’t matter.” But when I had my spiritual experience and set my bottom lines, my sponsor had me write that date in my S.L.A.A. Basic Text in permanent ink. And when I reached 114 days (a point that I could never stay sober past before) she made me a t-shirt with a countdown to 114 days with the S.L.A.A. life preserver on the back. This made me feel loved and forced me to recognize the importance of keeping that date and taking
sobriety chips in recognition of that. When I share, I pass around my sobriety medallion so newcomers can recognize the importance of sobriety. On my 12th sober anniversary, my husband bought me a medallion that was pink with bling. It makes me so grateful that I have a husband who understands and celebrates me. Acknowledgement and celebration of my sobriety date solidifies its importance. It helps me to not act out one day at a time.

I will celebrate my sobriety date and know that as long as I keep it, I don’t ever have to go back to the hell of acting out.

April 5

OBSESSION

We who are plagued with romantic obsession have found hope and recovery in S.L.A.A. The program shifts the focus from the idealized romantic relationship that our disease craves to a working relationship with a Power greater than ourselves. - from the “Romantic Obsession” pamphlet

Obsession has created so much anxiety in my life. It isolated me and forced me into a fantasy life that eroded my sense of self and well-being. I thought so much about him and how he could fix everything, “if only” he could be the person I wanted him to be (not reality). This left no time for me to do my life. But the obsession had such a hold (stronger than heroin) that I didn’t care about life without him. And the ironic thing was that I didn’t really know him. I was assigning him magical qualities that he didn’t have. I never wanted to be the kind of person that was so fixated on one person that everything else in their life suffered. I wanted to be a well-liked, well-rounded person. All that was gone the minute he walked into my life (and my mind). I used to wish that I could just cut out that part of my brain that contained thoughts of him so I could continue with some sort of life. S.L.A.A., God, and the Steps performed that surgery for me and I will be well as long as I continue on this path and don’t invite the tumor back in.

I will let Higher Power and the Steps relieve my obsession today.

April 6

SEXUAL ANOREXIA

Sex was more fulfilling than we had ever previously experienced, even as it was no longer the source of tyranny which had constricted so many of us. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 158

When I joined a food program and stopped binging on gourmet foods, I looked at the food plan as torture. I thought I would never enjoy food again. But I discovered that it actually tasted better because I was no longer grabbing for all I could get and ignoring the experience of it like I used to. It was the same with my relationships. I was in a committed relationship so my sexual anorexia didn’t have the excuses it used to that backed me into a corner and made me obsess so much that I ran away. Sometimes it’s a struggle to feel joyful about sex but I have a support group and close S.L.A.A. friends
to reach out to. A subject that used to be taboo is now a source for healing. Through sharing about my anorexia, I realized that I’ve always been anorexic, even in my acting out. Going through the actions without really being present or being with someone who I would never see again or didn’t even know their name was my anorexia. For me, the only way out of anorexia is intimacy and commitment. I will stay present and experience the joy in my relationship and when I’m not capable I will reach out to trusted sober S.L.A.A. fellows.

April 7
POWERLESSNESS
We began to recognize that we were powerless, not merely to change some specific sex partner, lover, or situation. We were powerless over an addictive pattern, of which any current, specific circumstance was just the most recent example. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 71
We are the owners of our patterns. These patterns are ways of thinking and behaving that are embedded and unconscious and therefore acted out without recognition of another choice. By honestly writing out our history and experiences with powerlessness and unmanageability as most do in formally working a First Step, we will inevitably uncover our non-working patterns and the progression of our disease. When we listen to others share their stories of unmanageability, we can usually identify the same thoughts and feelings, if not the behavior. Sometimes we hear people that reveal our own powerlessness to us where we thought there was none. We thought we could handle it, but it overwhelmed us. Admitting and accepting this part of our sex and love addiction as it is now documented in our First Step writing and therefore undeniable, is crucial in beginning to take personal responsibility and in changing. We can no longer point the finger as we have done in the past. Today I will commit to focusing on myself with the help of the program, my Higher Power, and my sponsor.

April 8
THE TENTH CHARACTERISTIC
We stay enslaved to emotional dependency, romantic intrigue, or compulsive sexual activities. - S.L.A.A. Core Documents, “Characteristics of Sex and Love Addiction”
Most people come to know that they are enslaved to their addiction at some point in their lives. Nicotine addicts need to smoke even when it’s inconvenient or killing them. Alcohol and drug addicts end up in the hospital or jail and go straight back to buying the substance when they get out. But enslaved to sex and love? You’re supposed to be emotionally dependent on the one you love, right? Most of society believes that romantic intrigue and sexual activities are the point of life. But I wasn’t happy unless I was constantly making romantic gestures or fantasizing. And if I wasn’t having sex, in
some form or another, six times a day, I was miserable and full of fear or plotting to get more. When these activities become self-destructive and consume us, we hopefully realize that we are enslaved to sex and love addiction and find S.L.A.A. The Program helps ease the need to be sickeningly dependent on one person by teaching us how to be independent and self-loving through Higher Power and the Steps. We are able to stop spending all of our money and time on romantic intrigue. Sex becomes a by-product of sharing, commitment and trust instead of a voracious desire.

Today I will focus on the work that needs to be done and feed my soul instead of my disease.

April 9
FELLOWSHIP
A fellowship of others who can truly say, “Yes, I understand--I felt that way too” is a vital part of what makes recovery possible in each avenue of addiction. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page viii

Left to my own devices, I can make the simplest of situations chaotic and unmanageable. I can misconstrue and misinterpret the people and situations around me. I can become so frustrated that the lure of my sex and love addiction — with its empty promises — seems the only way to assuage my fear, anger and resentments. Just for today, I can choose to try another way. I can reach out for support — through prayer and meditation, by telephoning a fellowship member, and by attending an S.L.A.A. meeting. I see others in S.L.A.A. doing this. If I trust Higher Power, I know that he/she/it will give me the strength and courage to be humble and to ask for help. The Steps, Traditions and Concepts were all set up to make a durable, workable Fellowship of people who are uniquely situated to help each other. They may be from all different cultures and backgrounds but they have all felt the pain of sex and love addiction. The first day that I went out to breakfast after a meeting with a group of fellows was when I truly realized how blessed we are to have found S.L.A.A. I knew I never had to be alone again.

I will not try to do everything on my own today, I will reach out for support.

April 10
HOPE
The difference between this despair and loneliness and those same feelings I had during my active addiction is that today I have hope alongside those feelings. Today I have hope that I can have a life as full and free as I’ve always wanted. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 189

Life was devastating when I walked into the rooms. My patterns seemed inescapable. They showed themselves definitely in love relationships but also with friends, co-workers, neighbors, anyone I met. I did not want to get close to people because I feared the conflict I grew up with, which seemed to be my inescapable destiny. So, coming to the room and listening to old-timers who spoke from their experience, strength and especially hope was so grounding for me, and inspiring, and really was the one thing...
that kept me coming back. It was more than the words they were saying, it was how they said it – the tone of their voice, the way that they could just be present in their bodies and face the room. Their words echoed within me and were the promise of a better life. It's amazing that I have been able to find recovery from my addictive patterns. Now I'm one of those people that can sit in my body and face the room and let the Higher Power of the program work through me and reach out to other people. Today, I will try to find hope in the rooms of S.L.A.A. If I already have it, I will try to give back.

April 11

ROMANTIC LOVE

Whatever novelty we held for our partners in the beginning, it had to wear thin, and then wear off. For those who were getting more involved with us, our ability to take a suddenly sick cat to the vet's, or pick up a bag of groceries on the way home, or come through with some real childcare help, was worth a lot more than a professional reputation, or romantic dinners by candlelight in extravagant restaurants, or magnanimous gifts or gestures. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 155

Romantic love is addictive. It's the stuff of Hollywood movies and escape fiction. We long to be with the person we desire, without considering his or her own wishes. The fantasy of long walks on moonlit beaches is alluring. Addicts want that above all else while the realities of life suffer. Goals fall by the wayside as we chase the high of romantic love. Often, the objects of our affection can't live up to our romantic ideal and we become resentful and vindictive. If sex addiction hides underneath the romance, it will eventually come out and our incessant demands for more will only lead to disillusion. People who don't want to live in reality become exhausted and the romance dies. Dramatic romantic gestures are seen for what they are: manipulation. After the honeymoon period, most sex and love addicts run. They don't have time for the boring errands of life. I always dreamed of having that romantic love but settled for what I got. I would obsessively watch movies and read books to get high on romance. S.L.A.A. taught me how to live in reality. Today I have a healthy relationship that gives me serenity and fulfillment. I wouldn't trade that for some crazy idea of fleeting romance. I will let go of my fantasies of romantic love and live in reality today.

April 12

RELATIONSHIP CONFLICT

We have learned by painful experience that life with a sex and love addict cannot and will not be without growing pains and often severe conflict. This is true even, and perhaps especially, in recovery. If we try to keep the surface of the relationship smooth, we begin to compromise our own feelings… Our own success in partnership rests first,
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as does the addict’s recovery on maintaining a sense of personal dignity. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 64

It’s difficult for my addict brain to look at the big picture when I’m having conflict in my relationship. All I can see is the fear. I’m afraid he’s not right for me, I’ve made a mistake, he’ll abandon me because of this particular character defect that we’re arguing over, etc. When I talk to my sponsor and fellows, I realize that I’m blowing everything out of proportion. Sometimes conflict can involve deal-breakers. But if I and my Higher Power have chosen well, and if I stick to the principles and tools of the program, relationship conflict can be worked through. Finding a way to work it out and getting through to the other side makes the relationship stronger. In each situation, I remind myself, “Do I want to be right? Or do I want to be happy?” If I hold onto my need to be right instead of looking where I can be of service to my partner, the conflict will last forever. I heard a woman who had been married 40 years say the secret to a happy relationship is to never go to bed angry. If I can take my ego out of the argument, I never go to bed angry.

I will not let relationship conflict demolish me, I will use the principles and rely on Higher Power and S.L.A.A. fellows for help.

April 13
FAKE IT ‘TIL YOU MAKE IT

Nothing less than going through the death of all that I had been in the world—up to that time—of experiencing the dissolution of my former self—seemed required...I could have no guarantees for the specific results. I would have to let it take me where it would. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 23

Through withdrawal, while I was becoming the person I was supposed to be, I felt like an imposter. I had never had true self-dignity before. My reactions to stress had always been to act out in some way. My sponsor told me to act as if I was already the sober dignified person I wanted to be. She said that the more I took positive actions, regardless of whether I felt capable of them or not, the more normal those actions would become. Taking sober action felt strange, as if someone else was doing it. But the more I practiced, the better I was able to make that my first reaction. When I was wrong, Higher Power showed me another way or revealed something I needed to learn. In college, I remember saying that people with big vocabularies were “actors” and “snobs” and I went around cursing all the time in order to “stay real.” The reality of the situation is that I looked ignorant and those “actors” went on to do great things. I don’t have to put myself down to be true to who I am. I can “act as if” and still be real.

If I am fearful today, I will allow myself to fake it ‘til I make it, knowing that Higher Power has a plan.
April 14

VIGILANCE

It would have been a serious error to attribute all of our troubles to the addiction alone, for our character defects affected all other areas of our lives as well. This was not the time to relax, for we needed to continue our vigilance against the constant sexual and romantic temptations and the illusion of "the perfect romance." - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 85

Sex and love addiction is sneaky. It can creep into every area of our lives and tell us a work friendship should turn into an affair because that person is perfect for us or it’s okay to take a little comfort in going to an adult bookstore. It tells us that cable television programs aren’t harmful. And for some people it might not be, but when we start rationalizing behaviors that make us dance around our bottom lines, we’re in dangerous territory. My sponsor said it was as if acting out was a big dark hole that we keep falling into until one day we walk really far away from it in order to avoid falling in. If I start doing a behavior that doesn’t feel right, I check with sober partners. If they think it sounds sketchy, I avoid it. Sometimes just the act of telling on myself stops the behavior. If I’m ignoring how I’m feeling, I can get caught in the trap of addiction. Journaling, praying, meditating, outreach, and all the tools of the Program keep me in touch with myself and my sobriety. Sometimes it seems like too much work, but it’s worth it.

I will use all the tools of the Program to stay vigilant today.

April 15

SELF-CARE

I was beyond the point of feeling that solitude was only deprivation, and was faring well. I had done many things which I had always depended on others to do for me. I had learned to take real pleasure in my ability to take care of myself. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 37

In this quote from the Basic Text, Rich had been living alone and going to S.L.A.A. He says, “I had learned how to cook a good meal for myself, to do my laundry, to maintain my apartment.” Sex and love addicts usually try to manipulate others into doing mundane (or big) tasks for them. When we depend on others, they don’t do it right or they end up resenting us or they take control. In my case, it was my parents who did everything for me because I could never get the unavailable men to do anything for me (talk about repeated blows to the ego). I felt like a little kid in my thirties! My sponsor told me to take a 30 day no contact and to stop taking money from them. The time alone made me realize how much work it is to take care of myself. But I got to pursue my own interests and felt real pride and dignity for the first time. I wasn’t looking to anyone else for approval, only myself. That feeling is so freeing, getting off the hamster wheel of trying to manipulate others to do what I could do for myself.

Higher Power, help me to focus on loving myself, so that I may be healthy enough to love others.
April 16
CHARACTER ASSETS
We had begun to develop spiritual qualities which we had never had, or had allowed to go unused during our active addiction. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 89
I’ve always had character assets, but they were so hidden under acting out that I didn’t notice them or have the chance to build on them. I often tried to claim my partner’s character assets as my own. Sometimes I would bury my good qualities out of fear of losing the attention of someone I really thought I needed. If I got the sense that a prospective partner would be intimidated by intelligence, I played dumb. If my boyfriend thought I worked too much, I became irresponsible and called in sick when I wasn’t. With the help of Higher Power in sobriety, I let go of the fear of losing someone in favor of letting my character assets grow. Once I could identify and clear out many of my defects, I got to work on cultivating the opposite of those defects. It was sometimes a long painful process, but Higher Power and Program helped me through. Today I am the kind of person I used to look up to and wished I could be.
I will list my character assets and add to them today.

April 17
STARTING A MEETING
A regularly scheduled S.L.A.A. meeting, even if only two are present, can lead to a deepening sense of personal commitment in furthering the recognition of sex and love addiction... A meeting can also serve as a focal point for sharing experience, strength and hope concerning recovery from sex and love addiction. – S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 121
In my early recovery, I was in a small college town. At that time, there were only two meetings. I had to drive two hours to get to some of them, and sometimes, when I got there, I found out that the meeting no longer existed. That’s how desperate I was for recovery. I soon realized that I needed recovery right where I lived, so a friend and I decided to start a candlelight meditation meeting. I don’t know if it still exists, but it was an amazing meeting that gradually grew. When I left that town, they were up to about five meetings. That’s how the fellowship grows. It just takes one person reaching out to another sex and love addict and it grows from there. I think that I take it for granted that I can go to a meeting now every day. I was more desperate back then, and it showed me that I would do anything for my recovery. It makes me grateful that I do have a lot of meetings now and can put more energy into other forms of service.
If I see the need, I will start a meeting today.

April 18
REAL LOVE
We travelled the road towards greater communication, understanding and cooperation; that is, towards partnership. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 43
Real love requires attention and acceptance. It does not imprison the beloved. It is not fantasy or projection of our own needs but respect for the other person’s. In real love
both parties are willing to relinquish control of each other and let go of the outcome of their efforts. In real love, we understand, too, that other people have their own relationship with a power greater than themselves and must make their own choices in particular circumstances. We want for our lovers whatever they understand as best for them, even if we think they are mistaken. After all, each of us can only learn from his or her own mistakes. And we can only hope that whoever we love will seek the guidance of a higher power in pursuit of their own good. The Twelve Steps help us clear away the wreckage of the past and build a stronger foundation for relationships with others. Our primary relationships must first be with ourselves and a Higher Power. And then we can enjoy cooperation in a partnership.
I will use the tools of the Program to clean up my side of the street and grow towards real love.

April 19
THE EIGHTH TRADITION
S.L.A.A. should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers. - S.L.A.A. Core Documents, “The Twelve Traditions”
Money and spirituality don’t mix. One sex and love addict talking to another, freely giving what was given to them is the only way the Twelfth Step works. If the motive is money, the speaker or sponsor is compromised. Sex and love addicts stop listening and refuse to believe a paid twelfth-stepper. Special workers get paid to help S.L.A.A function but they never get paid to be speakers or sponsors. This Tradition has helped me in my personal life because I used to see people in terms of their accomplishments and careers. I was in a constant state of “compare and despair.” The Eighth Tradition tells me that there’s actual value in identifying ourselves as who we are inside rather than what we do. A sober S.L.A.A. member who has a tiny apartment in the city is better situated to help another in Twelve-Step work than a non-sober member who lives in a mansion on the hill.
I will keep my Twelfth Step work nonprofessional and focus on deepening my spiritual connection with my Higher Power.

April 20
SECRETS
We even took pride in our ability to keep a secret, to keep our stories straight, to keep our feelings hidden, to go it alone…If we were able to manage the maze of intrigue without discovery…then we apparently never had to deal with the consequences of our actions. – S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Pages 81-82
There is a saying, “we are as sick as our secrets.” What we are able to say out loud to another human being and to our Higher Power is what we are able to admit to ourselves. With rigorous honesty, we can name and claim the thoughts and deeds that
get us into trouble, cause us pain, and compromise our dignity. When we share deeply from the heart, the love comes through no matter how painful or embarrassing the content of what we have said. This creates openness. When we see the unconditional love fellowship members have for each other no matter how shameful or painful their patterns of acting out, we begin to open ourselves to this love. The love in our hearts connects with the love in the room and thus begins the healing. Our judgments and doubt dissolve long enough for us to hear the strength and the hope. Let the fear in my heart be replaced by honesty, openness and willingness. Let me take an action today to strengthen my recovery.

April 21

PORNOGRAPHY

In my early teens, I spent hours in fantasy and masturbation, the only means I had to express my feelings. That pattern of withdrawal from human contact and solitary concentration on sexual release...became a growing part of my active addiction. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 164

For many of us sex addicts, using pornography was such a large part of our disease that it ended up totally consuming us. We locked ourselves up in our rooms with the glow of a computer or a glossy magazine. We entered a different world to escape the one in which we felt we could not function. Pornography has the power to twist our personal ethics to fit into a mold that will produce the greatest addictive outcome. Healing from the frequent use of this substance is a long process. Sometimes the images can pop back up when we are at our most vulnerable. Entering into recovery means realigning ourselves with the person we are without pornography. We no longer need to live that detached painful existence where we objectify and use images for our own selfish ends. We no longer torture our brains with those mind-numbing images, losing ourselves and our humanity in the process. Our identity will reveal itself as we continue the slow process of healing. We can live happy, fulfilling lives without our substance of choice. We can reform our identity to become the person we were always meant to be.

I am leading a new life of connection to others, attempting to treat everyone I meet with love and respect. I am beginning to know who I am without pornography. I look forward to getting to know the real me.

April 22

UPS AND DOWNS

Addictions, however, are like internal hurricanes. Periodic lulls may occur, but a tidal onslaught may recur at any time. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 9

They say that life has its ups and downs. In dealing with addiction, it always felt much more dramatic than that. The downs felt like a deep dark pit that I would never get out of and the ups sometimes felt manic. I would trade anything in the world to always stay in the highs and do anything to avoid the lows. Being depressed felt too personal, like God or the world was out to get me. With S.L.A.A., Higher Power and the Twelve Steps, I'm
learning to stick around and deal with the bad times. I also experience the good times with a more realistic perspective. I can experience joy with my feet on the ground now. I have found with this stability that the roller coaster ride has stopped. My sponsor compared it to a pendulum that swings wide in addiction. You just need to wait over time for it to come to center. But with sobriety, we don’t have to wait so long to get to center. Dealing with problems helps me to avoid despair. And having sober fun, helps me avoid the crash when the party’s over.
I will look for ways to stay centered today. If I feel desperate for a high, I will go to a meeting, pray, meditate, reach out to fellows or all of the above.

April 23
GENDER STEREOTYPES
Many persons with difficult sex and love addiction histories seek to blame “others” for them. These others can be labelled under such stereotypes as “emasculating feminists,” “male chauvinists,” “male dominated society,” “female dominated society,” “women’s liber- ers,” “male-sexist oppressors,” “feminists,” “masculinists,” ad nauseam. – S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 132
This section of the Basic Text goes on to say that, “The truth seems to be that until we ‘own’ our sex and love addiction as a personal condition about which we assume the responsibility to do something within ourselves, hostility directed outward towards some designated would-be ‘persecutor’ is a waste of time.” Yes, my mom tried to tell me I had to cook and clean and take care of a man or I wouldn’t amount to anything in this world. I wanted to be able to “drink men under the table” instead of wearing dresses and looking pretty like my sister. Rebeling against stereotypes caused me a lot of pain. I felt like a failure and an outsider because I couldn’t conform. When I came to S.L.A.A., that all changed. They accepted me for who I was, flaws and all. They told me I didn’t have to conform to society’s rules. That was between God and me. I only needed a desire to stop acting out. I could put all outside judgement aside and just concentrate on getting sober.
I will concentrate on the Twelve Steps and my sobriety today. I won’t worry about people who might judge me.

April 24
RED FLAGS
If our frustration level was up due to difficult circumstances in our work or our relationships with other people, these situations needed to be flagged. Flagging them meant disclosure of them and our frustration about them to our partner. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 157
Frustrations need to be communicated so we don’t act out over them. And maybe something can be done to change the situation. If red flags appear in a dating situation, it might be best to discuss them with a sponsor before speaking with our partner. Early on in my dating plan, my date admitted to lying about a past relationship. I took it as a red flag against the relationship. I told my sponsor about it and that I wanted to stop dating him. Her response shocked me. “If you came to me every week and said, ‘He lied to me again,’ I would tell you to run. But you lied to him also about a past relationship. Give him the benefit of the doubt this time.” My partner and I communicated about it, he apologized and ever since he has proven himself to be an honest, caring man. People are human and they will make mistakes. Something is only a red flag if it erodes the foundation of the relationship or if we will certainly act out over it. With Higher Power and Program, we can strive for a solution.

When frustrations come up, I will communicate and steer clear of numbing out behaviors.

April 25
RESENTMENT PRAYER
Whenever we were troubled by things other people said or did... we needed to make a quick assessment of our own spiritual condition...We found that one easy way to do this was to ask ourselves, "If I were doing to someone else what I think is being done to me, would it be a symptom of my own illness?" - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 96

Resentment is a burden on my emotions, my thinking, and my soul. It is one of the biggest obstacles to freeing myself from obsession and anxiety, fear and regret. When I first got in program I was paralyzed with resentments and was told to pray. I was given a resentment prayer which instructed me to shower this person with love, and I could not see beyond my rage and indignation. So, my sponsor gave me his emergency resentment prayer: just say, “PRAYER.” It helped me so much. I liked recognizing that the person was spiritually sick and I could identify with that myself. It helped me become right-sized when facing the person every day. I liked taking contrary action in praying for them and wishing the best for them. What I especially liked was asking my Higher Power for help with giving up the resentment. This is a tool I use throughout my recovery, which is basically the recognition that I am powerless even over my own ability to turn stuff over.

When I am feeling resentful I will pray and hopefully I will be relieved of the obsession and anger.

April 26
STRENGTH
I felt myself getting stronger in both insight and steadiness of behavior as I continued to share my experiences, both before and after recovery, with others, even if they were not receptive. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 39

Strength before sobriety meant fighting everything and everyone to prove I was strong. Inside though, I was insecure and scared. That’s a lonely place to be. I’ve always heard
people say “There’s strength in numbers.” I never felt that to be true until I came to S.L.A.A. and saw people helping each other through their struggles. The Fellowship held them up when they felt too weak to go on. We share our experience, strength and hope. With the help of the 12 Steps and the S.L.A.A. program of recovery, I gained insight into myself that helped me get through many of life’s difficulties. Instead of sticking my head in the sand, I engaged in self-care, went to the doctor and found out I needed surgery. Instead of running into addictive behaviors, I prayed and asked for help. I got through it all feeling like I was standing tall with my Higher Power instead of in grovelling despair. I have steadiness in my behavior now that draws people to me instead of the erratic behavior that used to push them away. Sobriety yields more and more strength every day.

When I feel like I am lacking strength, I will lean on Higher Power and the S.L.A.A. Fellowship.

April 27
THE NINTH SIGN
We begin to substitute honesty for self-destructive ways of expressing emotions and feelings. - S.L.A.A. Core Documents, “S.L.A.A. Signs of Recovery”
When my relationship with my now husband was new, I used to start arguments with him so he wouldn’t hang up the phone right away. I was afraid of losing him and my disease told me that this would keep him around at least a little while longer. I didn’t see how self-destructive this was in that it was harming the relationship. If the relationship went away because of my ignorance I was always able to beat myself up gloriously for that. My partner called me on it. He told me to stop finding things to argue about just so he wouldn’t get off the phone. Thank God that because of S.L.A.A. I found a partner who was good at being honest about his emotions! I instantly realized what I was doing and the fear of abandonment I was feeling. I did a fear inventory and realized I was self-sabotaging. I prayed for the character defect to be removed. It’s not that I never feel the feelings, it’s that I have S.L.A.A. tools to deal with them appropriately.

Today I will look for constructive ways of expressing emotions and be honest about how I’m feeling.

April 28
SOBER BREAK-UP
Encountering and facing any and all pain along the way through this process of withdrawal, I could become capable of making some decisions about how to live my life. This would now be based on the discovery of who and what I really was, which might emerge during my time alone, in full awareness of my addictive past. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 23
Six months into my relationship, my boyfriend and I broke up. It felt like I was experiencing a death- the death of hope for a sober relationship. I read a book about grief in recovery, and I learned that you don’t replace the loss. My biggest fear about losing a relationship was that I would act out again in S.L.A.A. I had to trust God, and
when I experienced that loss I found that I could turn to program, I could go to more meetings, I could go up to the desert and visit my family and just be closer to God and rely on my Higher Power for everything. I could get through the grieving process. I had to feel the grief instead of numbing it out or not allowing myself to cry, or whatever avoidance habits that I had in the past. I got through it. I felt stronger and closer to God because of it. I feel like I could get through any grief with the tools and support of the program.

I will try to use grief as an opportunity for learning and growing instead of as an excuse for acting out. I will remember that pain is the touchstone of spiritual growth.

April 29

CONSCIOUS CONTACT

From someone or something to bail us out of scrapes or to pray to only amidst crisis, we had progressed beyond an overseeing caretaker or parent-like God to the sense of being in conscious partnership with this Power. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 99

Working toward a relationship with God instead of only using him in emergencies has never been attractive to me. For some reason (addiction maybe) it has always seemed tedious to pray and meditate every day. Asking for God’s direction has been like something magical that only other people can do. I always felt that God wouldn’t listen to “poor little old me” or I wouldn’t hear him. Sometimes the noise in my head was so loud that I couldn’t hear anything! So, forget about meditating. When my sponsor told me to set a timer and meditate for 5 minutes a day, I refused. I didn’t have enough time in my day. “I’m too busy” is a logical excuse but not a good one for my recovery. And there’s a block to building partnership with a Higher Power because I don’t always trust him. I’ve always thought of God as an authority who punishes me. It’s difficult to change childhood beliefs and be on equal footing and open communication with someone (or something) you can’t see and are afraid of. I forced myself to go to meditation meetings and pray whether I believed it or not. And gradually I learned to trust and believe in a loving Higher Power that I have a partnership with today.

I will set aside time today to pray and meditate, to keep the lines of communication open with Higher Power. I will not allow myself to feel “lesser than” or “greater than” God today.

April 30

GRIEVING

I was caught in a swirl of unrelenting grief. Weight loss, lack of sleep, loss of appetite, vomiting, and thoughts of suicide were my constant companions. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 5

Anything can be a loss – a death, losing a relationship or losing a job. As addicts, we often run from the pain of grief. Numbing out behaviors are more easily rationalized when someone indispensable dies or leaves. If we have no sense of self (as is the case with most sex and love addicts), grieving can be catastrophic. Instead of a healthy process of letting go, for active addicts it can be self-destructive and narcissistic.
always used loss as an excuse to plunge into negative thinking and desperation. I ran
from the painful stages of grieving by acting out and so I never reached the final stage,
acceptance. It was never acceptable that anyone would leave, even if it wasn’t their
fault. My first instinct was always to replace the loss. I found another lover or someone
special. But that was a fantasy - they could never live up to my expectations. Without
processing my feelings, no one would ever be able to bring me out of my depression. In
S.L.A.A., I can share about my grief and get support. I can avoid the mistake of trying to
replace the loss or numb out over it. I can feel my pain and come to acceptance
eventually.
When I experience a loss, I will allow myself to go through the grieving process. I will
rely on fellows and Higher Power to avoid acting out.

May 1
THE FIFTH STEP
Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our
Why is it so important to unburden oneself, to let the unflattering truths of who we are be
exposed to another individual? Some of us can remember a time when we shared
deply personal information with people we barely knew out of an incessant need to
release the pressure valve of guilt or pain. Others felt the need early on in recovery to
inform all the people we loved that we had this thing called sex and love addiction, and
that was why we’d behaved so poorly. But the steps are in an order for a reason. We
must admit our problem, give our will over to a Higher Power, and take our inventory
before we are truly ready to share ourselves completely with someone else. Through
the red-cheeked relief of taking a Fifth Step with a sponsor (or another trusted
individual), we learn how to be vulnerable. We learn how to be honest with another
human being. This is practice for every encounter we will have in the future. To present
ourselves honestly is a foreign experience, but with the Fifth Step, we move closer to
rigorous personal honesty in every aspect of our lives.
I am not unique in being flawed. I can admit my shortcomings to the people I trust
without fear of judgment.

May 2
HUMOR
We had come to know ourselves more as we really were...We had begun to develop
spiritual qualities which we had never had, or had allowed to go unused during our
active addiction. Working hand in hand with our new partner, God, it was time to begin
making our peace with other human beings. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 89
The disease of sex and love addiction can be humorless. When we learn to laugh at
ourselves we gain humility. Laughing with others can be a way of creating healthy
intimacy. Early in sobriety, I went to an S.L.A.A. party with a sign around my neck that
said “confront me if I don’t ask for help.” My sponsee and I laughed about that all night.
Before Program, if anyone laughed at me it was like experiencing a death. I couldn’t
prevent myself from plunging into anger and fear. In order to get and stay sober, I had to learn to laugh at myself. If I took every little mistake I made (and there were many of them) personally, I would have run from S.L.A.A. a long time ago. Laughter with my fellows eased the pain of withdrawal. I knew they understood my suffering and were laughing with me instead of at me. That moment of relief motivated me to reach out to fellows and become part of the group. This gave me the support I needed to stay on the road to recovery.
I will find laughter today to combat despair and negativity.

May 3
LET GO AND LET GOD
Affirming our Spirituality - relying upon a Power greater than ourselves...Becoming open to accepting the unexpected turns in our life. Practicing acceptance when situations don't go our way. More easily sensing we are being guided by our Higher Power. Trusting that our Higher Power is using our personal struggles for a greater good. - from the “Measuring Progress” pamphlet

In active addiction, we hold on to people or situations that aren't good for us because we don't know what will happen if we let go. Often Higher Power has something better in store for us. It's difficult to trust that God will be there for us. It turns out Higher Power had a much better plan for my life than I ever had for myself. It just took the opening of the door to let him in. It's difficult to trust something we don't understand or have never believed in. Doing all the Steps in order helps us come to a place where we can start to believe. First, we surrender to the addiction, then we come to believe. We turn our lives over and clear out the wreckage of our past. If we truly let go we are able to do this painful task willingly. God takes over for us when we are too weak to continue, if we let Him.
Today, I will stop trying to fight against life’s struggles and trust that God will be there for me.

May 4
PASSION
Even if we seemed to possess some positive traits, such as authentic concern for others, we could see that these had been perverted by our addiction, leaving us full of conflict and working at cross-purposes. The line between compassion and passion had never been clear to us. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 73
The dictionary defines passion as a strong feeling of enthusiasm, excitement, for something or someone. The feelings can be sexual, romantic, angry, etc. It says that strong feelings can cause you to act in a dangerous way. Sex and love addicts know that only too well! In my addiction, I tried to rationalize my behavior as “I'm just a passionate person.” But that passion got me in dangerous, dramatic situations all the time. Usually every situation ended in anger and someone getting hurt. The sexual feelings seemed easier to handle because I could numb out. But the romantic feelings (love addiction in my case) made me lose my mind. As addicts, we never knew how to
control feelings. Once felt, they overwhelmed us. Fellowship and Steps and reliance on a Higher Power is a map out of the maze of dangerous passions. We emerge into enthusiasm and excitement for service work and our family and fellows. Passion can be a good thing if managed with the tools of the Program of S.L.A.A. It takes practice and commitment, but it can be done. Today I will admit any dangerous passionate feelings to my fellows and rely on Higher Power to guide me away from them.

May 5
LIVING THESE PRINCIPLES
The principles are simple enough: admission of the true source of the problem (addiction to the activity itself); reliance upon God or some other source of power beyond one’s own resources for guidance in recovery; willingness to inventory one’s own character defects and share this inventory with another; a readiness to come to grips with basic character flaws and make restitution to others; and commitment to these principles as a continuing way of life. The summation principle, the Twelfth Step, is the affirmation of personal recovery through accepting the responsibility to take the commitment to this way of life into action by sharing it with others. And it is here that true love, which is of God, and makes it possible for one person to touch the soul of another, is found and expressed. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page vii
This is a pretty tall order to present in the Preface of the Basic Text. I’ve always been surprised that it doesn’t scare newcomers away. Instead, it’s a goal to strive for. Living the principles gives us dignity of self and what we have been seeking our whole lives: true love. Newcomers see people in meetings who really are following the Twelve-Step way of life: being honest, accepting responsibility, and sharing love. This goal of living the principles takes a lot of work to achieve but is well worth it. I will do my best to live the principles of the Program today.

May 6
GIFT OF FORGIVENESS
We could not make our forgiveness of others conditional on their having redeemed themselves, or righted their wrongs. We had to forgive them because, like us, they were sick and afflicted, and presumably had not set out in life to be so. – S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 90
Forgiveness never seemed like a gift to me before my involvement in Twelve Step programs. It seemed like a weakness that others would take advantage of. I thought withholding forgiveness gave me some sort of power. But it actually only sapped my energy and harmed my emotional well-being. When I’m lost in resentment, I’m more vulnerable to acting out. It’s a waste of time. Since I started working the Eighth and Ninth Steps, I see that forgiveness is a gift to both the giver and the receiver. When I let go of resentment and anger, I get freedom from obsession. That obsession no longer has the power to stress me out and force me into self-destructive behavior. When I went back through my past in writing my Fourth Step and gave up many of my resentments in
Steps Five through Seven, I felt the burden of all of those harmful feelings being lifted. Making amends helped me see that others weren’t entirely to blame, I had a part in almost everything that happened to me. When others forgave me, I realized I wasn’t a horrible person, only human.

I will seek to give and receive the gift of forgiveness as often as possible.

May 7
DATE ‘EM TIL YOU HATE ‘EM
We anorectics begin to realize that we have been living our lives for a long time without love. We observe the absence of closeness in certain areas of our lives and we observe that we are engaged in a policy of dread of others, and a strategy to keep them at bay. – from the “Anorexia: Social, Sexual, Emotional” pamphlet
Most of my life I’ve stumbled upon relationships. Someone else always let me know of their interest in me. It was rare that I ever expressed an interest in someone else. I was always too afraid to step out there and admit my feelings for someone. Even in recovery, my attempts at dating began through the anonymous safety of an iPhone screen, rarely making any real connections. But once, I asked out a woman I met at a social gathering. At first, she seemed just my type, but it didn’t take long before I realized we had very little in common. She was more concerned with grooming me into her ideal man than with getting to know the real me. My sponsor didn’t say “date her til you hate her,” but he might as well have. He said I needed the dating experience. But eventually, it was too much for me. I finally told her how I felt. She told me that she had certain expectations of people she dated. I told her that I wasn’t interested in meeting her expectations. It’s not worth it to stay with someone who doesn’t like/love you for who you are, but it might be worth it to spend enough time with them to figure that out.
I will get to know someone and check my motives before leaving a dating situation.

May 8
HELPING OTHERS
The effectiveness of our efforts to help others would be directly related to the level of our own “spiritual awakening.” – S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 102
Before recovery, I never gave a thought to helping others. My goal was to get ahead at any cost. Ambition and pride blocked me from giving to anyone. Fear that there wasn’t enough money, power and prestige to go around or to satisfy my addict desires forced me to sabotage people. When I came to S.L.A.A., I saw people doing things differently. People raised their hands when asked if anyone could sponsor. Sponsors reached out to me and met me even when it was inconvenient for them. Volunteers kept the meeting going each week. Even watching a fellow put away chairs after the meeting helped teach me about concern for others. I saw a serenity in these helpers that I had never felt in my own life. But, I worked the Steps a few times and followed the direction of my sponsor and got service commitments (albeit begrudgingly). I started to feel more peace and freedom from the obsessions that had plagued me my whole life. Even though in the beginning I was only helping others in the hopes that I would rid myself of the
disease of sex and love addiction, forced service eventually became sincere concern and care. I look for ways to help others today, knowing it will probably do more good for me than for them.

May 9
THE FOURTH CHARACTERISTIC
We confuse love with neediness, physical and sexual attraction, pity and/or the need to rescue or be rescued. - S.L.A.A. Core Documents, “Characteristics of Sex and Love Addiction”
What is love? Of course I confused it with a bunch of other things before sobriety. Sex and love addiction twists many things including definitions. But not only sex and love addicts confuse love with other emotions. It’s a story passed down through the generations: man rescues woman and marries her. We are taught to value physical and sexual attraction in society. We are taught that we need a partner in life to be whole. My neediness was about feeding my ego, needing attention. Physical and sexual attraction was about finding a way to numb out. Pity and the need to rescue made me feel better than the other person. Emotions that are about ego and fear cannot be love. With the help of S.L.A.A., I was able to put my needs aside and care about other people. I felt true love from my Higher Power and as a result was able to express that with another human being. Love is no longer about finding a way to break free from my painful isolation. It’s about feeling genuine affection based on honesty and reality. I never want to go back to the confusing fantasy.
I will love openly and honestly today and not try to get anything from the person I love. I will only give love.

May 10
RESPONSIBILITY
While it was not wholly appropriate to blame either our early experiences or ourselves for our behavior as sex and love addicts, we had to accept some personal responsibility for it. We needed not to hide our true motives behind cosmetic rationalization or blame. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 83
I always believed I could use the excuse of what happened to me to stay a teenager for life. I never wanted to grow up and take on the hard work of adult responsibilities. My numbing out behaviors helped me stay incapable of living up to obligations. And rationalizing my situation with “It’s because so and so did this to me,” worked for me. The Fourth Step started me on the road to being willing to be responsible for myself. Fellows and my sponsor taught me the art of self-care. When I let go of immaturity it is often the more painful and difficult way of doing things but in the long run is much better for me. When I look at my side of the street and make amends, I am clearing out what keeps me stuck in the cycle where I need to be rescued. I am able to stand on my own two feet and maybe even be of service to others.
I will ask Higher Power to help me accept responsibility for my feelings and behavior.
May 11
AMENDS
But even if we could not see how we could find the courage to carry out these amends, the willingness to try to do so was vital to our progress. If fear and pride kept us from addressing this important step in our spiritual journey, we might go through life still trying to avoid the host of those with whom we had been involved in mutually destructive relationships. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 91

Why even bother saying you're sorry if you're just going to do it again? Before S.L.A.A., I couldn't avoid doing it again, whatever destructive thing that was. But in order to make the person I was obsessed with stay, I had to apologize. I had to try to convince them I was truly sorry and would never do it again. I should have won an Academy Award for those scenes! In sobriety, I found that making amends is essential. I had to confront my bad behavior and actually take the actions to change it. If I didn't clear out the wreckage of my past, I'd spend a lifetime running. Pride gave me rationalizations about why I didn't need to make amends to someone who had also hurt me. And fear told me not to admit anything or I would lose everything. I opened the door to willingness by praying over each amends. That helped me realize that I would stay stuck in my disease and act out again if I didn't take action and proceed with Step 9. Most of my amends were taken well and people could see that I had really changed. I had finally found serenity! I will apologize for wrongdoing today and amend my behavior.

May 12
"THE ONE"
The power of my long denied emotional yearnings for love completely overwhelmed me. My "lover," I thought, was my "one and only," the one light in my life-- made in heaven for me. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 4

I found "the one," my soul mate, the perfect man for me...so why should I care about his wife? That's how my disease spoke to me. Anything goes when you've found "the one." You go down in flames for them like Romeo and Juliet. I told myself, "It's okay that you're acting obsessive because you can't live without him." He was the air that I breathed. He was going to fix me. But that desperate neediness and inability to leave breeds contempt. All kinds of dramatic situations come from it. When no one else in the world can fix me, I have to get everything that I can from "the one." I remember a romantic moment when we were standing on a cliff after our 10th time getting back together and I thought, "He's going to push me off of this ledge and kill me." That's how frustrated we were with the affair. The only one for me now is myself and God and people who come into my life for a season, a reason, or a lifetime. And because of my work in S.L.A.A., I will leave if it's not healthy. There is more than one person in the world.
May 13

SLIPPING

However honest we became through any last-ditch efforts at “control,” our sobriety did not really begin until the last reservation had been let go, and we gave up the right, for one day (or one hour) at a time, to have “one more” liaison with our addiction. – S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 107

There’s a story in the Big Book of A.A. about an alcoholic walking into a bar (to get lunch) and thinking if he just had a little whiskey in milk it would be okay. Before he knew what happened, he was pounding on the bar, drunk. That was me with my sex and love addiction. I thought, “I can read his email even though I said no contact. I can manage. I know we said that if we saw each other’s cars we would leave, but it’ll be okay. I need to be here.” Before I knew it, I had broken all my bottom lines and was left bewildered and afraid, wondering what would happen to me as a result of the high-risk situations I had just indulged in. Every time I slipped, my sponsor reminded me of self-care - play soothing music, eat something nutritious that I really liked, take a bubble bath, and that we would get back to work the next morning. I kept slipping until the pain of acting out kicked my ass enough that I was willing to try a different way, to give it to a Higher Power. Thirteen years ago, I opened the door to a spiritual experience and haven’t slipped since.

I will let Higher Power, my sponsor, and S.L.A.A. fellows love me through my slips until I can love myself enough to stop.

May 14

LIFE ON LIFE’S TERMS

Real life is not without tensions, unhappiness, and conflict, if we are honest with ourselves and others. If we are to grow in sobriety, we must be willing to look for dishonesty and self-centeredness in all of our activities, lest we find ourselves seeking to escape from life once again. – S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 142

Life draws hard terms sometimes. I must work long stressful hours or take care of a sick child or watch a loved one die. I could never find hope or meaning in the midst of any of these things. I would run straight to the oblivion of addiction. “He yelled at me,” was always a good excuse to act out. S.L.A.A. opened my eyes to the dishonesty of my rationalizations and showed me how truly self-centered I had been my entire life. Practicing prayer, meditation, and the Steps brings us into reality and helps us deal with life on life’s terms. I constantly ask myself, “What does Higher Power want me to do?” The answer is always about helping others instead of numbing out or grabbing for my selfish needs. When I’m met with particularly difficult times, I go to more meetings (90 meetings in 90 days is good for the soul). I ask a fellow what they need or how they feel. If problems keep me away from service work, I get back to it as soon as I can. I always try to put Program and God first.
I will live life on life's terms today and remember to lean on Higher Power and fellows when things get difficult.

May 15
UNRESOLVED ANGER
I could no longer deny that I did have a huge amount of unresolved anger, very subtly hidden, and unless I got it out I would eventually be destroyed by it. – S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 262
Unresolved anger can manifest itself in more than one way. Sometimes, it is the result of not having control over a particular situation as a child. Other times, it is the result of not dealing with anger at the proper time in the proper manner. Either way, it amounts to an inability to properly express this difficult emotion. Since we have never known the right way to deal with anger, we often express it inappropriately with verbal abuse, internalized resentment, or even acting out. As we get sober and allow ourselves to feel our emotions, we will continue to make mistakes in how we handle them. To properly handle anger, we need to take baby steps. We may need to let the anger out through physical activity, or write about our feelings first. As we mature in recovery, we can move closer to a state in which we feel the anger and express it appropriately while we are still in the moment. When we do so, we can let go of anger quickly, and the destructive influence of unresolved anger need no longer wreak havoc in our lives.
I understand that I alone am in charge of my feelings. Help me move from anger to forgiveness.

May 16
GENEROSITY
Some part of me felt quite unlovable just for being myself, and so I tried to earn [love] by being generous, forgiving, understanding, and seemingly selfless. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 49
I was generous to a fault. I was willing to give away everything I had in order to ensure my lover wouldn’t leave. Generosity in this sense is self-destructive. S.L.A.A. taught me to look for the motives behind my desire to give. I was shocked to learn that giving in that way was actually selfish. My ego was trying to play the big shot. I was giving expecting love or adoration in return. Giving does create higher levels of self-esteem but I need to be sure it isn’t the only thing I do to feel better about myself. Sometimes, I need to make a fearless inventory of my motivation for giving. I need to find healthy ways to reach out and share my abundance, time, and wealth with fellows. When I help someone in recovery, it usually has the effect of helping me more than it helps them. Generosity in service work saves my life and ensures the growth of the program of S.L.A.A.
I will check my motives and be generous in service to S.L.A.A. to the best of my ability.
May 17
CAREER
We found that personal or professional situations in which we could not affirm these spiritual values were expendable...Careers that had been exploited mainly for material security at the expense of self-fulfillment no longer appealed to us. We either changed our way of going about them, or let them go. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 102
Many addicts are underearners. Like our love relationships, we stay stuck in jobs that don’t fulfill us because we don’t think we can get anything better. My sex and love addiction gave my self-esteem such a beating that I thought I needed to take whatever I could get. Before recovery, I remember having a panic attack when a job recruiter tried to get me to go on an interview for my dream job. Instead, I took the first offer and have been working in a career for 21 years that I never would have chosen. Before sobriety, it only served as a place to make money in between liaisons with my qualifier. I stole countless hours from my employer, talking on the phone, emailing, fantasizing, and sneaking out of work early. In my S.L.A.A. sobriety I tried to make amends to my workplace by getting more involved and helping wherever I could. I changed my way of going about my career and now I’m a trainer and supervisor. I still think of going back to school like I’ve seen other sober Program members do, but right now, I have a degree of self-esteem around my career that is very important to me.
I will focus on my career today instead of my obsession and try to be an asset to my workplace.

May 18
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING
This spiritual awakening was itself the product of having hit bottom and surrendered, having acquired a faith, having accomplished a practical examination of our past and our character, having developed a deepening relationship with God, having accepted responsibility for the impact our sex and love addiction had on others, becoming aware of problem areas in our lives and resolving to deal with these constructively, making amends, and reaching into a spiritual domain through regular prayer and meditation to place ourselves in closer communion with the source of guidance and grace. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 102
Sometimes people equate a spiritual awakening with a lightning-bolt spiritual experience. As soon as they humble themselves enough to work the Steps, they expect a Higher Power to take all of their problems away. For some people, this may be their experience. For me, it took four years of working Steps, becoming willing to believe, and
learning to trust a Higher Power. I needed to spend another 14 years continuing to grow. But that moment in the mind of this addict when I realized that God does exist, was magical. It changed me from a suicidal, insane person into a sober, responsible, and peaceful person. My spiritual awakening cleaned out that darkness and I want to do whatever I can to keep it out. My sponsee always says, “Be a cheerful giver, even if they want to beat you up for it.” My spiritual awakening changed me, and today I will be grateful and help someone else in their steps towards their awakening.

May 19
THE ELEVENTH TRADITION
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 fellow S.L.A.A. members. - S.L.A.A. Core Documents, “The Twelve Traditions”
Our Fellowship seems to be following the path of A.A. with the public media. In the last few years there have been quite a few movies made about sex and love addiction. There are bloggers and reporters who believe in S.L.A.A. and its message. They guard the anonymity of individual S.L.A.A. members. Individuals who carry the message remain anonymous to the general public. Personal ambition has no place in the Fellowship. Our policy on growing the Fellowship is attraction rather than promotion. Hopefully the world will eventually see the good that S.L.A.A. does. Families see their loved ones changing for the better. Communities see people become productive members of society. We need to be content with slow growth. I wanted to shout from the rooftops the good that the S.L.A.A. program did in my life. But I reserve that for newcomers in meetings and during sponsorship, not on a public level. Over the years, I have seen the wisdom of this Tradition and try to practice it daily.
Today, I will practice attraction rather than promotion and guard anonymity.

May 20
SELF-WILL
It took me six or seven months in A.A. to learn about asking for help in the Third Step sense of “turn my life and my will over to the care of a higher Power.” When I learned to do this, the higher Power handled whatever I turned over much better than I ever had. – S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 247
In preparation for my first step, my sponsor cautioned not to get too detailed in writing out my personal history. He just doesn’t understand, I thought to myself. This is how I do things. I wrote my story my way, all 80 pages of it. While recalling a particularly euphoric instance of acting out, I felt the impulse to return to my addictive behavior. It was the first time in recovery that I had any desire to act out again. I got up from my computer and went downstairs to spend some time with my roommate so I could distract myself from the triggering situation. I understood now why my sponsor had cautioned me. He had knowledge that I did not yet have. I didn’t have all the answers and I couldn’t keep
trying to do things my way. I needed to open myself to the wisdom and experiences of others. This initial lesson prepared me for the greater act of surrendering my will and giving myself over to the will of my Higher Power.

My best thinking led me to my addiction. I will listen to others and to my Higher Power to find my way in recovery.

May 21
OPENNESS
We knew how to be open with others in S.L.A.A. about virtually everything we were thinking, feeling, and experiencing. Through this openness we had come to know something about personal honesty, and we had also learned something about being emotionally consistent. – S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 146

Being open with others can be a struggle sometimes. It wasn’t safe in my childhood to be open with my family. Honesty usually involved sabotage or punishment. And with a rageaholic father, you never know what kind of reaction you will get. It was transformative to walk into my first meeting of S.L.A.A. and see people share openly and honestly without fear of repercussions. And I saw the community love and support them instead of shaming them. When I started sharing, people thanked me for my honesty and said it helped them to know it was okay to be open. Getting current in meetings and outreach calls opens the door to let God in. We learn how to be emotionally consistent. We rely on others and this helps chase the fear away. Fear used to keep me isolated and stubbornly refusing to let anything into my life. This closed system fed my addictive behavior and kept me stuck in acting out. The openness that I found in S.L.A.A. and with my Higher Power allowed me to live a joyful existence for the first time in my life.

I will do my best to be open and honest today.

May 22
CROSSTALK
[A] group of people seemed threatened and downright hostile when I shared my experiences, and I was brick-batted quite a bit...Sharing these things, regardless of whether I was met with sympathy, envy, or vilification, helped me immensely. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 34

When a group of addicts get together, there can often be crosstalk. Many meetings define crosstalk differently and have suggestions about how to avoid it. Some say, “We avoid specific references to shares but we may thank the speaker.” I have often heard people ignore that and talk directly to the speaker during their shares. It’s good to identify with the feelings being shared but advice-giving or unwanted comments can alter the safety of sharing. We need to hold a safe space for newcomers to practice openness and honesty. In Chapter 2 of the Basic Text, our founder, Rich, became frustrated with hearing a newcomer’s constant acting out stories. He confronted him
May 23
PRAYER
Our growing relationship with God was like a stabilizing keel beneath us. No matter how stormy the winds above the surface of life's waters, or how much sail we sometimes hoisted into the gale in the form of commitments beyond the scope of our limited strength and energy, we found that the keel beneath us, meditation and prayer, guaranteed that we would not capsize. We would retain our buoyancy on the ocean of life. We could survive whatever life might throw at us. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 100
Life has been throwing a lot of difficulties my way lately. Sometimes my prayer to Higher Power is just, “Help. Help. Help.” When I believe that something else in the universe is listening, I get the strength to go on. I have hope that things will change. I always try to say, “Thy will, not mine, be done” at the end of every prayer. Even if I don’t really want God’s will in a situation (I usually prefer my own) saying it anyway keeps me humble. I’m forced to realize that I’m not God and my job is to seek Higher Power’s will. Asking in prayer for answers and waiting and listening for them in meditation is the best way to do this. I have trained my brain to thank God in prayer instead of only going to Higher Power in crisis. Prayer is life affirming, not just a survival tool. Since I started practicing it, it hasn’t let me down. I always repeat what my sponsor told me: “God doesn’t drop people on their heads.” Since my spiritual experience, I’ve found that to be true. I will pray for guidance today and believe that Higher Power is listening.

May 24
STEPS
The Twelve Steps, as originally set forth in Alcoholics Anonymous, do provide a comprehensive and thorough approach to the problem of dealing with addiction, including sex and love addiction. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 67
The Steps gave me a way out of the deep dark hole that I had dug for myself in addiction. I did what my sponsor said and did all the steps in order. I didn’t rush ahead or skip a Step. They are brilliant in the way they are set up. The founders of A.A. must
have had divine inspiration, in my opinion. I have to recognize the addiction before I can begin to believe that something can take it away. I have to have hope before I can surrender to a Higher Power and clear away the wreckage of the past. We must do daily maintenance, and then it comes full circle with giving back to the Program. Each Step prepares us for the next one. We are reminded throughout to do each Step to the best of our ability. Everyone works the Steps differently. But they are set forth so clearly that even in their simplest form, addicts gain recovery in all kinds of addictions, including sex and love addiction.

I will work on the step I am on today and not worry about the other steps until I get to them.

May 25
THE FIFTH SIGN
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. - S.L.A.A. Core Documents, “S.L.A.A. Signs of Recovery”

Sometimes people believe the purpose of S.L.A.A. is to find and keep a healthy relationship with another human being. For some, the relationship may be a happy byproduct of their work in S.L.A.A. For most, the real task is learning to accept and love themselves. This sign of recovery reminds us that we are not alone in our quest for self-acceptance. When I hear people share the same feelings of insecurity, I realize that we are in this struggle together. I can make outreach calls to them or go to fellowship and learn how they are overcoming those fears. Usually the answer is the steps and meetings and prayer. When I let go of character defects, I become the person I want to be. When I follow Higher Power’s plan for my life, it’s easier to take responsibility because I’m not really doing it alone. Taking care of my own needs ends that rescue fantasy that always used to put me in pain and obsession. Whether living alone or in partnership, this sign of recovery is necessary in order to have a happy, sober life.

I will practice self-care and responsibility today. I will rely on Higher Power and myself to get my needs met.

May 26
OBJECTIVITY
Most of us found that writing down our inventory was very helpful. Looking at what we had done in black and white was a valuable aid to honesty and objectivity. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 79

My life lacked objectivity. When it came to me and my needs, I could never be open-minded or without bias. I was so insecure. My love addiction made me so needy that I couldn’t take a step back and calmly observe myself. This is a necessary tool in recovery. I need to be able to say, “I did this and I need to make amends,” without hiding out in the blame game. My strategy before program was always to make excuses in order to keep whatever behavior I felt was serving me. But, in reality, it was usually doing more harm than good. Seeing it in black and white in my inventory made it seem...
like it could have been someone else doing it. I asked myself, “If I had seen someone else doing this, would I have thought it was right?” A synonym for objectivity is dispassion. I always thought a life without passion wouldn’t be worth living. But once I started asking for my character defect of being a drama queen to be removed, I realized how selfish that had made me. I needed to stop trying to get everything for myself and start helping others. When the world doesn’t center around me, I can be objective. I will write a Tenth Step inventory today and try to be objective.

May 27
THE NEXT RIGHT THING
I found I had to have definite destinations in mind or I was set up for trouble. It was always hard for me to ask for help from other people, but I found it absolutely necessary to let go of my false pride and pick up the phone when I felt things slipping away...I must put energy into my recovery and do whatever is necessary to stay sober. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 205
How do I know what’s right? Pros and cons lists help, but to find answers, I pray and meditate. In my disease, I couldn’t see the next right thing because I couldn’t listen to Higher Power or fellows. I didn’t have the humility to think that anyone else’s opinion mattered. And often doing the right thing involved pain or inconvenience on my part. I hid from that at all costs. Doing the Steps of S.L.A.A. changed all of that for me. I started believing in a Higher Power. And once I started listening for God’s will, I found it much less painful to take the actions that would lead to a much more happy and serene life. Doing the Steps in order with a sponsor always revealed the next right action. I don’t have to tackle the whole problem at once. I can take one step at a time and just do what’s in front of me. Once I came to believe, I was able to turn my will and my life over to a Higher Power and clear out the wreckage of my past. I made amends and continued to work on spiritual progress. I may not always be on the right track but taking these actions helps me to see and do the next right thing. I will pray and meditate and listen for Higher Power’s will.

May 28
ACCEPTANCE
Although we had come a long way in our recovery, we were, however, still unable, by our unaided will, to shape our lives in a consistently positive manner. The reality of this estimation of ourselves was a truth we could now accept, if not gratefully, at least without struggle. This acceptance of truth, and willingness to allow a Power outside ourselves to continue to do what we could not do for ourselves, WAS humility. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 87.
A story in the A.A. Big Book helped me so much with the concept of acceptance, I printed part of it on a sheet of paper and posted it in my apartment as a reminder. “And acceptance is the answer to all my problems today. When I am disturbed, it is because I
find some person, place, thing or situation - some fact of my life - unacceptable to me, and I can find no serenity until I accept that person, place, thing, or situation as being exactly the way it is supposed to be at this moment. Nothing, absolutely nothing, happens in God's world by mistake. Until I could accept my alcoholism, I could not stay sober; unless I accept life completely on life's terms, I cannot be happy. I need to concentrate not so much on what needs to be changed in the world as on what needs to be changed in me and in my attitudes.** Refusing to accept something means I am trying to control things and that usually brings obsession and anxiety when things don't go my way. In every situation I ask myself, "Would you rather be right or happy?" I choose happy and doing things Higher Power's way instead of my own.
I will accept my disease and my life today, seeking Higher Power's will in every situation.

*Pg 417 A.A. Big Book

May 29

DESIRE

I would engage her in recitations of: "I love you"; "I need you"..."I can't live without you." An atmosphere of mutual hypnosis prevailed. Each of us seemed a candle into which the other's moth would fly. The world and time were insignificant in the face of our mesmerizing merger. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 11

Desire can be like kryptonite for a sex and love addict. Defenses are down and we're drawn into the tractor beam. But with the Steps it doesn't have to be that way. Steps 4 and 5 can show us where we are being delusional. Steps 6 and 7 can help us take the ego out of desire so that even though we feel it, we don't have to act on it. When we have an attitude of being of service to others, it's harder to let the addict run wild when we know it will hurt someone we love. With the help of S.L.A.A. tools and fellows, we begin to learn the difference between desire and deserve. Ego tells us we deserve everything we desire, regardless of the consequences. But the true sense of service (when we find out what others need instead of trying to control) reveals that sometimes what we desire isn't the best thing to pursue. With the help of Higher Power and Program, we are able to decide rather than hypnotically chasing a delusion.

I will double check my desires with Higher Power and S.L.A.A. fellows before I act today.

May 30

COMPULSIVITY

Especially for us as sex and love addicts, the need for love had seemed insatiable...it was as though we were trying to quench a terrible thirst by drinking salt water. The more we drank, the more dehydrated we got, until our very lives were threatened...We found that this thirst...was a spiritual thirst, and the water was the God of our understanding. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 101

Before S.L.A.A., my pursuit of sex and love was always irrational or contrary to my will. I pursued unavailable people. I never turned down the opportunity for love or sex even if I
disliked a person’s character or beliefs. It was a strong, irresistible impulse to have sex or a relationship. I needed to show the world that I wasn’t broken and that meant having a healthy relationship. But the compulsive need for sex always got in the way. I trashed my career and destroyed people’s lives over that impulse. I tried everything to control my compulsivity: therapy, other addictions, moving, getting a bodyguard, acupuncture and even hospitalization. When I finally walked into the rooms of S.L.A.A, I thought my impulses would be immediately removed like they were for my other addictions. But for years I worked the Steps and went to meetings and still acted out whenever that impulse hit (which was quite often). It wasn’t until I had a spiritual experience that I was able to stop. I didn’t have to wander in the desert alone with my thirst anymore. S.L.A.A. brought me home.

I will turn my compulsivity over to God today. If an impulse to act out hits me, I will pray, meditate, and make an outreach call.

May 31
PEOPLE PLEASING
Over time, without realizing it, I sacrificed my own individuality in my efforts to maintain this sense of emotional security derived from dependence on others. I thought that in order to be loved I must do whatever others would like me to do. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 196

People pleasing was my character defect of choice in my acting out days. If I was with a group of honor roll students, I bragged about my grades and spoke with a large vocabulary. If I was with my druggy friends, I drank people under the table. I never developed my own likes and needs because in order to feel safe, everyone had to like me. And if disliking anything I did meant that they were going to leave, I had to change everything about myself to make them stay. That way of life doesn’t leave a lot of room for getting to know myself. Even with the tools of S.L.A.A., it was difficult to find my voice in the first few years of sobriety. I was afraid to say, “No.” And I had to bring five different personalities into one that I could live with and like. I had to write many fear inventories about abandonment and emotional pain. What really helped me was when my sponsor said, “Look at who you’re trying to impress. They’re all crazy too.” As long as I realize that I can meet my own needs, I don’t have to compromise and feel bad about myself.

I can be myself today and have the strength to let someone leave if our needs don’t match. I won’t take it personally if someone doesn’t like me.

June 1
INSANITY
We reaffirmed our undying intensity, both sexual and emotional -- another brick of "quick-fix" on the wall of growing insanity. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 13

I heard once that true insanity is not doing the same thing over and over expecting different results, but doing the same thing knowing you’ll get the same results and doing it anyway. In this quote, Rich kept going back to his affair even though he wanted a
better relationship with his wife and the affair was destroying him emotionally. That’s the way it was with all of my compulsive behaviors. I needed to feel the high of that quick fix even if it would destroy my life. I used to believe that the undying intensity was the point of life. It’s the goal for everyone, right? But the reality is that the level of intensity that I needed to feel okay burns out and takes me along with it. Each episode in my acting out is a brick in that wall of insanity which is my disease. That’s why they say in meetings that God needs to demolish the house in order to build a better foundation. I need to fire my bricklayer (me) and let Higher Power build a better wall. Those bricks will be filled with self-esteem instead of insanity.
I won’t listen to the insane ideas that my disease gives me today. I will search for and follow Higher Power’s guidance.

June 2  
EMOTIONAL SOBERTY  
Sexual and emotional sobriety are self-defined in our fellowship...What I really needed was to just take it easy and experience my feelings as they really were, face them square on, and deal with them on a day-to-day basis, avoiding behavior that I'd come to identify as troublesome. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 265  
Being emotionally sober means we are no longer acting out in our fears. We aren’t emotionally intoxicated nor buffeted by the storms of our emotions. In the past, we were swept away by our emotions, trapped in that vicious cycle of automatic behaviors and feelings that reinforced how badly we felt about ourselves. It’s difficult to experience feelings as they really are in that warlike state. In sobriety, we identify and face the behaviors and negative thoughts that leave us emotionally wrung out. We surrender our past pain and trauma as well as the lies we tell ourselves. We let others affirm and love us. We are worthwhile people. We no longer need to escape into addiction because of overwhelming, unpleasant feelings. As we emerge from our emotional haze, we are more present and more willing to act from our heart. Now, when we begin to feel unhealthy emotions, we ask our Higher Power and others for help. We begin to feel a profound connection to God and to life. We have stopped struggling and are flowing with life. As we become emotionally sober, we are more open, honest, respectful, grateful and loving. We embrace our emotions, as they make us feel alive and connected to life.  
My emotions now flow with the current of life. I am emotionally present and learning to act from my heart.

June 3  
ROLE MODELS  
I will pass up the litany of my deprived childhood; I had screwed-up parents who offered neither role models nor affection so necessary to healthy growth. My desperate need for love/approval and my denial of this need, led to thirty years of frenetic behavior in a number of areas. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 216
All the adults in my childhood were flirty party people who made inappropriate sexual comments. I had too much information on who was cheating on who from my mother (even if it was only from the soap operas - I thought they were real). All the TV shows and movies were about sexy people getting what they wanted. The cute, good girl never got ahead. And guys had to be tough to survive. I wanted to grow up to be successful. But when I tried to fit that mold, it never quite fit. I was a nerd at heart acting like a femme fatale. When I threw away that idea of what a successful person is supposed to look like, I got to know the real me. S.L.A.A. gave me sober role models, like my sponsor, who I really wanted to emulate. That gave me peace and serenity that I had never known before. I threw away the old empty role models and found a way of life that works.

I will look to sober members of S.L.A.A. and the good, charitable people of the world as my role models today.

June 4
AROUSING SUSPICION
For those of you who are still suffering the pains of suspicion or the agony of discovery, we reach out in love and compassion. We are still only a few, a testimony to the power of this addiction to destroy relationships with those who do not share the illness. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 65

Every addiction carries a recognizable set of behaviors and traits that can clue others into when we are slipping. We may not even be aware of it ourselves. Withdrawing from activities that we normally find enjoyable, being open and honest with our emotions, spending inordinate amounts of time on the computer or our cell phones: these can all be warning signs that the addiction is taking hold of us. As addicts, we have all been the source of suspicion at times. The questions of a loved one can bring back the fear we experienced when fully immersed in the grasp of our addictions. It also brings back fear for our partners, who have been there for the hard times and have had to tread the difficult path of rebuilding trust. It takes humility and honesty with ourselves to listen to what our loved ones have to say with an open mind. A spouse or a parent may be able to see things that we are incapable of seeing. When caught up in the addictive hold of addiction, our perceptions become distorted. What was once the troubling paranoia of getting caught, can now be the way out of the addictive spiral.

Higher Power, help me to be open and honest with my loved ones. Help me to see that they are not there to condemn me, but to be a mirror in which I can see an honest reflection.

June 5
THE SIXTH STEP
Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character. - S.L.A.A. Core Documents, “The Twelve Steps of S.L.A.A.”

How do we become entirely ready? And why does this Step use that word? And removing all defects of character? Aren’t we supposed to work towards progress not
perfection? It seems like this step would create a lot of fear for addicts. But if we have thoroughly worked Steps One through Five, this step isn’t quite so fearful. God, our sponsor and fellows support us. Entirely ready doesn’t mean all our defects disappear on the spot - it means we have enough humility to be ready to ask in the Seventh Step. We have seen our disease in Step One and know that we don’t want to be that way anymore. We have seen clearly what the defects are in Steps Four and Five. And Steps Two and Three prepared us by giving us hope that there is a Higher Power listening to our prayers who can help heal our defects. God doesn’t remove them without a lot of help from us, though. Are we ready to keep asking? We may get fearful of doing the work of honestly looking at ourselves, of praying and of being humble, but others who have done it before us assure us that it’s the best and only way to recover. Serenity is the goal and we can get there if we try and ask Higher Power and fellows for help. God, I pray for the willingness to be willing to let go of my character defects.

June 6

CELIBACY
My bottom line also includes celibacy with no masturbation for a period during which I surrender to the S.L.A.A. program and the Twelve Steps and learn to apply them to my life. The energy transformation that is occurring is incredible. – S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 260

In my first few months of withdrawal in S.L.A.A., I used to go to an S.L.A.A. workshop at a nun’s retirement home. I dreamt of escaping the world, taking a vow of celibacy and joining them. I realized that was just my anorexia wanting to escape from the difficulty of finding and navigating intimacy. Then I used this as a way to rationalize my desire to continue having sex even in withdrawal. But my sponsor suggested I try abstinence at least until I finished my Fifth Step. In order to gain clarity on my disease, I found I needed to be celibate for a period of time. The Program wasn’t just about doing the Steps and going to meetings. I needed to take back the energy I was squandering on sexual pursuits and focus it on Higher Power and creative endeavors. I needed to find out who I was without all the numbing out behaviors. Because I was able to stay celibate during my withdrawal, realized that sex isn’t the most important thing in life and it’s no longer my only goal. I have a newfound self-respect and love of life.

I give my sex life over to Higher Power and practice celibacy if necessary. Celibacy can be a rich and powerful experience of developing intimacy with myself and my Higher Power.

June 7

COMPROMISE
We were left face to face with each other, trying to respect the other’s needs and thereby come up with a compromise that would make us both feel like winners instead of losers...If we try to keep the surface of the relationship smooth, we begin to compromise our own feelings. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 61
Compromise can be healthy or unhealthy. It’s difficult for a sex and love addict to find the balance and decide what is a healthy compromise and what to avoid. We can’t compromise our values and stay sober. When we give up our values to make a person stay or to avoid conflict we give away our dignity. Even small amounts of dignity depleted over time leave me a shell of a human being who can’t even recognize my own feelings anymore. But if I determine that it’s needed and compromise is pursued, I have to first determine if it’s trustworthy. Will it help the relationship without giving away too much of myself? There is no relationship if my sense of self-worth is so depleted that all I can do is say “yes” to everything, even if it will harm me. My feelings matter as much as the other person’s. Negotiations can seem to take forever and look like a waste of time. But with practice and learning to recognize healthy compromise, this skill has great value in the world and can make my life easier. There can be many pitfalls to compromise, but when done soberly, there are many rewards.

I will pause and weigh the pros and cons of making any compromise today.

June 8
COMPARISON
At the height of our obsessing we may...compare ourselves with those who appear to “have it all.” – from the “Romantic Obsession” pamphlet
My sponsor used to say that I shouldn’t compare my insides to someone else’s outsides. Every one of us has more going on internally than anyone could imagine by looking at us. We fantasize that every person is exactly who we assume they are by observing their physical appearance and social behavior. On more than once occasion, I was told by a co-worker that I “always seem so calm,” that I don’t let anything bother me. Once I responded, laughingly, “It’s all a façade.” If the image I project to the world does not match my insides, then maybe the same is true of everyone else I meet. The vulnerable honesty displayed in twelve-step meetings gives me a chance to look past appearances and listen to the experience of someone else. It allows me to sympathize with another’s situation. If I can do this, I can develop compassion for all human beings, and forgive the flaws in myself and others.
I will not rely on superficial means to judge people. I will look for those things we have in common, and give preference to our similarities instead of our differences.

June 9
SEDUCTION
We felt safe in knowing that physically, emotionally, and mentally we could continue to attract new people to us, or further bind those already in our web...Through sex, charm, emotional appeal, or persuasive intellect, we had used other people as “drugs,” to avoid facing our own personal inadequacy. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 74
Many people in our society think that having the power of seduction is something to be admired. It’s used in advertising and actors use it to become instant celebrities. Some ability to seduce may be helpful for some. But for sex and love addicts, it can be the currency that feeds our addiction. Using any means necessary in order to have a constant supply of sexual companionship usually means that we have to make empty promises. Seducing the same person again and again gets more difficult over time when they realize we’re not capable of commitment or intimacy. Many addicts love that type of a challenge, but most go for the quick fix and find another to convince. Seduction is short term validation. Once the goal of sex is reached, the true person comes out because no one can keep up a facade their entire lifetime. The truth always comes out. S.L.A.A. helped me stop playing games and present the real me in relationships. People were free to choose whether to accept me or reject me on who I was. I didn’t have to run around wasting money, time and energy on crazy-making schemes anymore. The freedom to be me and find true love is worth more to me than anything else. I will not try to seduce anyone today. I will stay true to myself and my sobriety.

June 10
RESENTMENT
Many of us…had learned to survive by cultivating hatred, anger, and resentment as motivating forces, seeking to insulate ourselves from hurt and fear. Now we discovered that we had crippled ourselves by using this monotonous strategy of distrust and isolation in all relationships, whether they were inherently hostile or not. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 86
When we feel pain, many of us look outside ourselves for the source. Who or what is to blame? Playing the role of the victim is much more attractive than accepting our own mistakes. Resentment provides the justification for any number of unhealthy acts. “I reported Mr. Long to my supervisor. That’s why he’s trying to get me into trouble now.” Never mind that Mr. Long has a legitimate complaint against me for using company property without permission. “Robert has been spreading rumors about me. That’s why my boss fired me.” That may leave out the part where I was wasting company time on the computer and reporting late for work. When we examine our resentments, it becomes clear that we are not always free of blame. If we’re still brooding over the perceived harm done to us, we’ll be unlikely to see our own part in the situation. There is a saying that resentment is like swallowing poison and expecting someone else to die. All of that hatred builds up inside us, making us suspicious, spiteful, and generally unpleasant to be around. If we can see our own faults, we can begin to let go of resentment and accept faults in others. When someone hurts me, it is a symptom of their own sickness. Higher Power, give me the willingness and compassion to help those who have offended me.

June 11
THE FIRST CHARACTERISTIC
Having few healthy boundaries, we become sexually involved with and/or emotionally attached to people without knowing them. - S.L.A.A. Core Documents, “Characteristics of Sex and Love Addiction”

Many of us don’t know what healthy boundaries are before we come into S.L.A.A. I read many self-help books that tried to explain what they were but my love addiction always got in the way. Magical thinking, co-dependency, and the need for acceptance were all more important than those rude old boundaries. How could something so seemingly harsh be healthy? Rationalizing away any need for rules made it easier for my addict to become sexually involved with people quickly and without knowing them. Sex addiction seemed easier to handle than love addiction, because it was like getting drunk and having a hangover the next morning. After every one night stand, I would promise myself never to do that again. But inevitably, I would meet some fantasy and be off and running. Becoming emotionally attached to people without knowing them almost killed me. I stayed with abusive partners long after I discovered that they weren’t the knight in shining armor that I had imagined them to be. S.L.A.A. gave me tools to stop the magical thinking and to start building healthy boundaries instead of anorexic ones. I had a dating plan to ensure that I would slowly, and hopefully patiently, get to know someone. I had outreach calls, sharing and sponsor-sponsee interaction to tell me if I was wandering into delusion.

I will lean on Higher Power and fellows to maintain healthy boundaries and sobriety today.

June 12
LIVING IN THE PRESENT
Be here now. This theme is at the core of any recipe for happy living. It involves, however fleetingly, the experience of a total trust, a total faith, that basically everything is just as it should be at this moment, including my desire for it to be different in the next moment. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 265

One of the tenets of recovery is living in the present, sometimes one minute at a time. We deal with our addiction-riddled pasts through working the 12 steps. The future often remains a constantly fluctuating and unpredictable concept. It is something over which we have no control. Events much larger than even our anxiety-ridden predictions can and do occur. In S.L.A.A., I am told that if I live the principles of the S.L.A.A. program in the here and now, my future will be significantly better than my addiction-riddled past. Not only that, when difficulties do arise in my future, I will be much better equipped to handle them from a psychological and a spiritual perspective. As I encountered the constant fear in which I lived during my withdrawal period in S.L.A.A., I was told that I was “living in the wreckage of the future.” This struck me to my core. From that moment on, I became willing to surrender my future to my Higher Power, knowing that my only task is to work my S.L.A.A. program in the here and now. My future will emerge out of my commitment to recovery today. I can let go!

I release all thoughts of the future to my Higher power. I work my S.L.A.A. program to the best of my ability today, trusting that the future will take care of itself.
June 13

COMPLACENCY

Most S.L.A.A.’s who have been through [a slip] say that…they forgot that they were sex and love addicts and became overconfident. Or they became too preoccupied with business or social affairs to remember the importance of abstaining from acting out…they withdrew from taking advantage of the help available to them. – from the “Questions Beginners Ask” pamphlet

Wouldn’t it be nice if we could just work the Steps once and be done with them? How long could we stay sober if we only did the bare minimum? Early on in recovery, I heard two things that stuck with me. The first was, “Be vigilant.” The other was, “Everything you put before your recovery, you will lose.” Sometimes I forget how cunning my addiction can be. Maintaining vigilance can be tiresome. Other interests and responsibilities can seem more important, because I think I’ve got my addiction under control. But when I start thinking that I’m the one in control, that’s when I’ve lost perspective. It’s only with the help of my Higher Power that I stay sober. If I stop doing my part, addiction’s going to come back and hit me with a vengeance. I can’t be 100% vigilant all the time. Sometimes it will take all my strength just to get to a meeting and call my sponsor. What’s important is that I never lose sight of the danger of my addiction, and never talk myself into believing that, “I’ve got this.” My recovery must come first if I want to stay sober.

Higher Power, help me to remain vigilant in my recovery. Give me strength when I am tempted to slip into complacency.

June 14

STILL SINGLE

In the process of being alone and going through withdrawal, I had discovered, for the first time in my life, a sense of my own dignity. It was mine, divinely given to me as I was. I no longer needed to hold another person responsible for giving it, or failing to give it, to me. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 38

One of my sponsees has struggled for years with the fact that she is still single. She always believed that “success” in S.L.A.A. hinged on finding a healthy relationship. I can’t count how many times I told her that it was about our relationship with ourselves and Higher Power. It didn’t necessarily have to be about finding a partner. There’s a whole section in the basic text devoted to living alone if one so chooses. She never chose that. It even sent her running from S.L.A.A into a turbulent relationship. After she lost her career, home, and a lot of money, she came back to meetings and went through the Steps again. Today her career is flourishing and I see a light in her eyes that I never saw before. She doesn’t care about looking for a partner anymore. She’s leaving it in God’s hands. She’s going through the painful work of changing herself for herself.

Watching her process has proven to me that this Program really works and that anyone can find dignity of self no matter what their situation.
I will not focus on my relationship status today. I will focus on my goals and seeking Higher Power’s will.

June 15
RIGOROUS HONESTY
As I came to explore a new world of relationships in which I had some sense of dignity and the capacity for caring and commitment, I learned that old addictive patterns could slip back into my life in subtle ways. I learned the...absolute necessity of rigorous current honesty. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 167
In my addiction, I lied for survival. If telling the truth meant I was going to get hit by my abusive boyfriend, then why would I be honest? In toxic relationships, honesty can be deadly. But I carried this entitlement into every other area. I lied when it was convenient or just because I could (ego). Lies are riddled with character defects. Telling untruths is really sloth and insecurity in disguise. I’m afraid I won’t get what I need or keep what I have so I need to be dishonest. I find I can't lie and have my character defects removed at the same time. I can’t have a sense of dignity when I’m afraid of getting caught in a lie. In relationships, there is no capacity for caring and commitment because my dishonesty hides my true self. If I’m dishonest with my sponsor and fellows, they can’t help me. I walk around an imitation of myself and that’s a breeding ground for a slip. When I lied in sobriety, my sponsor made me contact the person to reveal my lie – that painfully embarrassing task made me less likely to lie the next time. I will be honest today even if I need to face painful situations. I will ask Higher Power for the strength.

June 16
CARRYING THE MESSAGE
[The] "carrying the message" principle of the Twelfth Step of recovery insures that lonely sex and love addicts, desperate for recovery...will have the opportunity to find that special friendship and fellowship with others which is so vital - so life-giving. - S.L.A.A Basic Text, Page viii
I always thought carrying the message meant doing the lead share in a meeting. But it's based on the beginnings of A.A. when the founders went to the hospital or friends of friends and talked one on one to the alcoholic. I'm carrying the message when I sit quietly in my home group each week and do my treasurer commitment. When I live my recovery, and stay sober, people can see that the Program works. Sharing experience, strength, and hope comes in many forms: Talking with sponsees, showing the people close to us how we have changed, being quiet when another member is sharing, being kind, having the strength to get through hard times, etc. There are many ways to help the newcomer. I can’t count how many times that life threw me a curveball and I met with a sponsee or went to a meeting anyway and was so grateful for the strength I pulled from those interactions. Contact with another S.L.A.A. member and the reminders of our addiction that carrying the message brings, have taken me out of my depression countless times.
June 17

EXPECTATIONS

In truth, the option to "tailor ourselves" to meet the expectations of another was untenable. We could not now, nor could we ever, sustain a relationship in which we had to destroy an essential part of ourselves in order to render ourselves more desirable to the eyes of another. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 154

When I “fall in love,” all too often I expect my beloved to meet all my expectations, respond favorably to my demands, and behave as I imagine a lover should. I cast my lover in my own addictive movie, then feel disappointed when they don’t follow the script that’s in my head. A friend in another Twelve-Step program once said, “Expectations are premeditated resentments.” If I project onto someone else what I think they should be or if I’m changing myself only to meet others’ expectations, I am setting myself up to be let down. People have their own history, needs, feelings, and agenda. They behave in ways I can’t predict and may not like. To love someone is to accept uncertainty, because I can’t control another person’s reactions or behavior in response to my desires. Tailoring myself to meet the expectations of others means being untrue to who I am. The real me is hiding underneath that façade, and will always show itself in the end. By having realistic expectations, I not only experience less disappointment, but my expectations are often exceeded.

I do not need to change myself to meet anyone else’s expectations. I acknowledge that same freedom in others.

June 18

THE FOURTH TRADITION

Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or S.L.A.A. as a whole. - S.L.A.A. Core Documents, “The Twelve Traditions”

I’ve been such a rebel my whole life that when I first heard this Tradition, I laughed. “A bunch of ego-driven addicts allowed to do whatever they want,” I thought. “There will be chaos!” But I went to different S.L.A.A. meetings every day in the first few years of recovery and didn’t see too many problems. Every meeting voted to follow a pretty standard format that they got from the FWS office or other meetings. They may have had non-conference approved literature that they wanted to read but someone usually brought it up at a business meeting. And if it was too far away from the Twelve Steps, it was voted out. This tradition tells me to be mindful that I affect others. I can’t just make unilateral decisions in my meetings that would affect another meeting, any other service body, or even people in the meeting itself. I’ve learned the quality of considering other people’s needs when making my decisions. I don’t come from a place of love addiction, trying to entrap people, or trying to defend myself in case they get mad. It’s not codependent consideration. It’s really recognizing that people are also autonomous and they actually have their needs that are separate from my own. I can do what I want as long as it doesn’t affect other groups or S.L.A.A. as a whole.
Today, I will be mindful of how my behavior affects others. I will keep my Program safe to the best of my ability.

June 19

IMPLICIT MEMORY
I saw, for the first time, how automatically and unconsciously I was continuously creating a whole gallery of possibilities for loaded sexual and emotional events… Although I now knew that the payoffs from such intrigues were poisonous to me, I still found myself initiating them as second nature. – S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 28

I am powerless over my addiction, so of course I was acting off of implicit memory. I spent so many years acting out that sexual activities became like tying my shoes; I did it without thinking about it. In early recovery, I would start to drive down a street near my qualifier’s house and suddenly wake up and ask myself, “What am I doing?” I didn’t mean to put myself in danger. It was as if my car had a mind of its own. My foot hit the gas when it should have hit the brakes. Even at fellowship in S.L.A.A. where I was trying to gain sobriety, I would catch myself throwing out sexual hooks in conversation. I didn’t want to continue to do things the way I did when acting out. The work to change myself was difficult. I had to get a whole new set of coping strategies. I had to act as if I was a person of dignity until I learned to respect myself and stop unconsciously going down the path of addiction. Meditation and prayer helped retrain my brain. Bringing my unconscious habits out in the open in my Fourth and Fifth Steps also helped. Fellows sometimes called me on my behavior and though painful and often humiliating, this was useful in helping me change and become conscious.

I will become conscious of and try to change my addictive behavior today.

June 20

THY WILL, NOT MINE, BE DONE
We saw that [the steps] were structured on the principle of Step 3. Our cup of diseased behavior would be emptied out, and we would cleanse it as best we could, making it ready for God’s Grace to refill it, in accordance with God’s plan, not our own. – S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 77

When I entered the rooms of Twelve Step programs, I was an atheist. Sometimes I thought if God did exist, he was playing tricks on me. If that’s what God was like, why would I do God’s will over my own? I spent years of slipping in S.L.A.A. on that excuse. The simple fact was that I wanted my way. I didn’t want God to take over if he was going to give me hard work to do. But sobriety is hard work. When I finally did turn my will over though, God worked miracles. Instead of the relationship that I thought was essential to my survival (the one that was in fact killing me) I was given a healthy relationship with someone who helps me grow. I never would have received this gift if I hadn’t had those years of emptying out my cup of diseased behavior using the S.L.A.A. tools. The cleansing happened when I did Steps 4-10. I was ready for God to refill my cup when I finished all my steps and set a sober dating plan with my sponsor (and actually followed it). Today, I accept my life with gratitude and serenity.
I may not believe that Higher Power’s will is better than my own, but I will act as if. Today, I will let go of control to allow Higher Power’s plan to unfold. I pray for the strength to carry it out.

June 21
MANIPULATION
Whether we were victims or victimizers...we had used the disturbed relationships about us for our own purposes, for obtaining the addictive payoff. Regardless of what others had done or failed to do, our own part in these relationships was riddled with dishonesty and manipulation of others, with willfulness and pride. – S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 90
It would be nice if we could say that we never manipulated anyone in our addiction. But if we are truly honest, we know that our actions were not so innocent. Perhaps we didn’t lie, but we also didn’t tell the full truth. Maybe we were aware that our partner was dependent on us, and we took advantage of the situation. To take an honest look at our character defects can be very difficult. We don’t want to face the fact that we have manipulated our loved ones to get what we want. Recovery requires rigorous honesty, and we may not always like the truths we discover about ourselves. As we get sober, it is important to acknowledge that we have this defect than to tell ourselves that we are incapable of such behavior. Once we recognize this, we can own it and let it go.
I am honest about my intentions. If I recognize that I am being manipulative, I will admit my wrong and make amends.

June 22
FEELINGS
The difference between my feelings and what seemed to be acceptable was so great that I learned to deny my feelings, and look for excuses so that I would not have to label myself a “bad person.” ...I became so accustomed to denying my feelings and blaming my behavior on others that I truly did not know what anger or fear felt like, and I felt helpless to change my life. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 164
Today, I try to be responsible for my own feelings. I grew up in a family where children were to be seen but not heard. I always gravitated toward people who were emotionally shut down or violently dramatic. There was no middle ground. Feelings were too painful. Even joy was overwhelming. They needed to be numbed with addiction. A fellow described the process of denying feelings as if he was driving around in a station wagon his whole life and just throwing junk in the back until there was barely any room for him. And when he came to Program and started working the steps it was as if he slammed on the brakes and everything came flying towards the windshield. All of my feelings needed to come out in sobriety and be dealt with. No more burying things. I dealt with past hurts and fears in Steps 4-9. And continued to confront emotions with a daily Tenth Step. Sponsors and fellows helped me understand and work through confusing feelings. I am much more balanced today than ever before.
I will confront feelings today. I will ask Higher Power for the continued strength to identify and understand injustices that cause anger. I will try to rid myself of these negative emotions with forgiveness, responsibility, and moving on.

June 23
TIME
If we were ever to be as cups running over with redeemed, non-addictive lives, then some Power greater than ourselves...would have to do the refilling. Such a Power (He, She, It, or They) would do that in its own time, according to its scheme of things, not our own. – S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 76
I’ve seen how my Higher Power’s schedule doesn’t necessarily correspond with my schedule. And Higher Power’s so much more clever than me or the rest of the world. Higher Power knows exactly how to resolve everything and how to give everyone the best for what they need. And it’s not ways I could scheme up, even in my most clever acting out days! I’ve got about a three-day turnaround with Higher Power right now. I ask for help, and three days later I get the answer. Actually, that’s about how long it takes me, right now, to clear up my stuff so I can see or hear Higher Power’s answer. Higher Power answers me right away, but I can’t see it right away. How cool to know my Higher Power’s faster than a computer and only wants the best for me. It may not always look that way to me according to my plan, but in the long run, I usually see it is. I just have to let go and let God and trust. Something that’s painful in the short run may help uncover, discover and discard. It’s all in God’s plan to remold me in recovery. I will not be concerned with time today. I will trust that Higher Power can show me the way.

June 24
CHALLENGE
We were still plagued by sometimes prolonged bouts of obsessive thinking or emotional yearning for intrigue and romance, for sexual oblivion. These could be set off by accidental encounters with our former addictive lovers, which seemed almost fiendishly psychic in the uncanny way they happened just when we were most vulnerable. – S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 78
Challenges come in many forms. Life is a challenge. It can seem particularly difficult for people who are used to numbing out instead of stepping up to meet life’s challenges. Job loss, death, illness, and even an encounter with the object of our obsession (whether that is a person or not) can send us reeling. In early sobriety, I never felt strong enough to live up to what was required of me. So I went back to the familiar and broke my bottom lines. I used to say that if I broke a fingernail I would slip! But once I took the drama out of every situation (a character defect that made every challenge bigger than it really was) I was better equipped to handle whatever came my way. Fellows in program helped me see the reality and supported me until I had the strength to meet the challenge. Reliance on a Higher Power gave me that strength. As long as I don’t plunge into negative thinking and insecurity, I can look for ways to change my circumstances.
Higher Power, give me the ability to accept those challenges that you set before me, help me to meet this day with enthusiasm and certainty.

June 25
THE TENTH SIGN
We become honest in expressing who we are, developing true intimacy in our relationships with ourselves and others. - S.L.A.A. Core Documents, “S.L.A.A. Signs of Recovery”

Becoming honest in expressing who we are is difficult for most sex and love addicts (and all humans). Sex addicts need to lie in order to be able to seduce better. And forget about even finding out who they are - everything in their lives is structured around the hunt for their fix. I was always a fake image of myself according to what I thought my prey needed in order to do my sexual bidding. I always thought sex was the point of life so why bother finding other interests unless they would make you more interesting to other people? This applied to my life as a love addict as well. I was so concerned with making the object of my affection stay that I lost myself. When I lied to myself and others there was no room for true intimacy to grow. It was a numbers game – all about the quick fix and onto the next prospect. True intimacy requires time, honesty, and compromise. I needed the time to get to know myself and work on my character defects in order to have a good relationship with myself, before I could attempt a partnership with anyone else.

I will be honest with myself and anyone I encounter today, to the best of my ability. And if I am dishonest, I will ask Higher Power for strength to make amends.

June 26
TOUGH LOVE
Each of us, regardless of individual circumstances, was now willing to go to any lengths, a day at a time, to stay unhooked. This decision was unilateral. It did not depend on the cooperation or lack of cooperation of our spouses, lovers, or sex objects. We were willing to be available not to the next lover or new sexual fantasy, but to whatever might happen next within ourselves. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 73

For sex and love addicts, tough love is not desirable. It is a barrier to getting our needs met. Whether we are setting boundaries or someone else is showing us tough love, the emotions in those situations bring up a lot of fear. It takes a lot of courage to say, “No,” when otherwise we would let our partner stay weak, dependent, and active in their addiction. In my opinion, it’s easier to go cold turkey from addictive substances like drugs and alcohol. Showing tough love doesn’t hurt its feelings. The drug doesn’t complain when you are throwing it away. Most relationships can only survive if there is compromise. Sometimes we can’t do that if we want to stay sober. When our partner expresses displeasure, we may fear the loss of the relationship. We need to stay strong and let go of codependency. Higher power can help if we ask. God and fellows can help us set and keep boundaries regardless of our fears or ego around tough love. Nobody wants to look like a jerk, but sometimes it’s necessary for recovery.
June 27

ACCOMPLISHING GOALS

A lot of what we thought we were, and thought we couldn’t live without, was being boiled away. As this became clearer to us, our attitudes changed profoundly. We felt a deep desire to experience God’s will in all areas of our lives for its own sake, rather than for some limited, self-defined objective. We were becoming vessels more suited to God’s purpose. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 87

Before sobriety, goals were just an inconvenience that got in the way of my sex and love addiction or they were overwhelming, insurmountable obstacles. All of my elaborate dreams of fame and fortune were to serve my sex and love addiction. Self-centered in the extreme, I didn’t know how to set realistic goals, let alone accomplish them. Getting sobriety and working the Steps in S.L.A.A. reshaped my personality. Goals began to take form around my perception of Higher Power’s will instead of my own. When I felt that God was asking too much of me and a goal was out of reach, I wasn’t afraid to ask for help. I shared my difficulties as well as my triumphs. When I shared my difficulties, fellow S.L.A.A. members related and sometimes offered support. When I shared my triumphs, they applauded the effort and it showed newcomers the power of the Program. Realizing that I am human and couldn’t do everything all at once or immediately helped immensely. I take things one day at a time and let them unfold as Higher Power intends.

I will set realistic goals and work towards them today. Hopefully some of my accomplishments will be of service to others.

June 28

ACTING "AS IF"

The fact that we needed faith in some Power, since we could not trust ourselves to be consistent in either behavior or motive, left some of us feeling even more shaken. Where would we find even the rudiments of a faith that could carry us through this dissolving and reconstruction of our whole personality? – S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 75

It used to concern me that agnostics and atheists might have a hard time in a twelve-step program. The phrase “act as if” seemed like a denial of a person’s right to their own beliefs. But when the time came that I needed recovery for myself, I had to suspend my disbelief. Though I was still skeptical about putting my trust in something I didn’t understand, I came to believe that a twelve-step program could restore me to sanity. When I worked the second and third steps, I put “act as if” into action. I started praying, even though I didn’t know who or what I was praying to. By practicing the methods of a spiritual faith, my belief in a Higher Power grew with time. I found myself relying on my Higher Power more and more. I put faith before understanding, trusting that if I followed through with the actions, it would make sense as I went along. There is still much work to be done in my spiritual journey, but I know now that if I simply “act as if,” my Higher Power will do great work in my life.

I will practice tough love today wherever it will help keep me sober and sane.
I will set aside my doubt and trust that there is a Power out there greater than me. I will practice faith, acting as if, until I experience my spiritual awakening.

June 29
SERVICE
We had sought full partnership with God, and knowledge of God's purpose for us. By seeking to live with honesty and integrity, and to be of service to others, we had discovered that the source of love, which was of God, had begun to flow from within us. We had lived our way into step 12. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 101
I've always believed myself to be an unreliable person. I learned from a young age that my parents would nurture and support me more if I failed to do anything for myself. Taking on service commitments within S.L.A.A. has taught me that I can contribute positively to a very important cause. Working a service commitment such as secretary, treasurer, literature, intergroup, and starting a new meeting, has all taught me that I can actually do things for myself. Fears about failure and being unreliable have been removed from me as I've seen that I can show up regularly on time on a weekly basis for my service commitment. Recently, I was voted in for a second term of secretary which is a one year commitment. People that attend the meeting have reinforced that I can do what I'm supposed to do, and do it well or well enough. Perhaps most importantly, I can no longer deny that I am capable of being a responsible, competent person. That has shifted my outlook on life. This knowledge about myself is simple and humbling and so important because now I see the door is open for me to take on more and bigger responsibilities that I want to take in order to improve my life.
I will look for opportunities to be of service today and seek God's will.

June 30
TEMPORARY SOLUTION
The temporary addictive escape from a painfully perceived reality would be sought more and more, until the seeking itself felt like some primitive drive for survival in pursuit of which everything, including self-worth, would be sacrificed. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page viii
We seek out temporary solutions for our pain, because any solution that will provide a lasting effect requires time and hard work. These are not things that the typical addict is willing to give. We want what we want, when we want it, and right now would be preferable. Acting out provides us with a momentary escape, a quick fix, but when we come down from that high, we're still the same person in the same situation we were in when we started. We choose these methods because they are easy and immediate, but they are also empty and fleeting. Whatever joy our acting out may produce, it is quickly replaced by shame and self-loathing. Recovery requires a rewiring of our way of thinking. We must learn to love the longer path to results. When we can appreciate that real growth comes through struggle and rigorous honesty, then we will no longer see the temporary solution as the better option.
God, I know that these temptations are only temporary. Help me to recognize the more effective solutions in my life.

July 1
HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS
True partnership is not built on fantasy or heroic expectation, nor on the availability of sex, on tap and on demand. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 42
When I first joined S.L.A.A., I saw marriage as the ultimate goal. It wouldn’t be a healthy relationship unless you were married. The guy that I had gone through the dating plan with and was in a relationship with for a number of years told me that he wasn’t the marrying kind and never wanted to get married. I thought, how can you have a healthy relationship without marriage? I went to my sponsor with it and she said that you have to decide what your goal is. Do you want marriage at all costs or do you want a healthy relationship? And do you have a healthy relationship? I realized that my goal was to be healthy in a relationship and that was what I had; I had a loving partnership. I let go of the idea that I had to get married. A couple of years later he asked me to marry him. I think you grow in a healthy relationship and you give each other the space to be yourself and to express your needs and feelings.
I am learning what it means to be in a healthy relationship, one day at a time, by being open and honest with my partner.

July 2
THE SEVENTH STEP
Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings. - S.L.A.A. Core Documents, “The Twelve Steps of S.L.A.A.”
My ego doesn’t want to admit that I have shortcomings. That’s part of what kept my disease alive and active for so many years. Through working the steps and the S.L.A.A. program I’ve experienced the gift of sobriety. In sobriety, I’ve learned to love myself enough to admit that I have shortcomings. I don’t have to judge or shame myself for them. I can accept them and surrender them to Higher Power to remove. Feeling that God has the power to remove my character defects allows me to look at them realistically instead of getting belligerent if someone points them out. Before I had faith in a Higher Power and the 12-Step process, I would get angry whenever someone pointed out a mistake. Now I need to stop and ask myself if what they are saying has merit. If it does, instead of beating myself up, I ask God to remove the defect of character and do whatever I can to help. I just need to show up every day for sobriety and surrender my shortcomings to my Higher Power.
I love myself enough to let go and let God remove my shortcomings.

July 3
SELF-DEFINED SOBRIETY
Those of us who tried to deceive ourselves in the way we defined our sex and love addiction either found ourselves slipping back into the old behavior, or getting into real trouble with our new "steps forward." We learned the hard way that there was no such thing as half-surrender. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 72
Defining bottom lines was difficult for me. Half-surrender led me straight back to the dishonesty that had ruined my first marriage. My bottom lines such as “no contact with a qualifier,” and, “no sex outside of a committed relationship,” were clear and cast a wide umbrella over a range of behaviors that I knew led me to act out. But this didn't address accessory behaviors such as looking at photos, letters, or emails, or listening to songs that reminded me of qualifiers. Sobriety definitions are self-correcting if we are working a program. If I give myself too much freedom and independent choice, I find myself engaged once again in the behaviors that got me into the rooms in the first place. If I draw the lines too harshly, the program becomes an unsustainable system of “no,” a breeding ground for joyless hanging on. My commitment is to get to the truth about myself. I seek to define my sobriety as accurately as I possibly can and live faithfully to it. As more is revealed, with the help of my sponsor, I adjust. Over time, as the plan approximates the truth more and more, I receive safety from a fall and experience the blossoming of my true self.
The freedom and joy that sobriety gives me is worth the effort it takes to define and continue to refine it.

July 4
FREEDOM
God’s grace would give us freedom from the burden of our old self. S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 87
Sobriety never sounded like freedom in my acting out days. It sounded like bondage to a God I didn’t understand. When my sponsor told me to throw away my old God and get one that I could understand, I was able to let God in. But I didn’t want to become a slave to 12 Step Programs. That was my excuse for not surrendering. A fellow pointed out that I was definitely a slave to my addictions. I had to have my phone with me at all times; I couldn’t stop myself from going places and doing things that made me miserable, etc. The freedom from fear that I get by praying or going to a meeting is worth everything to me today. My old self was a rock around my neck, causing me to drown. It was as if I was walking around in a dark cave of fear and resentment my whole life and I found sobriety and stepped into the sunlight. It’s not that I never go back to the cave, but God helps me out of it every time.
I will not answer the call of my old self today. I will know that turning to God will give me the freedom I need to survive and thrive.
July 5

SERENITY PRAYER

The Serenity Prayer took on great significance as we asked over and over again for the serenity to accept those people and events which we could not change, and for the courage to change what we could - with Grace and luck, ourselves. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 91

Before recovery, there is chaos. We may face pressure from family, friends, employers or significant others. We may fear we can never pay off our debt. Problems pile up and they seem impossible to overcome. Many of us come to S.L.A.A. when we have hit the absolute rock bottom. Every other method has failed. We have been unable to bring order to the chaos through our own efforts alone. The familiar and comforting words of the Serenity Prayer give us the peace we need to accept our disease and begin to heal one day at a time. The Serenity Prayer helps us to sort out which things we can control and which things we cannot. It is a request for greater discernment. We say the prayer and we work the steps. We work with a sponsor and we do service work within our groups. One day, someone asks us to be their sponsor. We agree, listen to their problems, and wonder how anyone could possibly be helped by anything we have to say. And then we hear some words escape our mouths without having any idea where they came from. That is the moment we know that our Higher Power has granted us wisdom.

I will say the Serenity Prayer often because it reminds me there are many things I can change and it empowers me to do so.

July 6

SOCIAL ANOREXIA

Some of us feel overwhelmed in social settings. Others of us get high by socializing with a great many people in order to keep ourselves from intimacy with any one person. - from the “Anorexia—Sexual, Social, Emotional” pamphlet

Before S.L.A.A. I thought my ability to be outgoing was an asset. I was unaware that it was also a distinct facet of my disease. The concept of getting "high" or getting a "hit" off of socializing shocked me. At first I thought it was absurd. I eventually learned that the "high" I got from socializing came from the attention of others that I longed for to fill the emptiness I felt inside. Intimacy with any one person was way too scary. I even had three sponsors so I didn’t have to tell everything to one person. I could compartmentalize. With the principles of the Program I was able to let sobriety, the steps and my Higher Power heal and fill this emptiness so that I am able to experience true intimacy with others. But even then, I would go to S.L.A.A. parties and the intimacy would wear me out. I would get a headache very early in the night and have to go home. Today I check my level of self-care. Am I truly tired or does my anorexia want me to isolate? It’s much easier to be around people when I let go of my character defects of fear and perfectionism and let Higher Power take care of my social anorexia.
2017 AGENDA Appendix B
Motions and Items for Discussion
2017 S.L.A.A. Annual Business Meeting,
July 25 – 28, 2017
Fourth Version – July 25, 2017

Today, I turn to my Higher Power to fill the emptiness I feel inside and ask for healing from my fear of intimacy.

July 7
SAYING “NO”
I now have increasing strength to say “no” to situations that I know are inappropriate and will lead to behavior I know from experience to be ultimately self-defeating, and to say “yes” to various other invitations from the circumstances of my life that I feel will be self-sustaining and self-freeing. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 266
Saying “no” was never cool in the days of my addiction. I had to be able to do everything in order to impress people. I needed so desperately for people to like me and I didn’t believe in Higher Power so I couldn’t give the results of saying “no” to God. Never knowing or caring about what was good for me didn’t help much either. Add to that the fear that if I said “no” I would get physically hurt or lose something valuable, and it was almost impossible. I went through life without boundaries. Then S.L.A.A. taught me that I needed to say “no contact” with certain people in my life who were harmful. I needed to stop saying “yes” to inappropriate behavior from myself and others. I needed to say “yes” to self-esteem building actions. In the beginning, I needed help from my fellows to tell the difference between the two. But eventually I learned to recognize what actions were self-sustaining and self-freeing as opposed to being motivated by fear or a need for attention and love. I’m a different person, living in a different world today because of these S.L.A.A. life lessons. I will say “no” when appropriate today and leave the results to Higher Power.

July 8
MEMORIES
In this phase of recovery we found that much of the emotional energy which had been spent on our addiction was now surfacing as feelings and memories that were charged with meaning. More and more of our past pattern of sex and love addiction was being revealed or becoming clearer to us. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 78
I was sharing a nice night with my husband recently and a classic song came on the radio. It reminded me of my past relationship. I wanted to run into the next room and watch TV to hide. But I remembered how difficult that relationship was and what an addict I was in it. And I saw how beautiful my relationship is now. Memories can either send me into longing for the past and a “do-over” or make me realize my character defects and mistakes. Before sobriety, I always chose longing even if it was a fantasy. I was addicted to that type of emotional pain. Now that I have practiced self-care and can recognize self-destructive behavior, I can either pull myself out of longing with reality or ask sober fellows or Higher Power to help. When memories pop up from out of nowhere, it can be difficult to see reality. That’s why I need to practice staying in reality every day. The Fourth and Fifth Steps gave me the tools to do that and the Tenth and Eleventh Steps keep me practicing it.
I will use memories to help my recovery today instead of wandering around morbidly in
the past.

July 9

DISTRACTIONS
The original quest for distraction from life’s tensions and responsibilities, for relief from
past guilt and present frustration, now led us into oblivion. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 69
Distraction is my drug of choice. My favorite thing to do at a party was to get so drunk
that I could barely lift my head and I could just watch the people around me like they
were a live movie. I can’t just sit and watch TV without a video game in my hand. It
numbs me out from the realization that I should be doing something else like cleaning
the house or paying bills. In my active sex and love addiction past guilt and present
frustration were so dramatic that I felt entitled to the relief of sexual oblivion. It was
much better than the alternative. But that oblivion was sand through my fingers. The
emotional hangover left me depressed and craving more like a drug addict coming
down from a high. Eventually it made me suicidal. I needed the tools of S.L.A.A. to help
me find my purpose in life. Today I feel useful working with sponsees and being of
service to my meetings. I still want to bathe in distractions every day, but I catch myself
and take contrary action. Doing service work that I love lifts me up.

When I start drifting into distraction today, I will look for ways to be of service.

July 10

CONTROL
To continue to live out our addictive patterns, or to be controlled by them, brought us in
touch with the terror of irrevocably losing sanity…We now began to confront the second
aspect of powerlessliness: the paradox that surrender to the impossibility of control is the
beginning of recovery. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 70

I knew I had difficulty abstaining from sexual acting out long before I knew the phrase
“acting out.” At the age of ten, I recognized how my pursuit of a sexual high consumed
my time and made me oblivious to all other concerns. I began my first of many self-
imposed moratoriums on acting out, all of which ended with my finally telling myself, “It’s
okay to do it again. I deserve this.” Other times, I created rules for acting out that I felt
would limit the behavior so that I wouldn’t end up engaging in illegal activity. I restricted
myself to specific types of pornography, but I kept modifying my rules until I returned to
my original behavior, dangerously close to taking the step that could have labeled me a
sex offender for life. These methods of self-control never work because I have no
control over my addiction to begin with. The paradox of surrendering to attain victory
makes sense for me, because when I try to control my acting out behavior, I inevitably
lose control again. When I surrender, I am no longer under the impression that I can act
out without falling under the addiction’s power.

I admit my powerlessliness and submit myself to the will and care of my Higher Power.
July 11
ASSUMPTION
Questioning one's attitudes and behavior concerning sexuality and emotional dependency is tantamount to questioning the very ground on which we have been standing - our whole identity as human beings. Our package of assumptions about the world and our own roles in it have had to be upended in the process. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 44
The basic text goes on to say “nothing short of this has been necessary to make us available to new life." Assumption can't exist unless I’m playing mind reader. I heard someone say in a meeting, “When I assume, I make an ass out of u and me.” I think I know what’s right. That's playing God. Only Higher Power knows what’s right. If I run around trying to change everyone and everything, I’m wasting precious time that could be spent finding out God's will and my purpose in life. My package of assumptions about the world was always negative. Everyone was either out to get me or didn’t care about me. I believed this to be true without any real proof. Yes, my boyfriends treated me badly and my parents neglected me, but that didn’t prove that my whole life was doomed. S.L.A.A. taught me to take one day at a time. My sponsor taught me to take people at their word unless they proved otherwise. I had to refrain from stalking and playing detective, thinking I knew what was really going on in any given situation. I couldn’t assume facts not in evidence. God would reveal to me what I needed to see. Everything else was just unnecessary worry and misguided control.
I won’t assume I know what’s best for me today, I will ask for God’s guidance.

July 12
THE ELEVENTH CHARACTERISTIC
To avoid feeling vulnerable, we may retreat from all intimate involvement, mistaking sexual and emotional anorexia for recovery. - S.L.A.A. Core Documents, “Characteristics of Sex and Love Addiction”
In the beginning of sobriety, it may be necessary to retreat from all intimate involvement in order to go into withdrawal and get some clarity. Hopefully we have involvement with sober fellows during this time. But there has to be a point in recovery where we can emerge from isolation and trust that our Twelve-Step work will give us strength to meet life’s challenges. Many newly sober addicts dread dating because it triggers their disease. Fighting anorexia is difficult. The disease may want to rationalize and say turning down dates or social functions is recovery. “I can’t go there because…” may seem rational, but it could mask a true motive which is to avoid the fear of acting out. Perfectionism pops up to say we don’t need to continue down the road to a relationship because whoever we are dating is not right for us. It may be difficult to tell which voice is
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the truth and which is disease. We need to rely on Higher Power and the S.L.A.A. group for guidance in learning the truth and staying out of anorexia.

When I feel vulnerable about my sobriety, I will turn to fellows, God, and Twelve-Step work instead of retreating into isolation.

July 13

TEMPTATION

"Success" in handling temptation was measured only by the outcome. The fact that I did not succumb, rather than the gracefulness (or lack of the same) with which I resisted temptation, was the payoff. Furthermore, the energy available to respond to a temptation...could be used inwardly to increase awareness. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 32

I live in a very “body focused” city where there is a strip club on every corner and the weather allows for beachwear all year round. We also have one of the largest communities of S.L.A.A. My sponsor always told me there is no gracefulness to resisting temptation. You can’t save your face and your ass at the same time. I had to walk out of movie theatres if the movie was too triggering, stare at the ground and mumble like a crazy person and run away if confronted with a qualifier, and fumble out of every situation that could harm my sobriety. Whatever I needed to do to maintain my sobriety was good, even if it made me look like a fool or an outsider. I would learn humility from the situation and have more awareness for the next temptation. Worrying about what other people think is at the core of sex and love addiction. But people in S.L.A.A understood when I shared in meetings about temptations and my resulting awkward responses. Sometimes the laughter healed me and sometimes it helped me avoid a situation or be more graceful in handling it in the future. But I knew when they laughed, they identified. I was part of a loving community of people just like me. I will avoid temptation today and maintain sobriety, no matter how foolish I may look in the process.

July 14

GENUINE

We had made something trivial of "love," with our long lists of those whose names we didn't even know, cheating them and ourselves of anything authentic or genuine. We...had led everyone in our lives to expect from us what we could not or would not deliver. We had been masters of false advertising. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 91

Most of my life I was either so far in denial or so insecure that I needed to lie to the people I was with. I would call them “partners,” but that was a lie. I didn’t even know their names so how could they be a partner? I told myself I was going to nightclubs looking for something genuine and getting upset every time the one night stands didn't deliver a healthy relationship. And if anything ever did last long term, I was still cheating them and myself of anything authentic because I felt I had to lie about myself in order to make them stick around. They would expect me to be the person they saw in the beginning of the relationship-- the one who never angered, had no needs, gave
extravagant gifts, and was always kind and courteous. Meanwhile, I was ignoring everything and piling up resentments. My only outlet was to cheat and find new hope for a better relationship. I couldn’t continue to live my life that way. Worsening depression after every failed relationship was making me suicidal. The Twelve Steps and S.L.A.A. showed me a better way of life. I became the real me. I was able to have boundaries and be consistent. I opened up and became intimate. And instead of empty promises, I made real commitments and kept them. I will avoid false advertising today and be the real me.

July 15
SECRETIVE LOVE
Our lives were divided into carefully segregated compartments, underscored by secrecy and confidentiality. Indeed, we even took pride in our ability to keep a secret...If we were able to manage the maze of intrigue without discovery...then we apparently never had to deal with the consequences of our actions. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 81
Secretive love was very enticing to me. Because I couldn’t tell anyone else about my relationship, it created an “us against the world” bond. “If they found out they would be against us so we have to stick together,” was very exciting, but created a closed relationship. The risk of being found out made my heart race and made planning each meeting very important. I felt like a spy, so intelligent that I was able to “manage the maze of intrigue without discovery.” But I could only talk to him about our relationship. Friends didn’t understand (or I thought they would judge me). Secretive love is not adult, because we don’t confront other people’s disapproval or hurt feelings. I had to keep my true feelings hidden from even myself because if I confronted them I would have to leave the relationship. I wasn’t happy going against my beliefs and I couldn’t even talk to the one I loved about it. I finally told my secret and S.L.A.A. tools helped extricate me from the situation. Today I am in an open, honest relationship where I can be my true self and not worry that the world will come crashing down around me. I will be honest today and not hide from the consequences of my actions. I will face them with strength and self-confidence.

July 16
INTROVERT
My solitude had become precious to me…I had gotten a great deal of insight into myself as an individual, not just as part of a relationship. Most importantly, I had developed a vision of personal wholeness towards which I felt able to grow. – S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 38
Sex and love addiction flourishes in isolation. For an introvert addicted to sex and love, spending time alone can seem like risky behavior. But it is possible to cherish solitude without falling prey to our addiction. The prevailing myth regarding introverts is that we are antisocial and don’t have a lot of friends. In reality, many introverts actually enjoy time spent out in a group, and are capable of developing relationships with a wide array of people. Being an introvert just means that we need more time alone to refresh.
ourselves and be reminded of who we are. Solitude might feel scary at first, but as we wade through the troubling waters of temptation, we find that we need not fear being alone. Freedom from fear is a blessing. It means we can still recharge our batteries without fear of acting out. We might need to make some outreach calls. We might need to relearn how to fill our time. But eventually, we will come to incorporate solitude as a beneficial and necessary part of our recovery. As we relearn what it means to spend time alone, fear will drop away, and we will find comfort in our own company.

I am comfortable in solitude and enjoy spending time with myself.

July 17
ONE DAY AT A TIME
One day at a time. The past is gone, the future isn't here yet. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 265
It’s very difficult to forget about the past or avoid dwelling on the future. We’re told from a young age to plan out our lives. I would constantly worry about the future and obsessively think about the past, wishing I could change outcomes. My 11th Step in S.L.A.A. helped change this. Meditation and prayer allows me to see that I have a Higher Power in my life whom I can trust and have faith that my life is just as it should be in this moment. In meetings, I’m reminded not to tackle my entire recovery all at once. If I take it one day at a time, I can do each Step to the best of my ability and not feel overwhelmed about the rest of the work that I need to do to get to Step 12. And if I’m truly taking it one day at a time, then it’s okay to start over and believe that even slips are learning experiences.
I will live in the moment today and not try to tackle all of life's problems, having faith that God will show me the way.

July 18
THE NINTH TRADITION
S.L.A.A. as such ought never to be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve. - S.L.A.A. Core Documents, “The Twelve Traditions”
Fellowship-wide services, conference committees, intergroup and the ABM were all foreign words to me when I joined S.L.A.A. Even though I didn't care what they meant, these boards and committees were diligently working to make sure S.L.A.A. was there for me and for future newcomers. And they weren't just going about their business doing with our money as they saw fit. They were having conference calls and meetings that anyone could attend. They also took votes to the Fellowship at the Annual Business Meeting and through intergroup reps and the FWS newsletter. Being “directly responsible to those they serve” helps to keep people honest and humble. If someone brings up the idea that someone has overstepped the bounds of their service commitment, there can be a discussion and vote. If that person is replaced they can move on to other service work without retribution. This tradition makes everyone involved more humble and aware. Asking what another person wants and really
listening is a spiritual experience. But with all of this, how can we say we are never organized? We go with the group conscience over set rules and regulations. This can make changes in committees or service positions occur quite often and confuse things for a while. But we need the freedom that voting and communicating ideas brings.

If I find myself getting controlling in my service work, I will remember to whom I am responsible and I will ask what they want.

July 19
DÉJÀ VU
The feverish pitch [of acting out] reached the point at which I began my story, where I felt once again like I had to end it all. It was all too familiar. The patterns were tiresome.

- S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 204

I believe sex and love addicts have a very unique form of déjà vu in that they keep repeating the same patterns and are unable to stop. They repeatedly ask themselves, “How did I get in this situation again?” Or they repeat familial patterns even though they always said they would never be like their parents. When that familiar feeling stops being a vague sense of “having been here before” or “I feel like I’m becoming my mother,” and turns into, “How can I stop doing this?” we are lucky that S.L.A.A. is there for us. The tools of the program help us to stop the destructive patterns and makes the disease release it’s control over our behavior. We don’t have to keep waking up in that depressingly familiar place of hating ourselves and being suicidal or homicidal. We can make choices about who we want to be and where we want to go instead of finding ourselves becoming people we don’t want to be.

I will stay away from familiar self-destructive patterns today. I will seek self-fulfilling actions.

July 20
HAPPINESS
The possibility that no durable happiness or fulfillment could ever come from living out this pointless pattern did not occur to me at all. In fact, the promise of the “next one” being the situation that would make me whole, or complete me in some way, was a carrot that seemed to be forever dangling in front of my nose, coaxing me onward.

- S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 8

In my disease, I never believed in durable happiness. And even if it did exist, it sounded boring. Over-the-top joy and revelry was my goal. But what goes up must come down. That frantic happiness always led to a crash. Sex addiction hides behind love addiction and makes me think that pointless pursuits will lead to wholeness and to fulfillment of promises. My goal was always serenity but reality always burst that bubble. When I tried to harvest happiness from magical thinking, I found only fool’s gold. Living out a pattern
of sex and love addiction seemed like the only way to live life. I felt stuck in that vicious cycle of needing love, thinking I could get it through sex with a stranger and then finding out that I was wrong. S.L.A.A. showed me the road to true lasting happiness. It’s not over-the-top and not always there. But chasing that feeling and needing it all the time is what got me into trouble in the first place (an addiction to happiness)!
I will find fulfillment in life using the tools of S.L.A.A. and Higher Power’s guidance.

July 21
FINANCIAL DEPENDENCY
I chose to focus on the romance of supporting the “starving artist” both financially and emotionally. I loved being needed, and I thought that by filling that need we would be bonded for life. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 50
Romance and finance are usually intertwined. Every marriage article I’ve ever read focuses on what to do about finances and that it can cause relationship trouble. It’s when we expect money in exchange for sex or love or flirt to make more money instead of relying on the merits of our work that we get into trouble. Sex and love addiction twists a normal problem into an upside down way of looking at a relationship. When I’m fearful of not making enough money for my survival, I look for people to rescue me. Using my sex and love addict behaviors is an easy way out and I’m lazy. But in that case, my financial rescuer always has control. That always made me feel insecure; I was on the whim of my rescuer, which is shaky ground. But if I am compensated for my talents and do a good job, it builds my self-esteem and I stand on solid ground, knowing that I can work someplace else if I don’t like the conditions of my workplace.
I will rely on God and my talents to take care of financial fear today.

July 22
MONOGAMY
The cumulative effect of this continued questioning of our sexual myths and motivations was that a climate of trust and emotional intimacy began to evolve. — S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 158
I always said, “How boring that some people stay with one person for the rest of their lives,” and, “Everybody cheats so why not beat them to the punch?” I used this as an excuse to steal husbands and boyfriends and to cheat on my lovers. Addiction twisted my ideals and perceptions. I believed the more sexual partners I had, the more self-esteem I would gain. And having multiple partners would give me the power in all my relationships. It ended up creating the opposite scenario. I was spiritually sick. S.L.A.A. showed me how to stop searching for love in empty relationships. Finding a Higher Power’s guidance and unconditional love has allowed me to stop my endless search for attention and affection. But when I finally was able to find and commit to my true partner in life, all of the scary intimacy issues came up. Responsibility, honesty, and openness were never my strong suits. Doing a Tenth and Eleventh Step every day helped me maintain a level of emotional intimacy that I never thought myself capable of. The
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Twelve Steps and Higher Power gave me the humility and gratitude to be able to maintain a healthy monogamous relationship for more than a decade so far. I will no longer fear or loath monogamy, knowing that Higher Power can give me strength if I ask.

July 23
SPONSOR DIRECTION
With our sponsor, we begin to address recurring problems. Our sponsor helps guide us through the rough passages many of us experience as a result of letting go of our addiction...[and] shares his or her own experience and feelings from having been in situations similar to ours, taking care not to give advice. - from the “Sponsorship: A Return from Isolation” pamphlet.

I’ve always thought of sponsor direction as following the path in program that my sponsor took. She always said to me, “This is my experience and my opinion. You can always do it your way but this is what I see in this situation.” She was able to see reality much more clearly than I could with my addict eyes. Because of her guidance, I never said to my sponsees, “Do this or I’ll fire you.” I’ve heard of people doing that and maybe that’s what they needed at the time. I believe we find the sponsor we need. Our sponsor guides us through the steps and tells us how they stayed sober through tough times, and/or how they handled breaking their bottom lines. Listening and learning from their experience can help us avoid the pain of making the same mistakes. Some people listen, but their addiction is so strong they do it anyway. That’s when the sponsor guides them to the steps and actions that will help them get back to sobriety.

I will listen to my sponsor today and draw from their experience, strength and hope.

July 24
PARADOX
Minus the guilt, our experiences in addiction had been transformed into lessons for living of profound depth and durability...The paradox was that our usefulness as channels for healing was a direct result of our experiences in sickness as well as in recovery. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 102

It doesn’t seem logical that hiding from people we love would help us. But taking a break from a qualifier can lead to sobriety. There are a lot of paradoxes in S.L.A.A.: Surrendering to Higher Power gives us freedom; withdrawal helps us have healthier relationships; pain helps us grow. The dictionary definition of a paradox is a self-contradictory or ridiculous statement that nevertheless proves to be true. I felt like my sponsor and people in meetings were making those kinds of statements all the time.
Whenever I expressed that feeling to my sponsor, she cautioned me against contempt prior to investigation. I needed to stick around long enough to see that the statements were true. The Basic Text and my sponsor explained a lot and investigation led me to experiences that proved most of the paradoxes true. And usually when I was thinking something sounded absurd in program, I was just afraid of doing it or that I wasn’t good enough for it to come true for me. S.L.A.A. and trust in a Higher Power helped me find the self-esteem to have hope that the paradoxes would come true - and they did. When confronted with a paradox today, I will ask other S.L.A.A. members their experience and have faith that Higher Power will guide me.

July 25

HEALTHY RISK-TAKING

I described the pain brought about by these addictive patterns of compulsive sexual activity and emotional intrigue...Sharing these things, regardless of whether I was met with sympathy, envy, or vilification, helped me immensely. It was by taking these risks that I continued to develop perspective on much that had happened to me. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 34

There are many healthy risks to take in sobriety: Asking someone we’re attracted to out on a date, following a dating plan even though we risk ridicule or losing someone, sharing at meetings, being completely honest and vulnerable, trusting a partner, etc. It is when we take the risk and let the chips fall where they may that we know we truly trust a Higher Power and have found self-esteem. When we show our true selves, it’s possible that people will dislike us and walk away. S.L.A.A. tools give us the strength to be honest anyway. We know it’s a healthy risk if we’re in self-care as we take it. Reaching out to fellows and our sponsor and doing inventories around the risk are all actions to ensure we aren’t doing something unhealthy. Ensuring our emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being isn’t about hiding out in anorexia; it’s about living in the world. And that involves risks. As long as we continue to do 12-Step work, we will be able to handle it.

I will identify and take healthy risks today knowing that Higher Power is with me. And I will pray for the strength to handle the outcome, whatever it is.

July 26

THE TWELFTH SIGN

We are restored to sanity, on a daily basis, by participating in the process of recovery. - S.L.A.A. Core Documents, “S.L.A.A. Signs of Recovery”

I hear it all the time in meetings – insane sex and love addict behavior that could get us locked up or sent to a mental hospital. But the greatest insanity was in my mind when I was alone, trying to control this disease. When I participate in the process of recovery, I am no longer alone with the crazy voices in my head. It’s the things that my addict voices tell me will fix the situation that I battle every day. Those voices are only my disease trying to keep me sick. This sign of recovery says “daily basis” because every morning I need to start anew and keep working my program. Morning meditation, writing
in my journal, reading recovery books or calling a fellow starts my day off right. When confronted with difficult situations, I need to take my character defects out of it to the best of my ability. I try to recognize my part as quickly as possible. If I allow myself to get mired in the mud of fantasy, the addict voices find a way in. Higher Power and fellows can clear them out for me.
I will participate in my life today by taking part in the process of recovery.

July 27
THE MOTHERSHIP
Since the beginning of Alcoholics Anonymous in 1935, the Twelve Steps of that fellowship’s program of recovery have been adapted to a wide variety of human problems. Among these are gambling, overeating, smoking, narcotics abuse and child abuse. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page vii

Our program is based on the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts of A.A. Our founder, Rich, was a sober member of A.A. That’s where he found many prospects to grow this Fellowship. Whenever we have a problem in S.L.A.A. conference committees, it’s not uncommon that someone will ask, “How does A.A. do it?” In the introduction of Chapter 4 in the S.L.A.A. Basic Text, the adaptation of the Program of A.A. to sex and love addiction is explained. A.A. literature is recommended with the suggestion that we “substitute the words ‘our addiction’ or ‘sex and love addiction’ for the direct references to alcoholism in those books.” I struggled for four years to get sober in S.L.A.A. I was also sober in A.A. My sponsor told me I should let my sponsee go because I was acting out in S.L.A.A. She refused. So, we met each week and read the Big Book of A.A. One alcoholic’s story about burning down a barn revealed to me in stark reality the seriousness of my own sex and love addiction. I burned down the barn of my life over and over again because of this disease. I was able to get and stay sober immediately after that.
I will look to the Program of A.A. for guidance in S.L.A.A. matters, knowing the Program has a lot of experience, strength, and hope to share.

July 28
SEXUAL ABUSE
Like other people, we had been life’s victims in many respects. Many of us had memories of emotional deprivation or of being physically or even sexually abused...our feelings about these events had hardened into a great bitterness which we held for those people who had mistreated us. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 90

I spent a lifetime hating my abusers and using the abuse to explain why God didn’t exist. I was angry and distrustful of the world. Why live in a world where abuse exists? I couldn’t face the pain. I numbed it with drugs and dangerous sex. It didn’t matter that I was putting my life at risk; I didn’t want to be here anyway. I wasted my life on that excuse. I didn’t have to work towards goals or even happiness because I had the monolith of abuse blocking my path. Every time I tried to change, I was plunged into depression. I thought the hole was too large to climb out of. I couldn’t see that recovery
June 29
MIXED MESSAGES
As much as she had invested in her fantasy of me and the super-human role I was supposed to fill in her life, she was nevertheless starting to be aware of my emotional inconsistency...The commitment marriage would require was impossible, but so was doing without her. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 8
It's difficult to avoid mixed messages when sex and love addiction has got us by the throat. We want to be consistent and clear, but the addiction won't allow it. One day we profess undying love and the next refuse to answer any calls. Most addicts may attempt commitment or fidelity but get stopped in their tracks by fears of withdrawal. It can feel like death to an addict to abstain from indulgence. Fantasies take over and we think we want one thing and then reality kicks in and we realize the error in thinking. Vulnerability and intimacy gets shut down and the ones we love are left dazed and confused. Sometimes we play a role to try and have strength and mask how we are really feeling. We act like we don't care when inside we're full of insecurity and doubt. The steps of S.L.A.A., in combination with prayer and meditation, helps us calm the stormy emotions. We can actually be consistent instead of acting like we are. Program helps us see our true emotions and stick to our values. We are finally able to make and keep commitments and be emotionally consistent.
I will be conscious of mixed messages today and pray for balance.

July 30
SLIP DREAMS
In this dream I fought a gorilla, my addiction, for possession of a very nice and precious pocketknife. The gorilla was tremendously strong, and clenched this knife in his fist. I had never been without this knife and was incensed that this brute could have taken it from me. – S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 33
When we first go through the process of withdrawal, it’s likely that our addiction will try to reach us in our dreams. We may wake up feeling terrified at having acted out in our subconscious, or we may feel a strong urge to carry these acts out in real life. When we put a sudden stop to a long pattern of addictive behavior, it's going to take our body and mind a little while to catch up. Slip dreams can feel very real and leave us feeling off
balance. As time goes on, we may experience a variety of dreams, including those in which recovery seeps through and we resist the urge. However, our dreams may manifest themselves, they are not a reflection of our progress in recovery. The true measure is how we handle ourselves once we’ve woken up. If we feel triggered, we can talk to someone in the program or share about it in a meeting. Talking about the experience can take away some of its power. The dream, just like any trigger, will fade from memory with time.

I have no control over my dreams, but I do have a choice as to how I act on them.

July 31

TOLERANCE

There were good moments together and some actually intimate sharing, but neither of us was healthy or mature enough to survive the disagreements, to work through our differences and to engage in a true partnership. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 207

True partnership requires the willingness to tolerate another person's ideas, opinions, and behavior even if I don't agree with it. In my toxic sex and love addict relationships, this was impossible to do. Regardless of the fact that I didn’t have the patience to tolerate anything, the partners I chose always had outrageous or dangerous behavior. Tolerance worked against me. For some reason, I could tolerate bad behavior better than a simple difference of opinion on something fairly irrelevant. If a potential partner wanted to have an intimate conversation, I ran. Working through differences in a relationship usually involved violence. My work in S.L.A.A. changed all of that for me. The Traditions were there to support me in my service work. The idea of following group conscience even when I disagreed helped me keep commitments. I was no longer alone with my thoughts, thinking I was the only person with any good ideas. Like my sponsor pointed out to me, my good ideas always got me into trouble anyway, so why not give other people's ideas a try? I've found that Higher Power is always there to catch us if we fall.

I will tolerate differences of opinion today, but not dangerous behavior.

August 1

SELF-AWARENESS

I could become capable of making some decisions about how to live my life. This would now be based on the discovery of who and what I really was, which might emerge during my time alone, in full awareness of my addictive past. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 23

It’s difficult to be self-aware when all I do is think about myself! Sounds contradictory, but it’s true. When ego gets in the way and makes us use sex and love addiction to get our needs met, it clouds our judgement. Is it really a need or only a desire that might
hurt us in the long run? Being aware, for me, meant looking at both my character assets and defects in my Fourth Step. I had to take time alone in withdrawal to really do some self-reflection and meditation and prayer. People would mention things in meetings that really resonated with me and I’d ask myself if I had the same behaviors or characteristics. They would usually give good strategies for dealing with problems, even if it was simply the act of sharing with the group in that moment. And work with sponsees revealed my own areas to work on in my character. After withdrawal and a period of sobriety and a lot of work getting to know myself, I found that self-awareness could only be maintained by listening to others and not putting up a wall of self-defense and taking things personally. If I truly look at a criticism and level-headedly decide if it’s true or not, I can glean insight about myself. Being able to humbly admit my errors is key.

I will work on becoming more self-aware today, not letting ego get in the way, asking Higher Power to direct my thinking.

August 2
SEX DRIVE
This loss of one's soul could only be all the more poignant if the body in which it lived continued to exist, unanimated spiritually from within, and monstrously driven by imperious instinctual drives which would now have become its masters. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 70

Instinctual drives are the masters of an unanimated body. Being a slave to my sex drive was not something I signed up for in my fantasies, which were dressed up as romance. And I didn't know that because of my sex and love addiction I would end up a shell of a human being. I lost my soul to addiction. No wonder I turned to suicide as an alternative. But the instinctual drives still kept me searching for one night stands, rationalizing that I was looking for “the one.” This situation was not poignant to me at the time because I didn’t think God existed. But after my spiritual experience in S.L.A.A., I look back at the young me with compassion. The words of the S.L.A.A. Basic Text ring true for me now: “S.L.A.A. and God can save me if I put them first before my sex drive and my need for love. I believe that all my needs will be met if I practice a spiritual approach to life.”

I will put God first today and be grateful that I am no longer a shell of a human being.

August 3
THE EIGHTH STEP
Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all. - S.L.A.A. Core Documents, “The Twelve Steps of S.L.A.A.”
Some believe that this Step is just a shadow of the Ninth. But this is a very important step that needs caution and thoroughness. I had a friend who made the list and ran right out to make her amends before talking to her sponsor. She ended up acting out. My sponsor had me create 3 lists, people I would: 1. make amends to now, 2. make amends to later, and 3. never want to make amends to. We discussed each one in
depth. The people in my “never” category were my blocks to willingness. I had fear of letting them go or was holding onto resentments and felt they needed to pay for their crimes. Why should I apologize to these horrible human beings? It helped to pray for both the people I resented as well as the ones I couldn’t let go of to get everything they wanted. It hurt to pray for my married qualifier to get a happy family life without me, but it helped me let go of the fantasy. And it didn’t seem right to pray that the person that I had a horrible resentment against to get what they wanted, but it made them more human and made me realize that there was enough in God’s world for everyone. And I prayed for them to get recovery (which makes the world a better place when spiritually sick people get better).

I will pray for the willingness to make amends to those I have harmed, putting out of my mind the harms done to me.

August 4
SOCIAL PRESSURE
I never wanted to have children at all, just as I had never wanted to be married. Such situations represented bondage to me. Increasing responsibility could only impinge on my ability to pursue sexual and romantic adventure. It was society that was sick, I thought, trying to force bondage upon me. S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 11.

Social pressure is difficult for a sex and love addict to live up to. We have so many excuses for why we should be different and/or can’t do it society’s way. We don’t want to conform. We want to be special - to stand out from the crowd. Social pressure can motivate people to achieve. But it only gets in the way of a sex and love addict’s acting out “adventures.” That’s why so many addict behaviors are in the shadows. I always looked at social pressure as a negative thing, making me hide. But in sobriety I look at it as a system of checks and balances to see if I’m on the right track. I ask myself, “If society would look down on me for doing this, should I be doing it?” I write a pros and cons list, check with my sponsor and fellows, and pray. If the answer is yes, I should do it anyway, then I do it. Sometimes social pressure is bad, trying to make us do things we shouldn’t do (that don’t fit for us). But now that I have Higher Power’s guidance in my life, I can see what’s right for me.

I will be motivated to do what is right for me, asking for and using Higher Power’s guidance.

August 5
POETIC LOVE
“Engaging in romantic obsession distorts our perceptions. In the height of our obsession, we may: see the object of our obsession as someone other than who s/he really is; project qualities onto the person that s/he doesn’t have.” From the Romantic Obsession pamphlet.

Sounds a lot like poetry doesn’t it? The classical poets often wrote about people who were dead! Love at first sight or overly romantic love can happen. I see it in the movies all the time. But that’s not real. Maintaining communication with another human being
who has their own thoughts and feelings is hard work. Especially for a self-centered addict like me. Lovers in the pages of a book or on the movie screen are much easier to handle (or so I thought). Dr. Zhivago looked much different to me when I watched it in sobriety. I never realized it was a movie about politics, war, and family. I was too busy concentrating on the poetic love that eventually killed the main character. I get into trouble when I believe in the fantasy of someone and start to obsess. I need realistic expectations to keep me rooted in reality and sobriety. If I allow myself to go flying off into the clouds, I'm lost. Prayer, meditation, and contact with sober S.L.A.A. members keeps me tethered and sane.

If I start fantasizing about love today, I will reach out to a fellow S.L.A.A. member and ask Higher Power for help in prayer and meditation.

August 6
VALIDATION
Affirming signs of growing self-esteem: Replacing feelings of self-loathing with an appreciation of self; being able to accept a compliment or kind word; being able to recognize and acknowledge our accomplishments; being able to be with ourselves in solitude with a degree of comfort. - from the "Measuring Progress" pamphlet
Parking in my city is horrible. I have a friend in recovery who would wander around whenever he got a parking card saying, "I am seeking validation," We both knew what that really meant! Seeking validation isn't bad unless we're addicted to it and will do anything (including high risk behavior) in order to get it – especially from unavailable people. And when we learn to give ourselves validation, we have a much stronger foundation for self-acceptance. My disease loves to tell me I'm a piece of crap. In early recovery, when people complimented me, I explained to them all the reasons they were wrong. If I did something good, my perfectionism would step in to point out all the mistakes I made. Validation used to come through how much sexual attention I would get. But that didn’t allow me to feel comfortable in solitude. When I wasn’t getting constant outside validation, I felt like a desperate fraud. And when I was in a relationship, if my partner even hinted at a problem, there was big drama! Program taught me the difference between validation for ego and for healthy self-esteem. In recovery, I look for opportunities for the latter.
I will not look for validation outside of myself today. I will take esteemable actions for myself.

August 7
COMMUNICATION
I recall no greater loneliness than that of being with someone I supposedly loved without any deep, positive communication going on, or even being possible, between us! It’s far lonelier than being by oneself. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 8
Some of the loneliest times of my life were when someone was sitting right there beside me. I couldn’t turn to them and say what I was truly feeling because I was afraid they would run away in horror. When I felt anger, I suppressed it as long as I could and
eventually had to express it in huge dramatic scenes. I couldn’t let my childhood stuff come up because no one wants to deal with that baggage. Communication was difficult at first. I would immediately hate the rooms of S.L.A.A. after sharing openly about my pain. I would get paranoid that everyone disliked me and was plotting to kick me out. And I wanted to punch my therapist for making me remember trauma. When I found it particularly difficult to communicate with someone, my sponsor in S.L.A.A. told me to write down everything I wanted to say and read it to her first and then the other person. I could read my thoughts right off the paper. That was a novel idea to me. I always thought you had to look someone in the eye and talk spontaneously in order to communicate. In that case, I could never get the words out. Communicating in this way was awkward but the only way I could deal with difficult issues at first. It became easier with practice and now I can look people in the eye and tell them how I feel.
I will communicate with those close to me today without fear of repercussions, knowing that Higher Power is present in every situation.

August 8
THE NINTH CHARACTERISTIC
We avoid responsibility for ourselves by attaching ourselves to people who are emotionally unavailable. - S.L.A.A. Core Documents, “Characteristics of Sex and Love Addiction”
When I was trying to fix my partner, I didn’t have time to look at my childhood issues or fix the problems with my career, or even do the laundry! And trying to help an emotionally unavailable person feeds my addiction to drama. Situations can get very dramatic when confronting someone who doesn’t want to deal with emotions. It’s interesting that this characteristic uses the word “attaching.” The unavailable person doesn’t want me insinuating myself in his/her life. In this ninth characteristic situation, I wasted a lot of valuable time investigating and chasing my partner around. I might as well admit I was stalking! When I came to S.L.A.A. I didn’t want to admit that that was a characteristic of my addiction. That’s just a normal relationship, right? But there it was in black and white in the characteristics. One meeting that I went to even printed each characteristic in a huge font on an 8.5 x 11 sheet of paper and had everyone share on it! I couldn’t ignore it anymore. I had to start looking at myself instead of my partner’s faults. And no one allowed me to just sit there and complain; I had to get into action with the steps.
When I find myself concentrating on others today, I will take a step back, check how I am feeling, and meditate.

August 9
EMOTIONAL ABUSE
Using film heroes as my models, I decided that if I never showed my feelings, I'd get what I wanted, that if I was abusive towards women they would be secretly smitten. Adoring me for abusing them, they would cling to me and never leave. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 2
One day after hearing my mom yell at my dad ceaselessly, I asked her why she was so mean to him. Her reply was, “I always thought being mean made him stay.” My parents were together since they were 14 and my dad would do anything for my mom. But they were miserable. I felt sorry for my dad. And that way of going about relationships never worked for me anyway. I kept finding myself in situations where I was being physically and emotionally abused. I ignored emotional abuse, because at least they weren’t hitting me. And I was so desperate for them to stay that I felt I needed to put up with anything. I was so used to self-abuse in my addictions that it seemed okay if I was with a partner who lashed out in anger or told me I was fat when he saw me eating fast food. Listening to people share in the rooms of S.L.A.A. and working the steps made me realize that I needed to get out of any relationship that wasn’t loving and that included my relationship with myself. I needed to stop the emotional abuse in my mind first. I will not put up with emotional abuse today. I will remember that God loves me and love myself enough to walk away.

August 10
TABOO
The brave new worlds of morality where "anything goes" because "nothing matters" boomeranged leaving us grasping for some residual meaning or reality in life. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 69
Is society intolerant, or are people who break taboos acting out of a psychological compulsion? When engaging in so-called illicit behavior, sometimes the lines of morality are blurred because of society’s ever-changing view toward sex and love. The sharp differences of sexually accepted modes of expression can be cultural, generational, even historical. What might be taboo behavior for one society may be permissible for another. I don’t have to know what’s right for others, but I can define what’s right for me. I don’t have to continually chase the forbidden just because it entices me. I no longer feel the need to engage in illegal or antisocial behavior in order to look cool in the eyes of a potential lover. By turning it over to a Higher Power, talking with my sponsor and working the Steps, I can define healthy behavior that serves me. I might also realize actual ways to confront intolerance, ways that no longer disconnect me and create more intolerance. I no longer listen to the addict voice that tells me “nothing matters,” because I know Higher Power’s got a plan that includes me. I will not engage in an “anything goes” attitude today. I know that Higher Power’s will is important to my life.

August 11
TAKING THINGS PERSONALLY
We still seemed unable to respond in kind, often coming up against our own inner blocks, which kept experiences of genuine trust and caring at arm’s length… God’s grace would give us freedom from the burden of our old self. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 86
2017 AGENDA Appendix B
Motions and Items for Discussion
2017 S.L.A.A. Annual Business Meeting,
July 25 – 28, 2017
Fourth Version – July 25, 2017

I had a friend who always told me I “needed to get a thicker skin.” I would fly off the handle at every little thing. “This person is doing this to me,” was my mantra. Everyone was out to get me in this world because I thought it was all about me - and in a negative way. Sometimes people aren’t even thinking about me! I used to even think people in S.L.A.A. meetings were sharing “at” me. My sponsor had to repeatedly tell me that I wasn’t the center of the universe. I needed to get over myself and look for ways to be of service. Being of service at the Intergroup and Conference Committee levels really taught me to stop taking things personally. I saw people listening to the group conscience and making amends if their behavior negatively affected the group. They stuck around and continued to be of service in situations where I would have run. They had a sense of themselves as important in God’s world but still just part of the team. Seeking Higher Power’s will in every situation helps me to realize that I am a small part of a plan and I don’t need to control everything.

I will not take things personally today and know that others have their own Higher Power. They take care of themselves. I will do so as well.

August 12
MEETINGS
A meeting can...serve as a focal point for sharing experience, strength and hope concerning recovery from sex and love addiction, a place to which new people can be directed...Working with others was the best way to thwart that erosion of consciousness which...was such a characteristic of the disease. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 121
I used to go to three 12-Step meetings a day. That was the only place I felt relief from my various addictions. I always gathered strength to continue in my recovery from the small group of people in those cramped meeting rooms. I would complain about the coffee or the uncomfortable seats at first. But as the meeting went on, all those concerns melted away. I heard stories of strength and courage. I usually heard exactly what I needed to hear to help me in that moment with whatever I was going through. I saw people with light in their eyes who no longer walked around in the fog of addiction. Most of them had service commitments at the meeting. There were treasurers, greeters, secretaries, and S.L.A.A. literature sales commitments. Working as a team, they make sure there is a place for newcomers and old-timers to go and help each other recover. I am always grateful that there are meetings available in my area. That wasn’t the case in previous years. I had to struggle to get to a meeting. But it taught me more discipline than I had ever had before. When I really needed a meeting, I had to do the work. Like my sponsor used to say, “If your pants are on fire, don’t debate it, just jump in the river.” I will attend S.L.A.A. meetings regularly to aid my recovery with the experience, strength, and hope that can be found there.

August 13
SITTING WITH FEELINGS
When the pain comes now, I don’t automatically resort to a sexual thought or solution. I have time to process the feelings and to realize they can’t overwhelm me, by going to
either my higher Power or a member of the S.L.A.A. Fellowship for help. – S.L.A.A.

Basic Text, Page 205

I was addicted to drama, adrenaline, and busyness. Sitting with feelings meant boredom and pain (or at least discomfort) - things I avoided at all costs. I really did think I would die from overwhelming feelings. Early in recovery, I had panic attacks that would blind me. I had swirling lights in my eyes and if it caught me on the freeway I would drive blindly until it passed (thank God for bumper to bumper traffic). I found a coworker who was willing to walk with me until I was able to cry and able to see again. All the feelings that I avoided with addiction were coming up and I had to just let them. I didn’t go back to my old behaviors. One day at a time, I got better by turning my feelings over to God and trusting I was in a safe place. Because the 12-step process helped bring these feelings to the surface and replaced unhealthy behaviors with recovery, the feelings that I sit with today are much easier to deal with.

I will not act out on my feelings today. I will feel safe in knowing that the feelings will pass and that I have God and S.L.A.A. for support.

August 14
AFTER WITHDRAWAL

We had seen that it was possible for us to live through the pain of withdrawal without returning to our old patterns, and we sensed that the Power to do this was coming from outside ourselves. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 76

When will I get through withdrawal? When can I start dating again? When can I have sex again? These are some of the questions we may ask ourselves when going through the necessary pain of withdrawal. And the answer to all of them will come when we are able to stop asking them. There are no definite timelines where withdrawal is concerned. As the S.L.A.A. Basic Text suggests, when we are no longer obsessed with these questions then we are through the process of withdrawal and perhaps healthy enough to begin an intimate relationship. Once the pain of withdrawal lessens, do we come out into the sunlight thinking we are cured? Do we think, Well, I’ll never do that again, I’ve learned my lesson, and give ourselves permission to rest? It’s good to be grateful for getting through withdrawal but it’s not time to retire. Meetings where we can share our experience will help newcomers see the light at the end of the tunnel. There is hope for coming out of withdrawal a whole person! And hearing newcomers in the pain of withdrawal will remind us that we never want to or have to go back to that if we stay on the path of recovery.

I will be grateful for my reprieve from withdrawal and will try to help others.

August 15
STALKING

Engaging in romantic obsession distorts our perceptions, obscures reality, promotes self-destructive behaviors and stops us from fully engaging in life. - from the “Romantic Obsession” pamphlet
“No. You can’t drive by his house just to see if his car is there,” said my sponsor. “That’s stalking.” How could she use such a harsh word? It may be harsh, but it woke me up. I had a distorted perception that it wasn’t hurting anyone. What if my boyfriend had found out that I was doing that? He would think I was crazy, would be mad that I didn’t trust him, and would stop trusting me as a consequence. The obsession with him was obscuring reality. It was creating a fantasy world where he was probably cheating on me when I already knew him to be a trustworthy person. How could I go so quickly from believing I chose the right partner to convinced he’s a cheater? Love addiction. Control. Living in fantasyland. I get so bored with reality and being kind to myself that I need to stir up trouble. Stalking takes up all my time so that I don’t have to fully engage in life. The distorted thinking is that if I’m trying my best and fail in life’s achievements, then I’m a failure. But if I have the excuse of love addiction, then it’s not my fault. I had to let it be what it was and be okay with even failure before I could get and stay sober. I will stick to my side of the street today and trust that I chose the right path for me. I will live in reality.

August 16
THE SECOND TRADITION
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. - S.L.A.A. Core Documents, “The Twelve Traditions”
When I started doing service at the conference committee and Annual Business Meeting level, I wanted to take charge and change everything to make it more “efficient.” I thought, “If people would only see that my way is better, we’d get things done.” My sponsor reminded me that other people are not me and they have their own way of doing things. Everyone has an opinion, that doesn’t mean it’s right for everyone. That’s why we pray and meditate about choices. And the group votes on anything that is brought to a motion. I have to listen to what the group decides, whether I like it or not. And if I don’t like it, I know it can change because of rotation of service. When the secretary of a meeting could be voted out in six months, they don’t accrue too much power. I think it’s interesting that this Tradition says a “loving God” is the ultimate authority. My Higher Power used to be some all-powerful, all-knowing, heavy-handed, punishing God. But the groups in S.L.A.A. were always loving. Even during arguments in a group conscience, someone could call thirty seconds of silence to get us to meditate on our Higher Power’s intent. Usually, people came out of the silence with a better perspective. I will be a trusted servant today and listen to the group conscience.
August 17

MEDITATION

Meditation could be a formal time set aside for that purpose, or simply a moment of quiet listening, stilling our own thoughts to allow God’s ideas to slip into awareness. The style or amount of time devoted to this was unimportant, as long as it was frequent enough to be a regular part of our day. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 100

Before S.L.A.A., meditation seemed like some magical thing that only transcendent beings participated in. I was too tough for that. So when my meeting added 10 minutes of silent meditation, I would sit and make lists of what to do later that day. Sometimes I would have conversations with people in my mind. My thoughts were screaming 2-year-olds running around in my head. And whenever I could quiet my thoughts, there was a block to allowing God’s ideas to slip into awareness. Maybe it was insecurity - thinking that I wasn’t good enough for God to ever speak to. Or maybe it was not trusting God enough to help me. And I spent a lot of time debating whether people could tell the difference between God’s will and their own. I needed to remember that I couldn’t put my intellect to work on spiritual matters. The slogan “Don’t debate it, you’ll lose,” helped me put thoughts aside and concentrate on stilling my mind. The more practice I got, the easier it became. Today I concentrate on my breathing during meditation and imagine myself pushing thoughts out. I ask for God’s will and pause to listen. I will practice quiet listening today and ask for Higher Power’s guidance.

August 18

CLOSURE

[The] wish to clean up the messy, incomplete feelings, which were so common in our addictive relationships, however, could only result in “falling under the ether” of our addiction once again. Of course, it was often necessary to break off some relationships, or otherwise set some situations involving others right, early in sobriety. In such cases we found that writing a simple letter to these people was safest. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 92

I told my sponsor I needed to speak to my qualifier one last time to get closure. He said, “It’s over. There’s your closure.” I don’t need to go back to my disease one last time for any reason. Life is unpredictable. The only way to get closure on a relationship sometimes is to do the inventories and steps around it and give it to Higher Power. I can give myself a firm answer when doubts creep in about ending a relationship. But no matter what I say or do to end a relationship, the longing can stick around for years and crop up when least expected. S.L.A.A. takes the strength out of the memories and gives us the tools to stay away when necessary. I try not to get into the “what ifs.” That fantasy makes me open the door to a situation that is best kept shut. Buying into the delusion that I could have made it work is just self-will run riot. If I seek God’s will, I can stay away from the destructive relationship one day at a time.
I will stay out of the “what ifs” today and have faith that Higher Power has my best interests at heart. If I feel the need for closure, I will write about it, talk to fellows, and give it to Higher Power.

August 19

PROJECTION

I tried to deal with [the fear of her having sex or intrigue with others] by rationalizing it as being the projection onto her of my own wayward behavior and attitudes. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 17

It’s come to my attention recently that every time I find fault with anyone, I always have the same characteristics. I’ve chosen people in my life that have big character defects that I can hide behind and point at them. I feel such indignation that I have to endure their grievous character defects. I have a friend who I think is a show off. Lately I’ve realized I have the same issue. My Higher Power and my sponsor and my meetings are helping me see that in every single case I have those very shortcomings. The reason the person is in my life is probably to bring to light aspects of my character that I’m not capable of acknowledging. Sometimes I think it’s okay for me to express my defects the way that I do, because I’m not as bad as the other people in my life. I’m coming to a whole other level of accountability and realizing how I’ve impacted other people’s lives. I always projected that it was someone else’s fault. As the saying goes, “You spot it, you got it.” I’m finally able to look at my defects and surrender them to my Higher Power. If I am preoccupied with the defects of others, I will take a personal inventory and admit my own flaws.

August 20

PATIENCE

We might have asked to have the shortcoming of impatience removed, only to find that we did not need to practice patience. Instead, we had to get honest about our self-centered willfulness. As we practiced thoughtfulness towards others, really giving without holding onto the expectation of reward, impatience slipped away. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 88

I always used to say, “Patience is not my strong suit.” I thought that would get me off the hook for a lot of self-centered behavior. In my mind, patience was really laziness or weakness. If I’m not constantly going after what I want, I’ll never get it. As a child it was just a way for my parents to tell me, “No.” If they told me to be patient, I knew I wouldn’t get what I wanted. I usually threw a fit instead. That’s understandable for a child, but it kept happening into my thirties! Those dramatic scenes always killed whatever building blocks to intimacy I had created. Had I stepped back, listened, and waited, I might have been able to make that connection with another human being that I so desperately craved. But the addict voices and cravings made that impossible. Feeding the addictive urges took precedence over all sober virtues. It was only because I went through withdrawal and started practicing service that I was able to gain any patience.
when I find myself getting impatient, I pray and meditate and choose quietness instead of something outside of myself to calm the cravings.
I will practice patience today and know that everything happens in God's time, not my own.

August 21
"NOT MY TYPE"
There is great therapeutic value to being around a wide spectrum of people...Being around very attractive people within S.L.A.A. has forced us, within this sanctuary, to begin to learn how to interact more humanly with those who would have been cast as "types," on the outside. – S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 132
After doing the Twelve Steps in S.L.A.A. and working a rigorous Program, I married a man who was not my type. In my disease, I always chose dangerous and emotionally unstable men. Trying to fix them was a challenge. I felt too insecure to even consider chasing after a successful, self-sufficient, or self-confident man. I would complain constantly and play the victim. When I discovered that I had value as a human being in the rooms of S.L.A.A., I began healing from objectification. Not knowing what other S.L.A.A. members did for a living helped me with that. I could relate to others on an emotional level instead of looking at their price tag. Outside success didn’t matter. It was about serenity not ambition. Sobriety and connection with a Higher Power gave me dignity and community. I no longer felt superior or inferior and could explore relationships outside of my type. Thank God I did! My husband isn’t perfect, but he’s perfect for me.
I will be open to meeting new people and avoid judgment to the best of my ability.

August 22
GATHERING INFORMATION
While in the program for six weeks and out of the last relationship for eight weeks, I was still not convinced I was a sex and love addict. I went out for what I hope will be the last time...[and] had an affair...It was during this exciting, ecstatic two-week affair that I realized I was powerless, truly powerless over the sex and love that this woman was offering me. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 189
Sometimes listening in meetings is not enough to convince newcomers that they are sex and love addicts. They need to gather more information. Many of us have to truly see and feel our powerlessness before we can stay in the rooms of S.L.A.A. and do the work it takes to recover. “Gathering information” in recovery refers to someone who sits in the back of the room and listens, still on the fence about whether they need to do the Steps or not. I was this person for years in program. I didn’t need to do the Steps until the people in S.L.A.A. were able to convince me that I was truly a sex and love addict. But no one even tried to convince me. They said, “Why don’t you go do some more research? We’re here when you figure it out.” That research was painful but eye-opening. Finally convinced, I crawled back into S.L.A.A. ready to do whatever work was required to get and stay sober.
I will do whatever research I need to do, knowing that Higher Power and S.L.A.A. are there for me when I need them.

August 23
DELUSION
We learned not to worry about the inability of the blind to comprehend the concept of "color." Our affirming experiences in sobriety would later fall on more receptive and appreciative ears, once the new prospects had themselves faced and lived through the rigors of withdrawal and apparent deprivation. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 119
Delusion is self-will saying, "My way is right and naysayers are wrong." In my first few years of S.L.A.A., I told my sponsor I was moving in with the married man that I had been trying to break up with for months. We put a deposit down on an apartment, so it must have been reality that he was leaving his wife, right? My sponsor said I was heading for a brick wall and it was going to hurt when I hit it, but she just had to let me do it. And it did hurt! I thought the pain would kill me when I realized he would never leave his wife. My addiction tells me when I see a rainbow, that’s a sign from God that my relationship was meant to be. My realistic fellows tell me it's just refracted light. The addict voice speaks to me, telling me that sex is love. It’s difficult to stay out of delusion when the addict voice is constantly telling me things that aren’t true but seem reasonable in the moment. The healthy voice may be hard to hear over the roar of the addict voice, but it’s the one I need to hear.
I will try to keep my feet planted on the ground and listen for the healthy voice today.

August 24
SHOWING UP
If there was something there between Kate and me, I felt that I could now be available to work on it. The “success” of this, for me, would hinge on my ability to be emotionally “available” to her and to myself on a consistent basis. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 38
In my addiction, I would show up for commitments some of the time. If I didn't have a good excuse to get out of an event, my body would be there but my mind would be somewhere else. I never truly showed up for anything because that involves being emotionally present. Everything was all about me and getting my needs met. Because of all of the work I’ve done in S.L.A.A. and a healthy practice of prayer and meditation, I show up for my life today. I am more able to listen and get out of ego and fear. The ten-minute meditation in my home group meeting helped the most. I had to force my mind to quiet down because everyone else in the room was doing it. Practicing it every week helped me open the door to letting God calm the negative voices in my head. My sponsor told me to show up to commitments no matter what my addict voice said. I had to clear those voices out to avoid the numbing out behaviors that kept me checked out of life. I’m so glad S.L.A.A. taught me how to suit up and show up.
If negative voices try to talk me out of my commitments today I will pray and meditate and call sober fellows in S.L.A.A.
August 25

FANTASY

Through mutual sharing, we had come to know [triggering individuals] as human beings, and their stories had exploded many a fantasy we could have trumped up about them. Myths about their addictive desirability had been dispelled before our very eyes. Our interactions with others were becoming more authentic and mutual. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 146

Unicorns, Martians, and talking lions filled the pages of all my childhood books. I hid out in them to escape the scary reality of my life. My thoughts were always full of wild hopes and dreams of a better, drastically different world. Children are supposed to dream. But when these thoughts carry into adulthood and distract us from having any real purpose in life, they cross over into addiction. Obsessing about unavailable people is living in fantasyland. I can't have an authentic relationship with a figment of my imagination. I have to actually listen to the other person and hear what they are saying, instead of idealizing them and overlooking bad behavior. I have to watch out for playing mind reader, too. A mutual exchange of ideas is the only way for me to live in reality. Fear of conflict can keep me in fantasyland for years. One day at a time, I need to confront problems as they come and clear them out before they become full-blown fantasy worlds in my head and I'm paralyzed by the fantasy. Fantasyland can be a warm, comfortable place. So, who would choose harsh reality? The only way out for me is to realize that my addiction can get to me more easily there and will pull me out into an even more harsh reality. I will do my best to live in reality today and not get pulled in by the sirens' call of fantasy.

August 26

INHIBITIONS

When I was dieting and thin, I got very sexy and ran from bar to bar, and bed to bed, inhibitions released by the booze, drinking to forget, then waking with still more to regret. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 165

For me, sex and love and drugs and alcohol quickly got all mixed up together. Unable to relate to others in a healthy way, I turned to drinking and drugs to allow me to break through my inhibitions. Like Cinderella, however, the next morning I was stuck with those same inhibitions and lack of true, lasting intimacy. Guilt pervaded my consciousness in a hangover brought on by intoxicating chemicals and the violation of my personal boundaries. If drugs or alcohol serve as a gateway for me to act out, it may be time to reevaluate how and when I use these substances, or whether I should use them at all. When I lose my inhibitions, the desire to stay sexually and emotionally sober drowns beneath intoxicating waves. Am I willing to break my bottom line just to have a drink or two? Many recovering sex and love addicts are engaged in other 12-step programs, some joining before becoming a member of S.L.A.A., and some joining after. We must decide if we want to add another addiction to our list, or if we need to. God, help me to quit running from intimacy. Help me to be fully present and not seek to numb out in this present moment.
August 27

CRIME OF PASSION

[In] a closed-energy-system relationship...Each participant walks around feeling as if his or her nervous system is being consumed from within. A kind of half-alive stupor is punctuated with attacks of murderous rage or child-like deification of the other. Clearly the "crimes of passion" are an increasing possibility as this situation continues. Each person in the relationship needs to "live," to have a life of his/her own. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 144

When nothing else mattered in my life except the relationship, the murderous rage I felt when things went wrong was unbearable. And I had no support group or Higher Power to take it to. I had no one to help me through it and to let it go like my sponsor and working the Steps does now. Crimes of passion are committed because of a sudden strong impulse. I could never control my impulses in my disease. And a closed energy relationship is a setup to create such strong impulses. When I walk around in high anxiety every minute of every day, obsessing about what my partner is doing, I'm inevitably going to snap. With the help of S.L.A.A., I can take a step back from the relationship and go to a meeting or fellowship, forget about what my partner is doing for a little while, and focus on me, others, and my Higher Power. Those are much more life-enriching ventures than where my partner went to lunch that day.

I will try not to obsess about my relationship today and turn it over to Higher Power.

August 28

DISCLOSURE

Our awkwardness around those to whom we felt susceptible forced us to talk about [our identity as sex and love addicts] openly, in spite of the likelihood that doing so would end any further opportunity for an addictive indulgence. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 116

I read an S.L.A.A. Journal story that described a situation where an S.L.A.A. member disclosed her membership in our fellowship inappropriately and lost her dream job. She said we have to choose carefully when and where to disclose. I've always given too much information too soon, hoping to bond people to me quickly. It usually ended up backfiring and pushing people away. When I first started going to meetings, I told everyone around me about S.L.A.A. I was lucky that most of them were also in Twelve Step programs and understood. If my family had objections, they kept it to themselves. In sobriety, I check my motives before opening my mouth. Am I trying to find a rescuer? Do I want to quickly explain away bad behavior instead of making amends? If disclosure will help another person or keep my bottom lines safe, I'm on solid ground to proceed. If not, I think and pray about it and pause to talk to my sponsor.

I will choose carefully who to disclose my identity to as a sex and love addict, remembering that self-care is as important as honesty.
August 29
"TRUE LOVE"
It is our belief that all along we were trying to derive something more meaningful from our addictive activities. Perhaps we confused sex and romantic intrigue with love, but in the final analysis it was authentic love we were, on a deeper level, seeking. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 141
Before recovery efforts in S.L.A.A., I had a big issue with jealousy in all relationships. I took hostages, as they say. But from doing a deeper dive into my motivations and through talking with fellows and praying and researching, I can now say that the battle is all but won. Whenever I start to get those jealous feelings within a relationship, I remember that this life is one of abundance and not scarcity. People have the capacity to love you, me, their other friends, their family members - all. There is not a finite amount of love. The more love one gives, the more one has the capacity to give and knows how to do it and it just keeps on coming. I take their love and let it grow through me and I don't hoard it. I pass it on and watch it expand to others. What a beautiful and freeing realization that was for me in this program. I no longer drain love out of people. I seek to give love and to be loving. THAT is when I felt the most loved in my life. I will look for opportunities to be loving today, expecting nothing in return.

August 30
RIGHT ACTION
My criterion for my actions used to be, “What can I get away with?” That is changing: now the criterion for my actions is, “What can I do that is going to help me in my spiritual recovery and in the maintenance of my serenity?” - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 184
Before recovery, taking the right action meant whatever would make life easier, or would be socially acceptable to my co-addicted friends and family. I'd heard the phrase "right action' in a spiritual context, but it seemed more like an intangible, unattainable motto than anything at the time. During my Fourth Step, it became very evident that having been raped twice as a teen and sexually harassed (and then fired) at several jobs, I never considered reporting these incidents to authorities to be the right action. Each time, I thought I could handle it myself. The rest of my Fourth Step showed me how I couldn't handle it myself. Today, "right action" means recognizing my real needs through meditation and outreach calls, and asking how and where I can get those needs met before they turn into acting out on resentments. Burying my feelings under acting out won't solve anything and will only make matters worse. Taking right action and building self-esteem eventually leads to serenity. I will look for and take right action today with the help of Higher Power and fellows.
August 31
THE FOURTH SIGN
We learn to avoid situations that may put us at risk physically, morally, psychologically or spiritually. - S.L.A.A. Core Documents, “S.L.A.A. Signs of Recovery”
Avoid risk? Why would I want to do that? In my acting out days, I lived for the adrenaline rush of risk. That’s why people jump out of airplanes, right? They don’t know that their parachute will definitely open. And when the situations involved reducing the risk with my intellect, I got the added bonus of an ego boost. It felt good to pat myself on the back for avoiding consequences with lies. But when the risk of physical death became a real possible consequence of my acting out, I had to admit I had a problem. It was only when I went to S.L.A.A. meetings that I realized the risky moral, psychological and spiritual situations could kill me too. Morality and spirituality seemed to go together and I wasn’t having any of that “God stuff.” And I wanted to say I was a free, independent spirit. But in reality, I was lonely, miserable, and beating myself up. The risky situations always involved the one who (in my fantasies) was going to save me (even if it was just a one-night stand). S.L.A.A. taught me how to separate fantasy from reality and to run the other direction if a situation would harm me. It took years of work and a lot of support, but I was finally able to put down the drug of adrenaline and ego and avoid risky situations.
Today, I will look for healthy situations that feed my soul instead of deplete it.

September 1
CELEBRITY CRUSH
Romantic obsession is…an unhealthy fixation on another person with whom we may or may not have a relationship or even have met. The addictive nature of obsession can distort our thinking and behavior and can lead us in a direction that violates our dignity and personal integrity. - from the “Romantic Obsession” pamphlet
“Crush” sounds so harmless. I always told myself that that’s all it was. I wasn’t obsessed with the celebrity, it was just a crush. But my addiction twists everything and made this thirty-year-old scream like a teenager when she saw a picture in a magazine. It’s not healthy to sit around for hours fantasizing about what life would be like with a certain celebrity instead of doing the dishes. If I can enjoy their work and be entertained by it instead of going into fantasy, then I know it’s an innocent crush. As long as I’m honest with myself if it starts to turn into obsession, I won’t have to cross any boundaries and harm myself or others. I don’t have to let the addiction lead me down a path of destruction. I can keep my dignity and personal integrity if I tell on myself to sponsors and fellows, pray, and let go. A harmless little crush can stay a crush if I realize that I’m slipping into fantasy. I can bring myself back to reality with the help of others.
I will avoid romantic obsession today by allowing myself to see reality.

September 2
ILLEGAL ACTIVITY
As we are all governed by our own conscience, we do encourage members to study and understand the Traditions of our program to assist in group conscience / individual decisions on matters associated with crimes / illegal activity. - "Anonymity, The Law and S.L.A.A."

People commit crimes in pursuit of love and sex. This prevented me from feeling like I was worthy of recovery. I felt isolated and alienated from the world. This emotional atmosphere of self-loathing and shame can perpetuate more of the same behavior as a means of relieving pain. The amends-making process can help heal the pain so we don’t have to act out over it. Illegal activity can be defined differently in different countries. It is not up to me to decide whether these laws are fair. I seek freedom from the addiction, and freedom to live in society, and that means that I refrain from engaging in behavior contradictory to the law of the land. I set appropriate boundaries regarding incriminating information. I determine when it is safe to share information about my past illegal activity. I don’t assume or prevail upon others to keep secrets for me which may compromise that person’s own moral integrity. The possibility to recover from sex and love addiction by working the Twelve Steps is real and exists for all individuals, regardless of their past behavior. We can attain sobriety, while being mindful of the safety of ourselves and others.

Higher Power, grant me strength to face the truth about my harmful behavior.

September 3
SHADOW SELVES
What came to pass is that as we refrained from seeking to escape from ourselves through acting out on our sex and love addiction, we began to become intimate to ourselves. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 113
Sometimes what we’re doing through romance is seeking to grow, to expand our own horizons. We want to learn what our lovers know, and become what they are, acquiring their skills, style, social status, or culture. This is not bad in itself. However, a payoff of that kind may blind us to our own real needs, abilities, and limitations, which we may fail to address in our attempt to lead the other person’s life. When I did the Steps and went through withdrawal in S.L.A.A., I was finally able to meet the real me. I didn’t have to live in the shadows anymore. I found out that I’m good with computers. I can pursue that career without depending on my lover to show me the way or to provide me with contacts. I can be self-supporting. I look to myself and my abilities instead of enviously concentrating on someone else’s life and career. My sponsor told me to stick to my side of the street and that has helped me grow.
I will concentrate on myself today and pursue my own hopes and dreams.

September 4
CHANGE AND GROWTH
The old emotional habits...had subtle payoffs which made them difficult to surrender. We now moved...toward surrender to a life-long process which would refine the qualities we carried within and contributed to life. Underlying this whole shift in our attitude was increasing reliance on the God of our understanding. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Pages 85-7

If we can’t surrender our old way of doing things to the Twelve Step process, we can’t change. Most addicts hate change. My ego is so big that it tells me my way is best and I should keep doing it, even if it’s killing me. Emotional habits (like making a partner jealous to see if they love me or watching porn so I don’t feel lonely) have payoffs that make them difficult to give up. It’s much easier to manipulate a reaction from a partner than to confront problems in a relationship. And watching porn is much easier than interacting with live human beings that have their own thoughts and feelings. Change means I have to first see myself for who I am, get rid of my ego, and then give everything over to Higher Power. Letting God be in charge is scary to me because sometimes I wonder if he wants to punish me for my past. But the Ninth Step helped me clear away that fear enough to let God in and the other steps helped me get a better (non-punishing) God. I have definitely changed and grown in my years in S.L.A.A. I will look for opportunities for growth today and allow Higher Power to change me for the better.

September 5
ENABLING THE ADDICT
He...began drinking again and after not hearing from him for two weeks, I responded to his “rescue” call and re-entered the enabling behavior that Al-Anon had taught me to leave behind. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 208

In this chapter of the Basic Text, the writer explains that before she discovered the addict was drinking, she had been meeting with him weekly for superficial sex and was not happy with the relationship. When she realized she was in Al-Anon behavior, her sponsor convinced her to stick to a no-contact rule. She rationalized her pain and obsession as “loving him so much,” and she remained reluctant to label herself an addict. Many of us love addicts set up a system of rescuing and enabling the addict in order to ensure that our love interest will never leave us. We hide addiction behind love. I always chose addicts and tried to rescue them because I thought that would make me an indispensable saint. Everyone would admire my attempts to make my partner better and my partner wouldn’t be able to survive without me. But all it was really doing was feeding my own sex and love addiction, enabling me to stay sick and enabling my partner to keep acting out. Without me there to pick him up, he might have hit bottom and gotten help sooner. In sobriety, I am no longer caught in this vicious cycle. My partner and I each have our own spiritual practice and self-care. We can stand on our own and respect each other.

I will not enable the addict today. I will stick to my side of the street and practice self-care.
September 6
JUDGMENTAL
One day I ran into Rich. I had known him from A.A. but had judged him pretty harshly. I thought he had shown bad taste and judgment by moving on an A.A. newcomer while his wife was pregnant. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 248
I am grateful that the fear of judgment didn’t keep me from sharing and being honest when I was a newcomer. I had fellows who told me, “Screw them if they judge you. Look where they are.” And my sponsor always said if I was holding back because of fear of judgment, “look at the people you are trying to impress.” We’re all just a group of sex and love addicts trying to get better. Judging people sets us above them, where we’re too far away to be useful to them or ourselves. And whenever I start judging someone in a meeting it’s usually because I’ve had the same bad behavior in the past and I’m afraid of going back to it in the future. It isn’t a disease that I can catch! If someone shares about acting out constantly and being unable to stop, instead of thinking they’re horrible, I remember how painful it was for me to act out. I try not to share judgment with fellows in these cases, only love and kindness because that was what was shown to me. I will try to be kind today instead of judgmental and remember that I make mistakes too.

September 7
MARRIAGE VOWS
Kate and I got married when I was about eight months sober. I made an inner resolve to be “faithful” - although the notion that I could or would never romance or screw around again was incredible. Despite these misgivings, my engagement, wedding and honeymoon went off well. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 9
In this chapter of the Basic Text, Rich reveals that he found out he had contracted VD six weeks after the honeymoon. We may stand before our friends and family and make a public vow to be faithful during a marriage ceremony, but sometimes our addiction makes those empty words. S.L.A.A. helps us mean what we say in our marriage vows. Many of us never would have thought of marriage before getting sober in S.L.A.A. But if we work a rigorous Program and keep conscious contact with a Higher Power, we can see the value in making and keeping commitments. I didn’t want to say traditional marriage vows when I got married for the first time at the age of forty, because I didn’t want to pledge to obey my husband. But I actually do obey him as he does me. We care about what the other person wants. We each have authority in the relationship. Vows are not about the words we say, but about our intention and actions. This sex and love addict intends to love, obey, and honor her commitment. What a change from my addictive past!
I will honor my spoken and unspoken marriage vows today.

September 8
THE NINTH STEP
Made direct amends to such people whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others. - S.L.A.A. Core Documents, “The Twelve Steps of S.L.A.A.”
It can be a terrifying idea to think of contacting someone from the past and admitting to them that we behaved badly. The shame around our actions may have been brewing for years. It’s painful to admit face-to-face that we were wrong. They might not believe us, or worse, they might try to get revenge and harm us in some way. But confronting shame that we tried to bury with numbing out behaviors helps us to be humble and clear away the wreckage of the past. We have to confront ourselves when we listen to the person we are making amends to. They may lovingly understand or they may tell us a list of grievances. We should hear them and consider where we can improve ourselves from their feedback. If they are wrong in their assessment, we can realize that we have changed. We don’t argue with them. We quietly listen and later take any resentments to our Higher Power and fellows. I used to take the “except when to do so would injure them or others” part of this step as an excuse not to contact people. So, I let my sponsor decide each case. For some, I had to just let go and write a letter to them that I would never send. I’ve had emotional miracles happen with amends-making, mending relationships that had been broken for years. Thank God I got over the fear and did the work!
I will not be afraid to make amends today, knowing Higher Power is there by my side.

September 9
RESCUING
I was smitten with her enshrining me as her knight in shining armor mounted on a white steed. It seemed, for me, a realization of the heroic role in which I had cast myself...I could not let her down. The cause was holy. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 4
Rescuing, for this sex and love addict, has never been about the person I’m “helping.” It’s about wanting to feel needed, feeling superior, needing attention, and having someone in my debt that I can control. Sad to admit, but when I’m saying someone needs rescuing, I’m saying they’re not capable. That hurts me as well as the other person when we both play our roles. When I first started dating, fellows told me that “water seeks its own level.” In a rescuing relationship, two people are always at different levels, feeling “better than” or “lesser than.” If I stick to fixing myself, healthier people come into my life. And the more I avoid rescuing, the more I allow others to have their own Higher Power and their own self-esteem. My relationships are more mutually respectful today because of this. When I find myself wanting to rescue, I discuss the situation with my fellows and check my motives. If I’m helping with no motive to get something in return, I can take the action, as long as I’m not hurting anyone.
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I will be of service today, but avoid rescuing. If someone asks for help I will check my motives and consider it carefully. I will let others be self-supporting.

September 10
RIGHT ATTENTION
Many of us were so numbed that only a blast of physical and emotional intensity from a sexual or romantic “hit” could penetrate and animate our progressively deadened, dissipated beings. Like a cattle prod jabbed into someone who is exhausted and dazed, an addictive hit jolted us into a temporary illusion that we were alive and really living. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 69
If I put the focus on my career, my finances, and my spirituality that I put into trying to intrigue with other people and trying to get sexual and emotional hits, then I would be a superstar billionaire Buddha by now. The good news and the bad news is that my recovery is really all about where and when I put my attention. When my finances, career, or friends need my attention, I focus on that. When I need attention or my spirituality is lacking, I put my focus there. The truth is that’s not a delicious menu all the time. I have fought for so long to avoid my life by checking out. That’s what my sex and love addiction looks like. When I divide my attention appropriately, I don’t have that desperate need, and I don’t have to behave like a vampire, sucking all the attention out of the room. I no longer feel that desperation because the stuff that needs attending to is being taken care of!
I will focus on my emotional and spiritual needs today and avoid numbing out behaviors.

September 11
DISTORTED THINKING
It was not that our logic, motives or intents were wrong. Rather, our very ability to see the problem clearly, and our wishes to change ourselves, were themselves systematically distorted by the addiction. That part of our mind which at least intermittently recognized our sickness was itself not immune, and could not be solely relied upon to guide us to health. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 74
My mind makes up all kinds of excuses to rationalize irrational behavior. I want what I want, when I want it. So if someone tells me I’m going to get it, I believe them no matter how far they stretch the truth. Or I listen to the addict voice when it tells me to do crazy or dangerous things. I get an idea in my head that seems logical and I run with it. There may be a nagging doubt in the back of my mind (the sane part), but I squash that by chalking it up to fear. I can’t rely on my own thoughts because they are distorted by the addiction. If I had told my sponsor that I wanted to chase my cat around the apartment with an electric shaver because I thought getting rid of the pet dander would make my cat-allergic married qualifier come back, she might have pointed out the fallacy in my thinking. Today I don’t solely rely upon my mind to guide me to health. I tell fellows, my sponsor, God, and I share at meetings. All of this clears my mind so I can focus on reality.
I will bring my ideas to light today, turning them over to Higher Power and fellows. Living in reality will be my goal instead of getting what I want at all costs.

September 12
DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOR
We felt new depths of humility, as we saw what damage had been done, and how much of it could never be undone. As we concentrated on our own part in this, we came to a new understanding of our motives, so often a poignant mix of normal human needs for love and a meaningful life, twisted by the addiction into something ugly and harmful to ourselves and others. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 91
Whether my destructive behavior was to feed my image to the world of being cool and bulletproof or if it was a consequence of my enslavement to addiction, it was a high-risk vicious cycle that only S.L.A.A. could free me from. Destructive behavior is addictive. I was so used to driving too fast, smoking, drinking, and eating too much in response to the difficulties of living, that I could only get glimpses of the misery and chaos it was creating in my life and that it was killing me. The adrenaline rush of high-risk behavior and the ego boost of surviving through dangerous, painful events can be alluring drugs. It was difficult to get used to a normal “boring” life in sobriety. But as my sponsor always said, “Boring is much less likely to get you killed.” When I came to S.L.A.A., fellows taught me how to replace harmful behaviors with self-care. Prayer and meditation was a large part of that, even though I didn’t believe in God at the time.
I will seek life-affirming behaviors today, knowing my desire to harm myself will pass.

September 13
THE SIXTH CHARACTERISTIC
We sexualize stress, guilt, loneliness, anger, shame, fear and envy. We use sex or emotional dependence as substitutes for nurturing care, and support. - S.L.A.A. Core Documents, “Characteristics of Sex and Love Addiction”
When I’m particularly stressed at work, sometimes I flirt with my boss or I watch internet porn to lessen anxiety. Before sobriety, I always initiated sex to avoid feeling guilty instead of talking about things I did wrong in my relationship. When I was lonely, I watched porn instead of going out in the world. When I was angry, I had revenge sex. Feelings of shame made me hunt for a conquest to try and boost my ego instead of talking about my feelings. I used to believe that if I had sex with enough people, I would be better than the people I envied. I used to think that everyone used sex to get what they wanted or to ease painful feelings. I didn’t see any other way to make people stick around. What is nurturing care and support anyway? I never saw it growing up. I only saw rage and drama and narcissism. But I began to understand the meaning of those words when people listened without interrupting in S.L.A.A. meetings, when my sponsor met with me for free every week, and when people took my phone calls and listened to my rantings. And practice with this helped me choose a partner who gave me support
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and pointed out when I was sexualizing instead of dealing with feelings. Today, I can give myself nurturing care instead of acting out to avoid painful feelings. I will talk about feelings with my partner and fellows and turn them over to Higher Power.

September 14

INTRIGUE

When I was still actively addicted, this network of potential intrigues had constituted a kind of safety net, or security, for me. These gestures of kissing and hugging and touching were the currency of my external personality, of the way in which I related to others. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 28

When I was a baby, my mother was very ill and did not come to my crib often. She told me later that I was the best baby ever; I never cried. Considering this now, through the eyes of recovery, I think I probably did cry, but learned my cries would not be answered. So, I stopped crying. I became a pretty self-sufficient little person. This pattern has been pervasive in my life. I crave touch, but I'm also repulsed by it. When someone hugs me, I get very triggered. Before sobriety, I took it as a sign of potential intrigue. Whether I pursued it or not, I got high. Sometimes this was the only way for me to feel a part of the world. But I have a solution today - the steps are healing me in this area. Little by little, my Higher Power is restoring a healthy relationship to touch in me. When I am feeling touch deprived, I put my arms around myself and imagine my Higher Power is hugging me. I find that I am much less triggered today by touch. By degrees, I am developing touch intimacy with my husband as my Higher Power restores me.

Today I relate to others from a place of abundance and know my Higher Power is present in each relationship.

September 15

TERMINAL UNIQUENESS

I realized that I could have been anyone else, that my seeming uniqueness as a “lover” was an illusion. I was trying to trump up a sense of my singular, irreplaceable qualities as a person through engaging in one of the great common denominators of mankind. Hardly unique, I was merely another player. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 22

I think the keyword here is “terminal.” Uniqueness sets me apart from others and isolation will set me on the path to self-destruction. All human beings want to be unique. I was always trying to be better than everyone in the room or did crazy things to stand out. I usually ended up hurting myself in the process. When I joined S.L.A.A., I needed to become part of the community. My sponsor told me to become a worker among workers. Trying to stick out and get noticed would send me running from the rooms. And if I had run from the rooms, I never would have found recovery and I would surely have died. I had to identify instead of compete. I had to find humility and fellowship. I had to listen to old-timers and follow what worked for them. I couldn’t do the Steps or Program my way. Identifying with other sex and love addicts and becoming part of the Program of...
recovery was difficult. I battled my ego every step of the way. Being of service and reaching out to others saves me. I will follow the program of action that has worked for others and not worry about being unique.

September 16
TRIGGERS
Circumstances which can trigger this erosion of our awareness of our sex and love addiction are so frequent and numerous that we need to be able to "ground" any sexual and emotional ambiguity which has started to undermine our stable functioning. No matter how far we have evolved in sobriety, we are never beyond reach of temptation's siren song. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 127
I used to watch a television program that was popular with everyone I knew. I started to identify with one of the main characters and wanted to live a “free” sexual life like she did. I realized it was opening the door to my disease and making me think I should leave S.L.A.A. I had to put that television series and any like it on my bottom lines. I was embarrassed to admit that after years of sobriety, I was unable to watch a popular TV show because of the way it triggered me. But anything that erodes my serenity has got to go. I don’t need to become anorexic and cut everything out of my life, but I do need to recognize when something isn’t necessary. We ground ambiguity by getting current in meetings and fellowship. We share our daily trials. Others can see if our disease is speaking to us. Like the Basic Text says, “from meeting to meeting we need to get current and stay open.” If I am triggered, I can get support and much needed tools to help pull me out of my addiction.
Today, I will recognize and avoid triggers by going to a meeting and getting current.

September 17
DEATH
Once the negative thinking is allowed a beachhead, my addictive nature is all too quick to respond. I mention this in order not to paint sobriety unrealistically. The rewards of sobriety are immense, however. Life is more beautiful than ever before, and the promise of a future with some peace of mind is real. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 217
A loved one died suddenly from a brain tumor this year. Even after years of sobriety, I indulged in “What’s the point?” negative thinking. Grieving is painful. Excuses for numbing out behavior seem valid. Peace of mind is shattered. I feel like there is no future if we’re all going to die. But life in sobriety has been beautiful. I have had magical moments that I am so grateful for. My grandparents lived into their hundreds. Their lives mattered. Instead of concentrating on fatalistic thoughts and negativity, I try to be of service and make a difference in the lives of my S.L.A.A. fellows. It’s easy to fall into depression when we’re isolated. But when the S.L.A.A. community and Higher Power surrounds us, we can get through anything. It’s not about replacing loss or trying to outrun death, it’s about making the time we have here count in the lives of others and
enjoying life - difficult to do when mired in addiction, but a goal to work toward in sobriety. Hope can always be found if we look for it. I will celebrate the lives of deceased loved ones and try to make a difference in the lives of my fellows.

September 18
COURAGE
The courage to change the things I can - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 77
My compulsive/addictive feelings always come up at the same time I experience pain. It is an act of courage to wait out my pain. I used to think I had courage when I would do mindless dangerous things. But most of my actions were really done out of fear. Courage in sobriety, for me, means being honest even when I'm fearful someone will abandon me if I do. It means that I share openly in a room of sex and love addicts even if I worry that someone will judge or hurt me. I sit with painful feelings even when I am afraid doing so will break me. I don’t run or numb out anymore. Knowing I can rely on Higher Power gives me the strength to walk through the fear instead of acting out over it. I always ran from my feelings in the past. It seems that I have a higher tolerance for physical pain than emotional pain. The fear of losing what I have or not getting something I think I need doesn’t cripple me anymore. With S.L.A.A. and Higher Power I feel safe in the knowledge that I have everything I really need. I will pray for the courage to change the things I can today.

September 19
FRIENDSHIP
We have found that if we do not find balance and meaning in our lives then we are all too easily drawn into non-sexual relationships that are not unlike the addictive ones. Our relationships...must be subject to the same principles which keep our sexual lives sober. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 142
Friendship is based on mutual knowledge of each other’s personality and character that is acquired and deepened over time. Friendship involves a mutual commitment to be present for each other whenever possible, and supportive even when we can’t be present in person. It isn’t governed by the emotional uncertainties of lust, longing, fantasy, or projection. Friends don’t have to resemble each other or agree with each other all the time - we can stand by our friends regardless of our differences. Not every friend is able to give us everything we need at any and every moment and we shouldn’t expect them to. Trusting in the support of our friends is one way we can live out our faith in a power greater than ourselves, for Higher Power works through the help and affection our friends give us. The experience we gain in our friendships can help us to know what true sharing in a relationship can be. Today I will reach out to my friends, especially those in the fellowship, and I will show up for them when they reach out to me.
September 20

PROSTITUTION

[I] soon began to find prostitutes to get what I desperately needed. These were my first experiences with prostitutes, and the guilt and growing sense of myself as a pervert resulted in my frantically going to the yellow pages to find a psychiatrist. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 200

I entered S.L.A.A. because my dishonesty with and unavailability toward women in my life had driven me to conclude that professional sex workers were the only way to go. I knew on a deep level that rationale was twisted thinking. Still, I convinced myself on a daily basis that I was beyond hope and so I might as well indulge in whatever behavior I liked. I was sure that no woman would ever want to enter into a relationship with a pervert like me. I couldn’t even convince myself that I could be in a relationship without acting out. It took dozens of S.L.A.A. meetings, sharing the deep shame of my actions, and receiving encouragement and acceptance from my fellows before I began to recognize the faults in my thinking. And by the grace of God and by working this program, I have been blessed with a willingness to abstain from commercial sexuality, the courage to live and speak honestly, and have been given a genuine desire to be monogamous. I have been imparted greater humility, serenity, and increased awareness, all of which allow me a healthier viewpoint regarding all aspects of life. Recovery restores me to sanity and teaches me that I am worthy of love in a healthy relationship with another human being.

September 21

THE FIRST TRADITION

Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon S.L.A.A. unity. - S.L.A.A. Core Documents, “The Twelve Traditions”

If the group doesn’t survive, I won’t survive. I have to compromise sometimes. I have many aspirations. But if those goals would harm the group, I have to abandon them. Who gets to decide what is good for our common welfare when our leaders don’t govern (Tradition 2)? Higher Power and group conscience. If we get caught up in long, drawn-out arguments over where our money should go or what the format of the meeting should be, people will get frustrated and leave. A group conscience vote doesn’t always go the way I want it to. But I remain quiet, knowing the group has spoken and the future will tell if it was a mistake or not. If I just have faith that we can work it out together, I don’t need to become combative. I have to rely on meditation and prayer to work with someone I don’t like in Intergroup or at a meeting, for the good of the Fellowship. If I can’t do that, I can go to a different meeting or start my own. I don’t have to create chaos.
2017 AGENDA Appendix B
Motions and Items for Discussion
2017 S.L.A.A. Annual Business Meeting,
July 25 – 28, 2017
Fourth Version – July 25, 2017

I will put my opinions aside today in favor of unity. My goal will be to help the Fellowship instead of hinder it.

September 22
FLIRTING
The fear that we were not or could not be deserving of real love led us to make excessive sacrifices to parents or lovers, to flirt with everyone to prove we were attractive, and to lie to impress others. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 81
In addiction, flirting is usually about empty promises. We flirt to get craved attention or material things such as promotions at work or discounts at stores or bars. But the intended purpose of flirting should be to let someone else know of our interest in them. When done for any other reason, it can be considered acting out. We don’t want to send the wrong message. It’s better to abstain from flirting unless we want to pursue a relationship. If it is used to pursue a relationship, we need to be mindful of how we flirt. Before sobriety, my method of flirting was to use sexualizing language and tell a potential partner what I was capable of. My fellows in S.L.A.A. helped me curb that behavior. Healthy flirting during sober dating is different. It was a whole new experience for me. When my love interest took the conversation down a sexual path, I steered it back to everyday conversation. The kind of person who needed this kind of flirting was not for me anymore. This was scary for me. I had always been so insecure about my ability to find real love that I thought sexualizing was necessary to get and keep a partner. Refraining from this type of flirting helped me find true love and a healthy partnership.
I will state my true intention today and be honest in my actions.

September 23
ACCESSORY BEHAVIORS
We would engage in such solitary activities as masturbation, voyeurism, or exhibitionism and claim that they were improvements because we were no longer involving others directly in our disease. Such attempts were as futile as for an alcoholic to switch from beer to wine, or wine to beer, claiming either as an “improvement” over the other. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 72
After three years of sobriety from my bottom line, I moved into a place by myself for the first time. In less than a week, I was acting out. I told myself that as long as I didn’t act out on my bottom line, I would be fine. But soon I found myself doing things that I had never done before and the addiction was even stronger than I remembered it. I played down my acting out behavior with others in the program or completely neglected to mention it. When I’d finally had enough, I laid it all out for my sponsor and started a policy of strict honesty with him and others in the meetings. I admitted every time I acted out, even if I planned to do it again later. Eventually, that honesty brought me back to sobriety. Engaging in accessory behavior is like playing with fire. I could have crossed my bottom line at any moment. If I’m getting an addictive hit off of my actions, then it’s
probably not something I should be doing. I may even need to add a few things to my bottom line.

I must remain open and honest with others about my actions. If I engage in new behavior that gives me an addictive high, I will speak with my sponsor about modifying my bottom line.

September 24
SELF-LOVE
Amidst all difficulties and uncertainties, a simple intimacy had come into being for us: we had met ourselves, and found ourselves worthy. We had become beloved to ourselves. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 115

Oh, to be beloved by someone...anyone. It never occurred to me that this someone could be me. In fact, before recovery, the thought of loving myself was dismaying. There were too many flaws, too many imperfections. The goal was to find the perfect mate who would love me despite my imperfections. Surely, I could find this person if I looked hard enough, worked hard enough on my appearance, acted right, and loved that person despite their imperfections. Who could help but love me then? Those insane thoughts kept me stuck in a never-ending search for someone that did not exist. Today, I realize I don’t have to look any further than my own mirror and I find a person who will love me forever, flaws and all. I get to take care of that person today. I take her on long walks on the beach and listen to her thoughts and desires. I don’t beat up on her for being different (an addict).

I am enough, I have enough, and I will be provided with enough. My Higher Power loves me and I love myself - just as I am right now.

September 25
JEALOUSY
Jealousy is not necessarily a mere egotistical desire to possess for one’s very own, not just a selfish unwillingness to share. It is the anguish of despair; the wholeness one thought one had found with the loved one is shattered…One is overwhelmed with fear. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 55

Fear that my partner will abandon me or cheat on me, fear that I’m not enough - these are just a few of the fears that overwhelm me when jealousy hits. The anguish of despair is feeling like I’m not good enough to keep a relationship with a normal person. In the first year of my sober relationship, jealousy hit a lot! I kept praying for it to be removed because I knew it was fears left over from my previous relationship and I knew that I had chosen a trustworthy partner this time. I tried not to let it show when I was jealous, but it overwhelmed me in social situations and my partner could tell. I was selfish of his time and attention. I had to prevent my negative, magnifying mind from believing he was cheating on me. I had so many signs that he was trustworthy, but my need for drama made me ignore them. It helped to remember that I was with a healthy
person who wouldn’t hurt me if he could avoid doing so. And even if he did, we have tools and God to deal with whatever comes.
I will not get lost in fear and jealousy today. I will look for the positive and be grateful for what I have.

September 26
MASTURBATION
The experience was transcendental. I felt that I had tapped some secret, tabooed power which really ran the universe, but which was never acknowledged in the world...masturbation became a daily staple for me right away. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 3
Masturbation was never a problem for me, so I was surprised by the intense withdrawal when I gave it up for one month. Previously, I masturbated sometimes to help me sleep, sometimes to make myself feel better if I was upset or stressed out, and sometimes if I was feeling attracted to someone, which I always find exciting and ultimately very unsettling. Within the first month, I felt the difference. Masturbation wasn’t a form of self-love for me, I only used it to avoid my feelings. When the overwhelming craving hit, it was always in reaction to personal conflict. So, I made it two months. At two months, my car broke down after buying groceries for an event I was hosting. My first thought wasn’t to call a friend or a tow service. My immediate thought was, I need to masturbate now! Fortunately, I made an outreach call, prayed, and got a tow. One year later, I decided to try masturbating again, but after three weeks of feeling foggy and not present, I put “no masturbation” on my list of bottom-line behaviors. Not everyone in S.L.A.A. needs to do this, but it is best for me.
With Higher Power and my sponsor’s help, I will decide if masturbation should be on my bottom lines.

September 27
RESPECTING OTHERS’ PRIVACY
So it is that in a closed system each person comes to expend more and more energy riding herd on the other, even as less and less energy is received from a wider experiencing of life. To maintain their security this energy must be expended in riding herd on each other, making sure that neither will stray, so that no possible shortage of supply from each other will follow. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 143
It’s normal to read my partner’s journals to make sure he’s not cheating on me, right? That’s what my diseased mind told me about snooping. My sponsor told me that his business is none of my business and that I needed to stick to my side of the street. That didn’t sound right to me. I thought partnership meant you were always in each other’s business or you didn’t care. That was just a rationalization for me to control. I don’t get to tell my partner how to live his life. He has his own Higher Power and gets to make his own decisions. And if he chooses to tell me everything, that’s great, but it’s his choice. I
get to experience my life with him by my side instead of ignoring what I need to do in order to follow him around. Following him around only leads to feeling desperate and insecure. Paying attention to my life builds self-esteem. My energy is best spent on improving the quality of my life and, as a consequence, our lives together. I will respect others’ privacy today and concentrate on improving my life with Higher Power’s guidance.

September 28
THE FIRST SIGN
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. - S.L.A.A. Core Documents, “S.L.A.A. Signs of Recovery”

Why would I want to develop a daily relationship with something I didn’t believe in? I came into the rooms of S.L.A.A., at the very least, agnostic. I went to meetings every day. I was also trying to quit smoking and drinking. That forced me to develop a relationship, because I had to say the prayers that everyone else was saying or risk looking stupid (horrible for a sex and love addict) or worse - to risk someone calling me out on it! So I said the prayers, not believing them, and sometimes screaming rebellion in my thoughts. But the day I started to heal was when I started wondering if maybe my prayers could actually be heard by some kind of presence in the universe. Maybe all of these people holding hands and saying prayers together were a power that could heal. The person next to me was probably struggling with the God idea, too. I would talk to people after the prayer and get their methods of coming to believe in a power greater than themselves. When I stuck around long enough, I finally got a relationship with a Higher Power and some sobriety.

I will pray and meditate every day and have hope that Higher Power and Program will heal me.

September 29
SYNCHRONICITY
I continued to experience enticing situations which could have lured me back into the addictive quicksand. Among these was one more very serious trial concerning Sarah. The timing of this was so uncanny as to be particularly meaningful. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 36

Rich goes on to describe a situation where a friend of a qualifier asked for some assistance. He says, “The Devil himself could not have created a more tantalizing situation! Not only did it offer a chance for musical recognition, thus appealing to my professional ego, but [the friend] was beguilingly attractive.” He found himself in a situation where it was a choice between staying sober and reconciling with his wife or trotting down the path of temptation and bad motives. One theory of synchronicity suggests that life is not made up of coincidences, but that a larger order governs even the most seemingly random of events. If a triggering event was synchronous, I thought it meant I was supposed to stay in addiction. During withdrawal, I mistook running into my
qualifier at the mall for synchronicity. My sponsor always said, “There are no coincidences. God’s got a plan. I don’t need to understand it, I just need to say, ‘thy will not mine be done.’” I need to pay attention to God shots and ignore supposed signs from Higher Power that will lead me back to addictive behavior. I will ignore synchronicity unless it is rooted in sobriety and helps to prove the presence of a Higher Power.

September 30
EMOTIONAL AFFAIRS
Sensing the danger of involvement, I tried to keep control by not sleeping with her. In spite of this, I became increasingly obsessed until the prospect of not seeing her was torment...I went into a state bordering on paralysis. The hook was already set very deeply. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 11
Sometimes our primary relationship has difficulties or we get bored. There may be that co-worker who understands and is fun to be around. Society tells us in movies and television that it’s okay, even exciting, to have that push-pull of an emotional affair. I used to think it was okay if we weren’t getting physical, but emotional ties feed craving. Sex and love addicts in their disease crave attention. If we get it from the wrong source, it feeds shame and fear. Quite often this makes us lose control and cross the line into a physical affair. It’s like the alcoholic putting a little whiskey in his milk at lunch. Just a little flirting couldn’t hurt, right? Before you know it, we’re drunk on love and acting out in sex addiction. We may think, I can control it because it’s harmless, but that’s just the addict voice. We need to let Higher Power in to guide us in our emotional lives. If there are difficulties in our relationship, we should take them to our sponsor or fellows in S.L.A.A. instead of turning to the understanding, attractive person outside the relationship. Sobriety hangs in the balance.
I will confront problems in my relationships today and rely on Higher Power’s guidance.

October 1
TRAUMA AND TRAGEDY
Frequently overcome with grief, loss and feelings of abandonment, I had few experiences which gave me a feeling that I was O.K., that I had value as the creature God had created. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 1
When life gets difficult, it can be hard to believe that a Higher Power exists and has our best interests at heart. For years in my addiction, I used the trauma of my boyfriend killing my best friend as an excuse to act out. Feelings of grief had to be numbed, not dealt with in a healthy way. And God couldn’t be relied upon if he would allow such a beautiful human being to be taken from this world. This created an anger at God that was hard to recover from. “Eff you God,” was my attitude. If I can’t live the way I want to live, I don’t want to live. So, I became self-destructive in response to the tragedy.
S.L.A.A. helped me realize that it wasn't God who killed my best friend, it was the guy I had chosen as my partner in life (for nine years). They taught me to pray and meditate to improve my conscious contact with my Higher Power. This made me more willing to believe that God didn’t cause tragedy and he would help me through it. If tragedy hits I will turn to Higher Power and close sober fellows instead of getting lost in anger and acting out.

October 2
the JOURNAL
My story has been shared not purely for its ending but for its process. The writing of it is to let you know you are not alone and that there is hope. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 63
When I got sober, I had writer’s block for ten years. In my childhood, I had big dreams of becoming a world-famous author. That didn’t happen! But when I discovered the Journal (our “meeting in print”), I found new creativity and a sense of community. We weren’t writing Journal stories to impress some publisher, because the writing is anonymous. Writing to be of service and help other people by telling our stories is very healing. There are stories of sex and love addiction from all over the world. We see that everyone can have the same feelings that we have no matter where they live. Sometimes the stories tell us how to deal with problems that we are facing. Sometimes they remind us of where we’ve been and how far we’ve come in recovery. When travelling or unable to get to a meeting, I always find wisdom within the pages of the Journal that helps me. I will share my story and remind myself and others that we are not alone.

October 3
SUPERSTITION
External challenges, especially those with psychic overtones, did occur, and we felt ourselves thrown back into having to devote all our energy, once again, to abstaining from addictive behavior...Yet we must say that, tenacious as the psychic hold may appear, it, too, does respond to the withdrawal process. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 111
This passage goes on to say, “Many of us have found, in S.L.A.A., that we needed to accept the possibility that psychic occurrences can happen, in order to make sense of some of these situations which seemed so uncanny. Even when we felt far removed from actual contact with a former addictive lover, such things happened as unexpected letters, or finding ourselves in settings with special meaning in the past relationship. These things could serve to catalyze, or charge up, a feeling of being psychically connected to our former addictive lover. Eventually we came to expect that we would continue to encounter a barrage of such experiences.” My disease will grab ahold of anything to say my addictive lover and I were meant to be. The feeling that God put him in my path can be an opportunity for growth or an excuse of my disease to keep me sick. Part of living with sex and love addiction means accepting that triggers are all around us. The withdrawal process brings me back to reality and I realize that seeing my qualifier doesn’t mean we’re psychically linked, we just happen to be at the same
place at the same time. I don’t need to go back to the misery. Superstition is not my friend unless it prevents me from going back to my addiction! I will not look for excuses to go back to my addiction today. I will accept that psychic occurrences happen and move forward in recovery.

October 4
THE TENTH STEP
Continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong promptly admitted it. - S.L.A.A. Core Documents, “The Twelve Steps of S.L.A.A.”
It’s humiliating to promptly admit I’m wrong. I want to hide out for a few days and mutter an apology under my breath. But if I’m taking personal inventory every night, I can’t avoid it like I used to. Writing down all of my anger and fears on paper forces me to take a realistic look at my behavior. Also, included in the writing is a list of my assets and things that I’m grateful for. Funny how quickly I forget these things! But it wouldn’t be a thorough personal inventory without them. I think “continued” is an important word here. I have to make self-searching a regular habit. And promptly admitting my faults keeps me honest and humble. This step takes patience and persistence and understanding. If I can’t understand my writing, I can take it to my sponsor to interpret. I usually find the right path to take to clean up my mess (or find out that I actually handled something fairly well). Taking this step helps me avoid the emotional hangover. If I clear out my fears and anger before they become too huge, I don’t become physically ill over them. That alone makes this step worthwhile to practice.
Today I will take personal inventory and admit when I’m wrong in order to preserve serenity and live to good purpose.

October 5
PLAYING THE VICTIM
Whether we were victims or victimizers (and most of us were both), we had used the disturbed relationships about us for our own purposes, for obtaining the addictive payoff. Regardless of what others had done or failed to do, our own part in these relationships was riddled with dishonesty and manipulation of others, with willfulness and pride. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 90
I get attached to the story of my life, and a lot of that has to do with early abuse in my family. I hold onto that and I don’t move on because I’m constantly reverting back to that victim. When I focus on that I’m in my disease and I’m not progressing. The more I do this, the more I leave myself open to being victimized by others. When I’m a victim, I’m isolated. I want sympathy but I don’t want to do anything about it. I don’t want to get into the solution and that keeps me in my addiction. When I know that I’m connected to a power greater than me, I don’t have to be a victim. I don’t have to manipulate people or seek pity. I can be in the solution and I don’t have to be alone. Sharing at meetings keeps me connected to other people who have been through the same experiences. To not play the victim, for me, is to live my life from a place of freedom and joy.
I will not obsess about being a victim today. I will concentrate on making my life better in this moment.

October 6
EXPLOITATION
As we looked at our current lives and at our past, we saw that virtually everything we did and everyone we knew was exploited to satisfy our addictive needs. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 80
If I was clearly exploiting someone and they stayed with me anyway, this fed my ego. I thought I was so important that people couldn’t leave me even if I mistreated them. And my addictive needs took over everything in my life. It was necessary to take advantage of whomever I could in order to get those needs met. In my twisted mind, I believed ill treatment made people stay. My mom used to say, “All men are dogs. That’s why I have to act like a bitch.” But when the tables turned and my love addiction forced me to take abuse, I finally saw how destructive exploitation is. It is an empty victory. When I got sober and started being of service to others, that huge ball of needs went away. I found it was more satisfying to treat people with respect and look for ways to help than to get everything I could and then throw them away. I stopped looking at people for what they could give me and saw them as human beings. The intimate, honest partnership that I have today is much better than anything I gained from exploitation in the past. I will be respectful of others today, seeking to help rather than to exploit.

October 7
SOCIAL STIGMA
We knew that our ‘condition’ of sex and love addiction was no less stigmatizable, in contemporary society, than alcoholism had been in the 1930’s and 40’s. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 122
I don’t like the special stigma that is attached to sex and love addiction. It brings forth fear when a meeting is kicked out of a church because of our name. We even took on a pseudonym (Augustine Fellowship) to help out well-meaning members of society who wanted to rent meeting rooms to us but were afraid of the potential backlash. The fellows who wrote the Basic Text decided to do this “after considering that this would be a problem wherever [they] went.” But in the 1930’s, alcoholics were just as misunderstood and feared. Over the years, society learned more about alcoholism and saw people recover in A.A. I believe there will be the same kind of learning curve with S.L.A.A. And the more the membership grows, the less mystery is attached to the program. The more people who know someone who has “attended one of those meetings,” the more the fear dissipates. Public outreach efforts will integrate S.L.A.A. into society the way it has done with Alcoholics Anonymous. Once people see how much S.L.A.A. has changed lives and brought families back together, they will want to support (or at least tolerate) the effort. I will not be afraid of social stigma today. I will be grateful that S.L.A.A. is there for me.
October 8
MIDDLE GROUND
I had long since learned that for me one-night stands, pick-up bars, prostitutes and the like were all bummers, but I still hoped there was a happy middle ground in a liaison of a few months’ duration with no real commitment. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 262
My friends who were acting out either died or got into recovery. They realized how it affected their lives. I had a friend who thought he might be a sex and love addict. He was still going to bars even after he had been sober in A.A. for over six years, mainly to find partners to have sex. He got picked up in a bar and was murdered. That brought it home to me - my friend could still be living today if he’d gotten into recovery. This is a deadly disease; it does kill. I have to commit myself to my recovery. I have to turn it over to my Higher Power. I have to be vulnerable. I have to open up and know that God is in my life and there’s a plan for my life without addiction. When it comes to recovery, I’m either in it or I’m out. I could be on the edge for a long time, and this takes me to a jumping off place where I’m either going to work the Steps or die. I have to stay in the rooms of S.L.A.A. and stop thinking there could be a middle ground. I will refrain from searching for a middle ground. I will look for a Higher Power instead.

October 9
NEUROPLASTICITY
I began working at my art again; I felt my brain returning...I took up jogging...I took formal instruction in Transcendental Meditation...Compulsion for somebody in my life to fix the pain has been lifted. And the pain underneath has been bearable. It is a healing pain that I endure because of the gift I have received from God - the first partnership I have ever formed. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 223
Neuroplasticity is a big word for the brain rewiring itself over a lifetime - it deletes the connections that are no longer necessary or useful and strengthens the ones that are. The brain decides this depending on life experiences and how recently connections have been used. Neurons can grow weak from underuse and die off. When we suffer trauma or injury, an uninjured part of the brain takes over for the damaged part. Depression and addiction makes my brain work too hard! When I practice self-care every day, my brain will start rewiring itself for healthy actions instead of addictive ones. I remember drinking whiskey as a teenager and saying, “Whoops, killed another brain cell.” I never realized that traumatic dramatic relationships work the same way, only slower. I want to function to the best of my ability. Self-care and seeking God’s will (in other words, sobriety) instead of mind-numbing behaviors will help my brain learn to heal itself from all these years of addictive damage. I will practice self-care today, taking action to help my brain heal itself.

October 10
ADVERSITY
Some of us suspected that God had been the architect of many a painful, growth-fostering situation we had encountered along the course of our sobriety, or at least had
allowed these to occur. Only gradually did we see that in God’s scheme of things, these difficulties might have been permitted in order to spur our awareness of our own finite nature, thereby rendering us ready to further our relationship with God. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 99

Sobriety doesn’t necessarily help me avoid problems or prevent them (although I don’t find myself in nearly as many dangerous situations as I used to). But it does help me walk through adversity with grace instead of numbing out in addiction to escape problems. My reaction to adversity in the past was to run from it (usually to the arms of a dangerous man) and to feel that I’m doomed. Fate was never my friend before sobriety. Whenever problems arose I went straight to negative thinking. If the kitchen sink backed up, “See, God really does hate me” was my immediate response. Today I realize that Higher Power loves me and as long as I stay close, together we can handle anything that happens. I never liked the idea that God would allow difficulties in my life in order to help me grow. Suffering should not be part of my God’s plan. But getting through suffering with God’s help has given me more faith and hope than I had in the days of my addiction. And it has helped me grow. I may never understand God’s reasoning, all I know is that I am now stronger and more able to handle situations that used to baffle me.

I will ask for God’s help with adversity and not run from it into addiction.

October 11

RIGHT-SIZED

We often found ourselves feeling entitled to being treated in a particular way and trying to coerce others to meet our own exalted standards. Or we were aroused by what seemed to be the machinations of others, feeling that we were being victimized. The simple truth was that when our own spiritual condition was less than solid, everyone around us seemed to be "sick" with a malaise which, upon reflection, was remarkably like our own! - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 97

I spent a lot of time before recovery trying to get "adoring fans," but knowing in my heart that I didn’t deserve them. And whenever things didn’t go my way, I wallowed in my victimhood. S.L.A.A. taught me how to be right-sized. People would laugh at my insane ideas when I shared at a meeting. I would get flustered and angry and feel like the meetings weren’t for me. But, over time, I realized that I was being delusional and that others were identifying. When I took my ego out of it, I gained a level of humility. Trying to coerce others to meet our own exalted standards takes a lot of time and mental energy. And it’s not real anyway. Today I let the chips fall where they may. This is saying that I have trust and faith in God’s will above my own. When I concentrate on finding God’s will instead of my paranoid perception of the machinations of others, I stay right sized according to reality, rather than the drama going on in my head.

I will pray for God’s will in order to remain right-sized today.

October 12

EMOTIONALLY UNAVAILABLE
2017 AGENDA Appendix B
Motions and Items for Discussion
2017 S.L.A.A. Annual Business Meeting,
July 25 – 28, 2017
Fourth Version – July 25, 2017

All my life I either seduced people with my intellect or seduced them with my body. I never seemed to know what real emotional intimacy was...I was so emotionally dishonest I could not admit even to myself what I really felt. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 164

I always felt like I was outside of my body, floating around the room in social or stressful situations. If there’s danger ahead, it can be a good thing to be able to get lost in fantasy. But if you’re at an intimate dinner and you’re constantly checking the door to see who comes in next, it’s putting up emotional barriers. I told myself that I just needed to know what was going on. And if my partner complained, I quickly jumped into bed. Seduction was my go-to tool. But this just allowed me to run from my feelings. I couldn’t live in the moment and be present and vulnerable. I was always predicting the future or trying to fix the past. I thought feelings would overwhelm and kill me. Whenever anyone tried to drag feelings out of me, anger would well up inside. I had thoughts of hitting and screaming at my therapist in the beginning of my recovery. I finally had to confront my emotional unavailability in my Fourth Step. And the Fifth Step forced me to become vulnerable and admit everything to my sponsor and God. The rest of the Steps helped clear out many of the barriers to emotional availability.

Today I will live in the present moment and try to stay in touch with my feelings. I will allow myself to be vulnerable, trusting that Higher Power is there beside me.

October 13
THE EIGHTH CHARACTERISTIC
We become immobilized or seriously distracted by romantic or sexual obsessions or fantasies. - S.L.A.A. Core Documents, “Characteristics of Sex and Love Addiction”

I felt like I was paralyzed. I remember staring at my computer screen at work, on the phone with my qualifier, unable to leave. The plan was to visit my sister for the weekend. But he didn’t want me to go. He kept me on the phone for an hour. I knew it was his disease making him unable to breathe without me, without his “fix.” He was a sex addict in program also. My disease told me to stay. I had enough recovery to leave anyway. But I was so distracted, I got into a car accident. “She came out of nowhere and was going too fast” didn’t cut it with the insurance company. I knew I was thinking about him and not paying attention when I backed out of the parking space. Later, when we broke up, I got in another car accident because I thought I saw him standing on the street. When I ran into him at a meeting years later, I was proud of myself for not talking to him but as soon as I left the meeting, I got a traffic ticket for not paying attention to the road signs. Recovery has definitely helped my concentration! As long as I don’t swing the door open for obsessions and fantasies, I can lead a fairly responsible happy life.

Higher Power, please help me concentrate on my life today, instead of getting lost in fantasy or obsession. As soon as these thoughts begin, direct my attention to what you would have me do.

October 14
SPIRITUALITY
The possibility of finding some form of faith, based not on any specific conception of "God" but rather on a need to find such a faith, was the beginning of spiritual healing. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 75

Spirituality focuses on personal growth with a Power greater than ourselves. I like that S.L.A.A. suggested finding spirituality rather than saying, “You need a specific religion.” People like me run from religion all the time. My addict intellect will grab at any excuse to run from hard work or pain. Growth is painful. But finding spirituality helped me stay in S.L.A.A. and grow. It’s a daily practice. I see others in meetings who used to be atheist or agnostic and I believe them when they say a spiritual life works for them. I hear people say that prayer and meditation got them through some really difficult experiences without losing their sobriety. We see proof in the rooms of people who lived insane lives before S.L.A.A. and have now found happy and healthy lives. They credit the Twelve Steps and finding a faith that works for them. Prayer and meditation transforms my life - a life I wouldn’t have without S.L.A.A and a daily practice to keep me in faith.

I will have a daily practice to build my spiritual foundation.

October 15
CONFUSION
I couldn’t tell anyone who I REALLY was, and was confused behind the façade. Sex was a way of "stopping the clock," a place to go when the rest of the world was too much. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 245

Addictive distractions and being an actor on the stage of life, presenting who we wanted to be in the world instead of showing our true selves, creates confusion that is difficult to break free of. When I hid out in sex, it may have “stopped the clock” for a little while, but always ended up creating more confusion because I was with unavailable partners. Hearing him say, “I have to get back to my wife,” after just having sex is hard to reconcile in this addict’s mind. Caught between relief and guilt, I can’t see the reality of the situation. In my acting out days, I walked around trying to understand my predicament. Why did I keep acting this way when it brought me so much pain? And the distraction of “I want that now” makes it impossible for me to stay present to myself and my responsibilities. Without a Higher Power to give my troubles to and to ask for answers, I float around the world on the wind. I can’t pin down any idea that will make my life peaceful and give me serenity and sobriety. S.L.A.A. and Higher Power showed me the way out of my confusion and I have chosen to stay there ever since.

When confused, I will take my thoughts to Higher Power and ask for answers. I may not get them right away, but I will try to be patient and wait for them, having faith that God will show me the way.

October 16
RETREATS AND WORKSHOPS
In new sobriety we found that along with the task of staying away from addictive activities, we had the equally difficult task of filling up all that free time. We needed to have a lot of time alone, to give feelings a chance to surface, but we also needed to keep busy. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 140

Retreats and workshops were always a great chance to let feelings surface while keeping busy! Our Intergroup’s workshops were always held at a gorgeous retreat center in the hills. It had a reflection pool, fountains, an olive garden, and lots of places to meditate. Going to an S.L.A.A. workshop all day on a Saturday was never my favorite idea for filling up free time. I never looked forward to delving into the S.L.A.A. topics that the workshops were based on (contempt prior to investigation). But sitting and looking out over a beautiful landscape while I thought and wrote about my S.L.A.A. issues really helped me get to know myself and my disease. There was a sense of spirituality in it. And bringing my writing back to the group solidified my place in the program and helped me get and stay sober. Retreats were a longer period of time to get to know other members of S.L.A.A. as well as spend time in reflection and meditation.

Today, I will spend my time on healthy activities instead of engaging in acting out behaviors.

October 17
THREE-SECOND RULE
We were working at standing still, at freeing ourselves from the tentacled clasp of a frightful addiction which had driven us to such a pitch of self-destroying activity. Simply not doing it took tremendous effort. We were suspending, for the moment, our very real fears concerning the outcome of all this...we were discovering that there was a joy to be had in successfully negotiating our way through each twenty-four hour period. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 109

I implemented and used the three-second rule right away in early withdrawal. It was the only way that I could relieve myself of the obsessive thoughts. It was a great tool to use again and again. I still use this tool later in recovery, when needed, and it has been one of the most useful tools of recovery for me. The method that I used was, once the thoughts started and I noticed them, I allowed the thoughts for a maximum of three seconds and then moved on to other thoughts or tasks. When obsessive thoughts come booming into my mind, I visualize throwing them into the trash can right away because they are garbage thoughts. Sometimes, this tool needs to be used over and over in a day, especially during early withdrawal. This is one of my favorite tools and helps me to maintain my sanity, and allows me to not obsess about others and keep the focus on myself and my own recovery.

In this moment, I realize that I am powerless and let go of the obsession. I bring the focus back to myself, and bring myself back to the present moment with the help of my Higher Power.

October 18
EMOTIONAL ANOREXIA
We endeavor to stop acting out a pattern of sex and love anorexia...We have found, no matter how different or alone we feel, that reaching out to others - to give help and to ask for it -- helps us to recover from our anorexia. - from the “Anorexia” pamphlet

We anorexics live in a world of extremes. Extreme fear. Extreme pain. Excruciating loneliness. We want so much to connect with people, but are so afraid that we are going to be deeply hurt. So, we isolate and end up hurting ourselves repeatedly. We have walled ourselves off and it feels like there is no escaping this prison in which we find ourselves. But as we share, little by little, in the rooms, a crack starts to appear in our insurmountable walls. We peer through the crack and see our fellow travelers in S.L.A.A. smiling and accepting us. How can that be? We were vulnerable. We brace for the rejection and hurt, but we are not rejected. People talk to us after the meeting. They encourage us. Ever so slowly we risk a little more at each meeting. Our walls start to crumble and the slivers of sunlight come streaming through, warming us and beckoning us to venture out. We start to feel a growing confidence that even if someone did hurt us, we could turn to our new friends for support. We now feel safe surrounded by people who love us unconditionally and let us love them back. Finally, we are free to be who we always wanted to be.

I will be courageously loving today. I will no longer isolate in my self-constructed prison.

October 19

REJECTION

B. was trapped by his sex and love addiction into thinking that if only he were reunited with his lover, his world would be alright. When she rejected him, he shot himself in such a way that he would be propelled out a window on the top floor of a ten-story building. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 219

Rejection is God’s protection. When my qualifier rejected me after all that I had done to be with him, I felt my mind snap. I ran around doing crazy things to try to make him stay. If I hadn’t had the years of working the S.L.A.A. program of recovery and my fellows who supported me and pulled me out of that insanity, I would have killed myself. I thought my qualifier’s love was the only thing that would save me in this world. Higher Power had a better plan for my life. That is what rejection is. Before program, I could never date soberly and take it slow because of the fear of rejection. When I finally got sober and started attempting to date, and people said, “No,” I shut down and didn’t want to ask anyone else out. I cried for two days. No one else seemed to have this reaction. I took it personally, when it really wasn’t. It’s not about the other person. It’s about how I feel toward myself - how I reject myself and continually beat myself up. My Higher Power accepts me for who I am, and I don’t have to be or do anything. When people reject me, it’s not necessarily a bad thing. If someone doesn’t want to engage with me then maybe we aren’t right for each other and I can avoid a harmful situation. I can spend more time with friends who know and like the real me rather than wasting time pursuing people who aren’t interested.

I will not fear rejection today, knowing that Higher Power never rejects me.
October 20
OBJECTIFICATION
The objects of my passion were seen entirely in terms of their ability to fulfill my
NEEDS. They were defined by how well they functioned in this way. They were
functions, not human beings. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 47
I have a friend who always reminds me that people are not vending machines. Ah, if
they were! If we could only arrange them on stage and produce the show the way we
want to. There would be no need for my anorexia. I remember how shocked I was when
I heard men share in S.L.A.A. and realized that they had pain to deal with just like me.
Or my partner would express feelings and I would realize that he’s a lot like me. My
sponsor always tells me that people have their own thoughts and ideas and they may
not do things the way I would do them. Agreeing to disagree was never good enough for
me. I had to twist everything to fit my idea of perfection. And if I couldn’t do that easily, I
moved on to the next person who I thought would give it to me. I rationalized bad
behavior with an attitude of “Why not have multiple partners if one can’t give me
everything I need?” And my addict needs were always unrealistic and exaggerated.
Even a robot couldn’t fulfill them. How could I expect a human being to? People are not
objects to be used or abused. We all suffer, selling ourselves short, when reducing
sexual love to a spiritually disconnected state of supply and demand.
I will try to fit myself to the world today instead of trying to force the world to fit to my
needs. I will pray for Higher Power’s will.

October 21
PEER PRESSURE
As we read our own version of what had happened [our 5th Step] we could often see
through our excuses and our need to blame others; we clearly saw the progression of
our spiritual malady and how “convenient” our memories could be in seeking to
minimize our roles in our more painful debacles. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 79
The day that peer pressure changed for me was when I walked into a meeting of
S.L.A.A. and saw that the “cool” people were the ones with sobriety. They weren’t
running around doing crazy stuff to impress others. People admired them because they
refrained from acting out. They ran from peers who would pressure them into going to a
strip club or picking up a one night stand. I used to blame peer pressure for my acting
out. “They made me do it” used to be a good excuse in my mind, but is a clear sign of
my sex and love addiction. If I’m harming myself to impress others, then my love
addiction is out of control. Today I avoid anyone who glamorizes acting out and gravitate
toward those who have serenity. If I find they have a hidden motive to find an acting out partner or someone to cosign their BS, I run. My 4th and 5th Steps revealed that I can’t continue to blame these people if I’m just as sick as them and I continue to stick around for diseased behavior (mine and theirs). It helps us both if I walk away from the situation and seek sobriety.

I will find fellows who lift me up with their positive energy and will engage in sober behavior today.

October 22
REALITY
During our active addiction, we had been the embodiment of sickness, tainting reality for all those who came in contact with us. Our spiritual, emotional, mental, and sometimes physical disease had contaminated even those relationships which could otherwise have been healthy. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 92
Addiction has been a futile attempt to escape the pain of our lives - that pain being reality. I would twist reality with lies that I told myself and others. In recovery, we learn that reality will not kill us, but it can be the source of a lot of suffering. Addiction is a self-centered attempt to escape. However, walking through pain is essential in order to move beyond an addictive lifestyle. Accepting reality is the first step to dealing with the pain. Making amends brings our addict behavior into reality. We no longer get lost in fantasies or rationalization. Trusting our Higher Power to carry us through our struggles in life becomes our reality. Although reality is not free from suffering and problems, recovery gives us the tools we need to deal with the pain and live in the solution.
Whenever there is tension and unhappiness, we are either given relief or we come to acceptance. One essential tool is honesty with ourselves and others which helps us find the truth. That truth is the bridge to a new freedom...a life free from addiction.
Today I view reality as my friend. I will try to be honest at all times with myself and others. I will ask my Higher Power to help me see the truth in every situation.

October 23
THE TENTH TRADITION
S.L.A.A. has no opinion on outside issues; hence the S.L.A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy. - S.L.A.A. Core Documents, “The Twelve Traditions”
I might really hate the candidate for president who isn’t in my party but I keep that to myself when sharing at a meeting. If a newcomer came in and heard me ranting about politics they might run from the conflict or use it as an excuse to say no one in program has recovery. Or I might make a fellow sufferer worry about the state of the nation and they might use that as an excuse to act out. I try to focus my shares on experience, strength, and hope. If I can’t do that, I get current. I avoid wasting my time on global issues that I can’t fix in a three minute share (the courage to change the things I can). We don’t have specialty groups that have any outside affiliation (Tradition 3). A.A. learned from its predecessors’ mistakes that if you associate your groups with a movement and that movement fails, the fellowship fails. And if we take sides on an
issue, we waste our time mired in controversy instead of going about the business of recovery. I will stick to my side of the street today and do everything in my power to ensure the S.L.A.A. name doesn’t get drawn into public controversy.

October 24
ROMANTIC CLICHÉS
This condition of being relatively unencumbered by the left-over repercussions of our active sex and love addiction meant that any new sexual or romantic situation could carry a lot of novelty along with it. We had to be careful not to get carried away with this. Beyond the unavoidable and exciting “newness” in a beginning relationship, especially those carrying the possibility of physical and emotional intimacy, we could not build a partnership on novelty. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 155
The simple definition of cliche is something that has been used so often that it is no longer effective or interesting. That’s what happened with my love life. All my relationships were the same - just different faces. A new face always held promise for a better relationship but would soon fall flat. And romance was always the central focus of my life, so how could it avoid becoming a cliché? I always dreamed of having the life of the romance novel or romantic movies, but ended up with abusive partners. The clichés became a way of escaping into fantasy, a way of coping with the misery of life. And the bad clichés like “evil other woman” found their way into my life, too. Jumping around to so many different relationships left me vulnerable to this. I turned into a person that I never wanted to be. S.L.A.A. helped me see reality and throw away the clichés for an open, honest, and therefore intimate relationship that teaches me new things every day and helps me grow.
I will avoid romantic clichés today by getting honest and staying out of fantasyland.

October 25
HOME GROUP
The formality of having a regularly scheduled S.L.A.A. meeting, even if only two are present, can lead to a deepening sense of personal commitment in furthering the recognition of sex and love addiction by others who need to withdraw from it. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 121
What is the most comfortable environment you can think of? What makes it comfortable to you? Do you prefer the presence of many friends, or a small circle of close confidants? Do you prefer to be in a setting where people meet your comments with skepticism, or where your opinions are valued and respected? When we set out to find the right twelve-step group for us, these may be important factors to consider. It’s important that the group we end up at meets our needs. We might not have much choice in where we attend if there is only one group in our area. We may have to adjust to slightly uncomfortable circumstances in the interest of our recovery. If personalities rub us the wrong way, it may be part of our Higher Power’s plan for us to learn how to communicate and understand others. Eventually, we become more comfortable and
identify with our fellows more than we notice the differences. One day, we may find that we are able to more freely express ourselves when at meetings. It is at that moment that we realize we are home.

I am at home when I can express my true self among my peers.

October 26
HEREDITARY PATTERNS
I was raised in a relatively "normal" family. There was no substance abuse, no physical abuse, no sexual abuse. Yet the feelings I grew up with are very similar to those of the people I have heard in S.L.A.A. who grew up in a much more obviously troubled environment. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 210
In their share, this person goes on to say, “My mother was a strong willed, hot-tempered woman who found it easy to criticize but difficult to offer praise or reassurance.” I’m not debating nature versus nurture. But through S.L.A.A. and years of therapy, I was able to see how my parents and their parents didn’t have the tools to deal with emotions and feelings in a healthy way either. They had all the same stuff I had. And what I had previously thought normal was really well-hidden addiction and emotional problems. They were just more skilled at hiding it and swapping addictions than I was. Ways of approaching relationships can be handed down from generation to generation. We learn from our parents how to act in the world (or at least how we don’t want to act). If we see them having affairs or unable to show affection, we are affected. We may replay these tapes well into adulthood. We may believe their negative views on society and life. But as far as anyone knows, the disease of sex and love addiction isn’t genetic. We can change our lives with the help of a Higher Power, the Twelve Steps, and S.L.A.A.
I will work the Twelve Steps of S.L.A.A. today and break away from my familial patterns.

October 27
THE EIGHTH SIGN
We begin to accept our imperfections and mistakes as part of being human, healing our shame and perfectionism while working on our character defects. - S.L.A.A. Core Documents, “S.L.A.A. Signs of Recovery”
The character of the typical addict has often been described as an “egomaniac with an inferiority complex.” Many of us grow up with a skewed perspective of our own personal worth, while putting on a show for the people around us, trying to appear as though we have it all put together. In reality, we hold ourselves to impossible standards, and then beat ourselves up when we fall short of our expectations. It is only a matter of time before the façade crumbles around us. With the twelve-step process, our perspective can be realigned. Our fellows in the program can help us to take an objective view of ourselves and others. When we recognize that all people are flawed, we forgive our own imperfections, and even come to love ourselves for them. This is where the healing process begins. We no longer need be ashamed of who we are. We can take pride in our imperfection, knowing that we are exactly who we are supposed to be.
I accept myself as I am. I am perfectly imperfect.
October 28
DISHONESTY
I could not be honest because, love her or not, I really needed her. She was the security on which I depended for my ability to function. Being honest about the true scope of my feelings was not, and could not be, an option. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 87
Sex and love addiction made me lie to myself and others for most of my life. I always believed that song that said, “All I need is the air that I breathe and to love you.” To this addict, their love was the air that I needed to stay alive! In a closed relationship like that, it’s impossible to state one’s needs or to gamble on letting the chips fall where they may when we make mistakes. I spent a lot of time trying to cover up mistakes, lying, and hiding the real me. I wanted to stay in the immaturity of avoiding responsibility and never deal with the consequences of my actions. And my constant need for “good sex” and adoration made me make a lot of mistakes. It was difficult for me to have any sense of self-esteem when I was always changing myself to fit what other people wanted instead of standing up and being real. I even did it for years in S.L.A.A. But when I finally started opening up and sharing honestly (and consequently falling apart in every meeting), I began to build a strong foundation for dignity and sobriety.
I will be honest with my fellows and God, knowing that I can handle the consequences of my actions with the tools of the program.

October 29
ESTRANGEMENT
One by one such things as satisfaction in our work, friends and social activities dropped away...We had lost control over the rate or frequency (or both) at which we would seek the romantic or sexual “solution” to life’s ills. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 69
Most addicts are no stranger to isolation. Estrangement takes it a step further. We are no longer on friendly terms with the social group that we built with our partner. Our former lover wants nothing to do with us. If estrangement occurred because of our acting out, we usually carry a heavy burden of guilt as well. In recovery, we clear away the wreckage of the past. We ask ourselves, what was my part in the dissolution of the partnership? What can I now do differently? It takes time, but if we do the Twelve Steps and stick to the principles of the program, people see the changes in us and some let us back into their social circle. Sometimes reconciliation with a former spouse or lover occurs. If we stick to our side of the street and are careful to stay on solid spiritual ground, we find our lives opening up in ways we never imagined. We regain the respect of ourselves and others. We no longer have to hide out in addiction. We have a community in S.L.A.A. that helps us have a community in the world.
I will not wallow in isolation today. I will take the necessary actions to be part of my community.

October 30
POWER STRUGGLE
What security we had derived, knowing we could foster insecurity in others, making
them all the more needy and dependent on us, thus insuring our own sense of well-
being. We enjoyed the power our sex appeal gave us in enforcing our dominance over
others by hinting that they could be replaced. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 74
I remember so much crying and dramatic situations in my relationships before sobriety.
Everything I did was about gaining the power in the relationship. I strategically flirted,
ignored, abandoned, or created dramatic situations. I needed a reaction from the other
person that would let me know that I had power over them. Even if I was deathly afraid
of losing them, I would hint that they could be replaced. It didn’t matter that they lost
trust in me over this behavior, as long as I felt a twisted sense of security in fostering
their insecurity. This is where the power struggle always backfired on me. As long as I
relied on these strategies, I was destroying the relationship. And what a mess I was in if
they called my bluff! Sober members in S.L.A.A. showed me that openness and honesty
works much better at building trust and intimacy. It’s okay to compromise sometimes in
a relationship - I won’t die on the spot or be destroyed by the person I care about.
Whenever I feel the desire to have power over another, I can do a fear inventory and
check my motives. The feeling is usually cured when I turn it over to Higher Power and
trust that everything is as it should be.
I will not let my fears force me into a power struggle today. I will pray and meditate and
let go of insecure feelings.

October 31
GUILT
Now we were truly feeling some sense of deep release from the past! We were free of
much guilt for our misdeeds, from the shame of having fallen short of our inner values.
[We allowed] our own personal wholeness to take root and grow. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text,
Page 95
Reflecting on the past was never very serene before S.L.A.A. My mind was too busy
beating myself up for what I had done. No one would forgive me, so why even try to
apologize? I would end up doing something I regretted and beating myself up even
more. I was caught in a vicious cycle of guilt and shame. When I tried to bury or ignore
the feelings, they would come up at inconvenient times whenever a memory was
triggered. Through many long and thorough 4th and 5th Steps and much sharing with
fellows, I have cleared out enough of the guilt to experience a release from the
chokehold of the past. And the 8th and 9th Steps helped me realize that some of what I
thought unforgivable can be forgiven. S.L.A.A. helped me realize that instead of being
uniquely flawed, I was pretty much human and others had made similar mistakes. Guilt
didn’t have to haunt me forever unless I chose to stay in it. Now that I know the truth,
the only reason I would choose to stay in it would be because my addict wants to put
me in a position to act out. This idea reminds me to work through and release regretful
feelings as soon as possible.
If I feel guilty about anything today, I will pray, write a 4th step inventory, and discuss it with my sponsor. I will make amends if needed and let it go.

November 1
THE ELEVENTH STEP
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. - S.L.A.A. Core Documents, “The Twelve Steps of S.L.A.A.”
Prayer and meditation was always difficult for me. I said the prayers that others in program told me to say. But I didn’t believe them. I must have said the Serenity prayer a thousand times before I even thought that any part of it could come true for me. And meditation was less about asking God than it was about asking myself what I was going to do later that day. But with practice and faith, I was able to gain a conscious contact with a Power greater than myself. It wasn’t so conscious at first. It was more like a kid asking Santa Claus for presents. But the more I read about the Eleventh Step and listened in meetings, the more I knew that it had to be about humility. What does God want for mine and others’ lives? And if I discover that, what can I do to help it happen?
At first I resisted, fearing that Higher Power would take away my toys or that I wouldn’t have the strength to maintain a sober lifestyle. But constant prayer and meditation gives me the strength and insight to handle whatever comes.
I will let go of my ego and improve my conscious contact with God to the best of my ability.

November 2
PERFECTIONISM
Two prevailing defects which many of us experienced were perfectionism and pride. Even as we failed to control our petty selfishness or chronic procrastination day after day - were less than "perfect" - we saw that we were learning how to accept progress, rather than perfection! If we could not always be proud of the results of our efforts to change, at least we had earned the right to respect ourselves for the efforts themselves.
- S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 89
I was a competitive gymnast as a child and if I couldn’t get the gold medal every time, I didn’t want to participate. Depression took over and I wouldn’t practice. Most people want to do their best but my perfectionism made me chase after it to the detriment of my sanity. I would try to do everything perfectly and if I fell short I would beat up on myself mercilessly. Progress is slow and steady. Perfectionism is quick and easy (at least in theory – if you are perfect, which no one really is - it’s an impossible goal to attain unless you’re a robot). I had to accept that I’m a human being with faults and I will make mistakes. I only get to be perfect in God’s eyes, even with my mistakes. With the help of S.L.A.A., I found the unconditional love that I had always been seeking and realized that I could be me, flaws and all.
I will strive for progress today, not perfection. I will remind myself that I am loved for me and not for doing everything perfectly.
November 3
VALUES
The brave new worlds of morality where ‘anything goes’ because ‘nothing matters’ boomeranged, leaving us grasping for some residual sense of meaning or reality in life.
- S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 69
Values and self-respect were characteristics I didn’t possess when I was in the depths of my addiction. My outside appearance gave the impression I had them, but when I was acting out or planning in my fantasies to act out, then my values and self-respect went out the window. There was no sense of meaning or purpose to my life. Seeking the next high was empty and the emotional hangovers cut into my self-respect. Walking into the rooms of S.L.A.A., getting a sponsor, and doing the Steps changed all of that. Today I have values and decency inside and out. I cannot claim to be decent with my mind whirling about sex and love addiction. I have learned to match my insides and outsides through S.L.A.A. Doing the right thing and the next right thing is a way of life for me today.
I will ask Higher Power to give me keen perception and understanding so I can quickly identify negative ideas and rid myself of negative feelings and attitudes. Responsibility starts within.

November 4
HUMAN NEEDS
After we were sober a while, we began to name this need which drove us into more and more desperate and hopeless sexual/romantic situations: the need for our lives to have meaning. Having a steady income could be important, having a creative outlet was a pleasure, having mutually supportive friendships was essential. But none of these things gave our lives meaning the way we craved meaning. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 141
Acting out can often feel (and be rationalized) as if driven by a powerful, unconscious urge for basic human needs: the need for freedom, the right to feel, the right to experience, the right to love. These basic human rights have been denied, and still are denied to many people in many ways, in many families, and in many cultures. But in reality, my right to practice free love or seek unadulterated pleasure will not save the world. In my active addiction, my deeply driven need for sexual and emotional freedom was a fantasy that justified a lot of selfish behavior. It was actually destroying everything good and supportive in my life. People didn’t trust me and I almost lost my job over it. I do have the right to sobriety and recovery from the inhumane oppression of my internal addiction. My more human needs like shelter, dignity, and love are met in recovery.
I won’t rationalize behavior today. I will accept real human needs and support myself.

November 5
GENDER ROLES
We needed to see the motives behind the roles we played and the image we presented, to understand the payoffs we had derived from our addiction. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 79

I was such a tomboy growing up. My parents would get frustrated because I wanted the toys that “only boys should play with.” I wouldn’t go near my sister’s Barbie dolls or makeup. Always the rebel, I was refusing to fit into the pretty little girl role that they tried to assign me. I saw women being mistreated and I refused the wife and mother role as soon as I was able. Refusing to fit into the gender roles that society assigned made me feel like an outsider. When I came to S.L.A.A. and found others like me, I realized I didn’t have to feel so alone anymore. That allowed me to look at my motives behind rejecting society’s gender roles. I didn’t want to be abused and I thought if I “acted like a man,” I could have the power in relationships. But I kept choosing abusive men. My addict kept me in that addictive cycle. Today, after working all 12 Steps, I know I don’t have to fit into a role to be accepted by my fellows in S.L.A.A. I have many feminine and masculine aspects to my personality and can accept myself as I am. If others are uncomfortable that I don’t fit into society’s mold, that’s their issue to deal with and God be with them!

I will not try to fit myself to any role in order to be “normal.” I will be me and accept others for who they are.

November 6
FAMILY DISAPPROVAL
I was therefore determined to be the super kid; I would do no wrong. But occasionally my frustration at not being able to earn my father’s approval would be unleashed in explosive temper tantrums. When I left home and tried to function on my own, I discovered how handicapped I was by this deep emotional dependence. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 196

It’s natural for children to seek the approval of those closest to them. As a child, family disapproval can mean we won’t get our basic needs met (being sent to bed without dinner for example). If disapproval makes me numb out in addict behaviors (especially as an adult) instead of helping me find a sense of myself, then I need help sorting through the mess of feelings. S.L.A.A. helped me do that. My sponsor saw that I was enmeshed, so the first step to freedom from the need for my family’s approval was to separate from them for thirty days. I had to rely on my own thoughts and feelings to see what I really wanted in my life instead of using them as a gauge for my behavior. The steps helped me see that if I was doing something good for myself, I needed to keep doing it, even if my family disapproved. Disapproval does not mean death. They still
loved me anyway! And if they didn’t, that was an issue for them to work out, not me. When I stay sober, my family approves of me more and more. I will concentrate on my sobriety today. If confronted with family disapproval I will take a realistic look at the situation and decide if I can/should do better. If not, I will let go of my need for approval.

November 7
SELF-SEEKING
We were right that a meaningful life is one filled with love, but we had distorted that meaning with selfishness, seeking only to “get” rather than to “give,” to “rip” off rather than to contribute. There could be no enduring meaning in “love” that was a rapid consumption commodity on an open market. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 141. We are self-seeking because we are so fearful. In trying to protect ourselves from being hurt, that inward focus on ourselves made us totally lose perspective and consequently all connection with others. In trying to get our needs met, our self-seeking was so blind, that we ended up driving others away, leaving us even more lonely and desperate. Self-seeking is a lonely pursuit. We feel so damaged and worthless that we have to aggressively seek to have our needs met. The only seeking we need to do is to seek our Higher Power. God loves us unconditionally. All we have to do is ask for help. We soon realize that when we seek our Higher Power, our self is taken care of much better than we could ever do alone. We can ask God and others to help us be more useful in doing God’s will. Self-seeking does slip away when we strengthen our conscious contact with a Higher Power.
I will have faith that by seeking God and others, I will receive all that I ever needed.

November 8
JOURNALING
Another defense against these unnerving onslaughts was sustaining awareness by starting and keeping a list of very short observations of exactly how we were feeling...we did not edit out any negative sentiments. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 111. Journaling started for me with my Fourth Step and inventories. But today I read a part of a meditation book or some literature from S.L.A.A. or other 12 step literature – I write summaries and read them to my sponsor and I talk about how it applies to my life. It’s really helped me to grow in recovery and feel closer to my Higher Power and my sponsor. Sometimes I just write resentment inventories or fear inventories or whatever’s on my mind. Getting the swirling thoughts down on paper makes them stand still so I can look at them. When they’re loose in my head I can’t shine the light of reality on them. If I’m dealing with a particular problem I write about that. It’s been key to my recovery to journal every day. When I don’t do it, I feel the difference. I start to get moody or depressed or worried.
I will be searching and fearless in my journaling today, shining a light on all the dark corners of my mind.
November 9
THE TWELFTH CHARACTERISTIC
We assign magical qualities to others. We idealize and pursue them, then blame them for not fulfilling our fantasies and expectations. - S.L.A.A. Core Documents, “Characteristics of Sex and Love Addiction”
As soon as I began the withdrawal process from my sex addiction, I discovered something called love addiction. One person in particular, a married co-worker, was my primary source of emotional stability. I told her on a regular basis how perfect she was. I relied on her to make me feel good about myself. This dependence was just as dangerous as my addiction to sex. I was greatly disillusioned when, inevitably, the flaws began to appear in the idol I had constructed. One careless, drunken night, I wrote her a letter detailing how emotionally destroyed I was when she did not live up to my expectations. In return, she said, “I am not responsible for, nor am I capable of, making you feel better.” It was a harsh, but true statement. I cannot rely on any one individual to get my needs met. No one is capable of being anything and everything to me. Today I see people for what they truly are: flawed individuals just like me. To acknowledge this is to take one more step out of fantasy and into reality.
I forgive the mistakes of myself and others, and recognize that the only true perfection lies with my Higher Power.

November 10
PREDATORY BEHAVIOR
Accessory behaviors include the strategies I have used to obtain partners or materials for acting out. They are warning signs, obsessions and rituals that may precede an episode of acting out or "acting in." - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 108
My sponsor told me to write “watch predatory behavior and flirting” on my bottom lines list. These are behaviors that may not necessarily be a slip, but ones that I need to be very careful around. Predatory behavior can sneak up on me and I’m doing it before I’m aware of it. When I have the thought that I’m attracted to a newcomer, I might approach them to be helpful, not knowing that my ulterior motive is to steal attention from them to feed my ego. This is dangerous ground that could eventually lead to 13th stepping if I don’t stay aware of my motives. Flirting is similar. I have to be sure that I’m doing it with an available person for the purpose of dating and not to obtain some kind of self-serving reward. There are many other predatory behaviors that I engaged in in the beginning of my recovery in S.L.A.A (driving by his neighborhood, dressing in skimpy clothing, having conversations with an erotic subtext, etc.). This kept me acting out for years. I started writing down a list of these behaviors and this kept me vigilant. Finally, the tide started to turn and I was able to stay sober.
I will be aware of my behavior today and tell on myself if I start to engage in predatory behaviors. I will look for support from my fellows and Higher Power to have the strength to abstain.

November 11

LUST
The depression lifted, as the excitement and deception and intrigue took over my life. It was a rollercoaster of fear and lust, but the thrill of secret adventure and new lovers was somehow satisfying, and I did not want to stop. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 165

In my acting out days, my fellows viewed lust as a good thing. We had a “lust for life.” I knew that it had the reputation in religion as being a sin (one of the seven deadly). But that was just another reason for me to avoid religion altogether. Why not just call it desire? It’s defined as sexual desire. When it reaches a certain level, it receives the status of lust. That level is the point where we’re consumed by the search for lovers (or the need to have sex with a particular person). The point at which it reaches addiction is when it blows up everything in our lives and we just can’t stop obsessing. I rationalized that I didn’t want to stop because the excitement eased my depression (self-medicating) and it didn’t completely blow up my life (I still had a job). But with sex and love addicts we hide this character defect even from ourselves. We profess to love someone (and may even believe it on some level) so we can hide lust in a dark corner of our minds. S.L.A.A. helps us get honest and prevents lust from lurking.

I will not depend on lust for excitement. I will go out into the world and concentrate on my life and my sobriety.

November 12

GROWING UP
I'm a kid at thirty-seven, finally learning to grow up! But also like a kid, I'm experiencing life in a new way. The challenges are exciting. The learning is painful but not nearly as painful as all that guilt and acting out. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 206

At 13, when my mom told me that painful experiences were a part of growing up, I remember crying for days. I didn't want to grow up - especially if it involved pain! I liked my stuffed animals, naps and being in my own little make-believe world. I wanted everyone else to take care of me. I was given very few responsibilities. Chores could be easily managed with a fantasy world. Living in the real world was to be avoided at any cost. I held onto that philosophy until I walked into the rooms of S.L.A.A. and started working the steps. Running errands, promptly admitting when we're wrong, being of service and a worker among workers may not be glamorous but can be exciting because it builds self-esteem. I actually started focusing more on contributing at work and I made more money as a result. Knowing that I was earning as a result of my abilities instead of asking someone else for money (and therefore being under their control), was self-esteem building. And I was able to stop looking for partners who would rescue me. Finally growing up made all areas of my life better.
I will not be afraid of the pain of growing up. I will remember that taking responsibility will help my recovery.

November 13
MUTUALITY
We began to notice those daily phone calls, or other overtures which we habitually made to those who never responded in kind. We came to regard the energy needed to maintain these meager relationships as an unacceptable expenditure. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 114

“Am I having the relationship with you that you are having with me?” I have to ask myself this question constantly. As a love addict, I want to fantasize and idealize every relationship. And as a sex addict, I need to do everything I can to manipulate relationships to get what I need. I heard in a meeting that serenity is another word for clarity and honesty. If I'm spending a lot of time and energy on someone who ignores me or doesn’t seem to like me very much, I have to be honest with myself and investigate my motives. If I'm doing anything I can just to make someone stay because I’m afraid to be alone, I have to use the tools of the S.L.A.A. program to learn to feel comfortable in solitude. I can pray and meditate and I learned to take myself out on a date and appreciate myself. If I’m not given loving kindness in my relationships, I can find it in a meeting or in meditation. And I can stop going to the hardware store for milk and realize when someone is not capable of giving me what I need.

I will not try to fix anyone else today. I will take a realistic look at my relationships and have the courage to change what I can and accept what I cannot.

November 14
PROGRESS
From the surrender to our powerlessness over sex and love addiction and then over ourselves, we had come to know ourselves more as we really were, and had entered into partnership with a Power that could free us from the addiction and lead us into a new life. We had begun to develop spiritual qualities which we had never had, or had allowed to go unused during our active addiction. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 89

“Progress, not perfection.” I heard that phrase all the time when I was going to S.L.A.A. meetings and still acting out for years. I couldn’t understand why progress in recovery was so slow when the progression of the disease could be so quick! Why didn’t God just take it away without all this work from me? It’s a long journey from active addict to spiritual recovering person. And progress is difficult to see when you’re still acting out. At first, I needed fellows to point out how much better my life was than in the days of acting out. Eventually, the tools of S.L.A.A. helped me know myself and to see reality enough to see my own progress. And the Steps helped me transform my life into a better version of myself through partnership with my Higher Power. The spiritual qualities like patience and serenity which were never available to me in my addiction, became available with my progress in the program.

I will be happy with slow progress today and patient with my recovery.
November 15

EUPHORIC RECALL

Often a life pattern that seemed, to me, to have been as grim as anything I had experienced myself would simply be lost to the person’s conscious awareness as soon as the current crisis was over...He or she would leave us, ready to go out and repeat the pattern of self-destruction once again. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 39

Euphoric recall kept me stuck in abusive relationships and bad situations my whole life. For some reason, no matter how bad a situation was, after a week or sometimes a couple of days away from the person, I would remember only the good things about them. He was kind to me once, forget about all the times he put me down. He came to see me when it was inconvenient for him - forget about all the special occasions he missed. Overlooking negative experiences usually meant that I wanted to continue to have sex with the person. If I set boundaries or pointed out bad behavior, I risked losing what I so desperately needed to survive. S.L.A.A. sharing dragged me out of that denial. I had to let go of the fantasy that my magical thinking could change a bad relationship into a fulfilling one. Fellows made me remember how miserable I was in the past addictive relationships. Listening to sponsees reminded me of what I used to put up with. Realizing that I could rely on Higher Power instead of sexual acting out helped me to stay out of fantasy. I trained my brain to get out of euphoric recall as soon as possible.

I will not sit in euphoric recall. I will remind myself of the reality of my past by sharing with S.L.A.A. fellows and Higher Power.

November 16

TOOLS OF RECOVERY

What are some of the tools we have found which can help us hold up and behave with consistency in spite of external challenges? Clearly we needed some ways to counterbalance the erosion of our awareness and resolve. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 111

The Basic Text answers this question with some suggestions in Chapter 5, “the Withdrawal Experience,” such as, “Sustaining awareness by starting and keeping a list of very short observations of exactly how we were feeling in withdrawal...daily prayer and S.L.A.A. related activities...regular contact with other members of S.L.A.A., or others who were trustworthy and knew what we were trying to accomplish...abstain[ing] from sexual or romantic entanglements;” “In fact, every way we found that had awareness-sustaining power was important.” I would add to the list of suggestions: self-care, meditation, and if necessary, attendance of other Twelve-Step meetings. Therapy and recovery literature helped keep me aware also. Having non-triggering fun and positive thinking can help too. If I do at least one thing on my list every day, I guard against a slip. The tools of recovery help me stay in program and learn how to avoid the things that drag me back to addiction.
I will use the tools of recovery today to further and sustain my recovery.

November 17
SHAME
I now know that there are others out there who are making their imperfect way through life as I am. I have nothing to be ashamed of. I have everything to look forward to. I have one day at a time. I have myself. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 176
From what I’ve learned about myself in recovery, guilt and shame seem to be the axis around which my disease comes alive. So when I come from a place of shame, and I’m not aware that I’m having these feelings – I act out on them. I go into romantic intrigue or romantic obsession. I try to find my next sexual fix, or I think about cheating on my partner, or I become interested in pornography. When I’m in a state of shame, I lose my relationship with my Higher Power and I start losing myself. The more that I’ve become aware of my shame and am able to make friends with the feelings, the more I’m able to know that the feelings won’t consume me. I don’t need to act on them and I can get a sense of freedom. Knowing that others in S.L.A.A. are trudging the same road with me helps. I try to remember that I wouldn’t shame a fellow for doing the same things I am powerless over because of my addiction.
I will lean on fellows and Higher Power to help lift me out of my shame.

November 18
THE FIFTH TRADITION
Each group has but one primary purpose -- to carry its message to the sex and love addict who still suffers. - S.L.A.A. Core Documents, “The Twelve Traditions”
I try to keep my shares focused on sharing my experience, strength, and hope. S.L.A.A was the solution for me. It brought me to my spiritual experience. Without it, I was destined to a hopeless search for a therapy or religious practice that would cure me. Because of this idea, the Fifth Tradition was born. Our primary purpose is to carry the message. The only thing that matters is that each individual is a sex and love addict and can help other sex and love addicts heal like no one else can. Meetings focus on sobriety. I laugh when the leader of a meeting says, “this is not a place to meet prospective partners.” But that message keeps the focus on our primary purpose for gathering together. Better to do one thing really well than many badly. Carrying the message is important for our survival because we can’t keep the gift of sobriety unless we give it away. The hospitals and institutions program is important, as is speaking at meetings, working with sponsees, and being an example to people in the world who may suffer from our disease and ask us how we got well.
November 19
COPING SKILLS
There was no judgment, no condemnation, no guilt, no punishment, no heaven, no hell, no purgatory, no penance: just the adult manifestations of the coping strategy of a small child trying to survive as best he could in the situation in which he found himself. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 264
Growing up, my coping skills were all addiction-based. They never served me very well. Usually they created more chaos to deal with. Today, after working the Twelve Steps, I rely on Higher Power for everything, for every decision. I call my sponsor to help me clear away all my emotional turmoil. Only then can I make a clear decision because that’s when I am able to hear my Higher Power’s voice. I can’t hear it when I’m clouding over with fear, resentments, anger, excitement, emptiness, shame, guilt, etc. Before recovery, when I’d get in that place where I can’t hear, I used to run and soothe my spinning head and physical being with some sort of acting out. Now instead of acting out, I pray, I write it out, try to look at my behavior by doing a 4th Step. Then I call my sponsor, do a 5th Step, and talk to my Higher Power again. It’s cool that I have some tools. This is what I’ve been looking for my entire life. S.L.A.A. recovery is a gift.
I will use healthy 12 Step tools to cope with problems today.

November 20
ABANDONMENT
The horror of this “death” - a death of my “love” relationship with Lenore - was that my whole self-concept, which had come from being part of her was also dying. My sense of “I” had come out of my sense of “We.” I had no positive, personal, independent self-concept. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 5
I was in a meeting and I heard somebody say, “I abandoned me not to be abandoned by you.” I was so much of a love addict in those days that I would constantly check my messages and ignore my life. In looking back, I realized I was abandoning my needs so as not to be abandoned. It’s been a very long hard lesson. The truth is that I could never be present because if I was in a relationship, I was not with me. I spent a lot of time doing my hair, doing my nails, anything for someone to notice me. As soon as my partner wasn’t around, I was lost in my head and not present for myself. For twenty-one years in S.L.A.A., I’ve worked very hard, and my relationships today with men and women and family are very different. They’re very healthy and I can be content with a loving healthy phone call or interchange and not have to cling and grab. I don’t have to fear abandonment anymore. I have myself, Higher Power, and S.L.A.A to rely on. I no longer take it personally when someone needs to leave. I live my life and let them live theirs.
November 21
GETTING 'HIGH'
The addictive experience has been so mind altering for most of us that, once enmeshed in it, we have lost track of ever wanting to be out of it!...[Eventually] the novelty of each new romance or "reconciliation" no longer screened the truth from view: each new situation was just another hopeless episode, holding about as much promise of fulfillment as swapping bubble-gum cards. As this jaded feeling broke through, the addictive “high” was becoming harder and harder to achieve and maintain. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 106
As a sex and love addict, “getting high” is one of my most favorite ways to check out and live in fantasy. I get a physical hit from an attractive person, from a romantic story, from any fantasy relationship that I can create with a stranger or a good friend. But over time, I became like the crack addict searching the drug dens for salvation and finding only misery and degradation. In my recovery, I’m learning to recognize that ‘high’ and make different choices. I can choose to stop talking to certain people. I can avoid triggering movies. And I can remind myself that an intriguing person is just a friend and that I only feel high because I want to numb out and escape my life. I remind myself that usually what I feel and think has nothing to do with that person, our relationship, or reality.
God, please help me to avoid using people as drugs today.

November 22
NARCISSISM
Self-centeredness and pride seemed to be at the root of our difficulties. We had dressed and acted seductively, craving attention and more than our share of sexual intrigue. We spent money to impress people, and verbally abused those who did not give us the attention we thought we deserved, or tried to hurt those who would not give us our own way. We proved our power by seducing our friends' lovers or spouses, and responded with anger when the satiation of our self-centered needs was thwarted. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 80
My obsession with getting my needs met meant that no one else mattered. At times, I was like a caged animal wanting to stalk its prey. An animal has no concern for the object of its affection except to devour it for all it’s worth. And even when I wasn’t the most narcissistic person in the relationship, I was still participating in self-centeredness. Staying with that kind of unavailable person is a form of narcissism, because I think I’m powerful enough to change them into a person who can give me what I need. Wasting energy on those kinds of romantic pursuits is not giving back to the community or being of service to others. In sobriety, serving my own agenda finally was replaced with seeking God’s will and my narcissism eased. It still pops up in everything I do, because I’m an addict. But S.L.A.A. gives me the tools to recognize and combat it.
I will stay in touch with my feelings today, hopefully enough to realize when I'm being narcissistic. I will use the tools of the program to take the focus off of myself.

November 23
HAPPILY EVER AFTER
The image of our relationship that comes to mind is that of a plant which got pruned at a certain point and then sprouted off in a newer, stronger direction. The roots of the plant are still there, only the growth they are nourishing is a healthy, vibrant one...just for today my story ends with a "happily ever after" by my own definition. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 63
Before my recovery, I thought that the idea of “happily ever after” was some fantastic dream in which I would be with the perfect partner and everything would be magical. I would have all my dreams come true. I didn’t realize that real “happily ever after” means balance in any healthy relationship. This means that sometimes things would be good, and sometimes things would be bad. It means that at times things would be exciting and sometimes things would just be boring. To achieve balance, I have to go inside myself and see who I am, and what I’m contributing to my relationship. The magical thinking of finding “happily ever after” and my corresponding fantasy of what I’ll get out of a relationship is outside of me. I need to look within to find serenity through my Higher Power instead. That is the only thing that is enduring. The fantasy goes up in smoke when the relationship hits rocky waters. But Higher Power and the program of S.L.A.A. are rocks that I can stand on through any storm and find safety. I will let go of my fantasy of “happily ever after” and work on my relationship and myself.

November 24
CONSENSUAL SEX
I am learning to eliminate abuse of all sorts from my life...I give all I can, in whatever way I can, so that when the time comes that I get the insane urge to throw myself away on an abusive sex or love partner, I will be saved. S.L.A.A. and God can save me if I put them first before my sex drive and my need for love. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 260
During written inventories, we discover how much we used and manipulated others or indulged in mutually harmful activities. I always used excuses, saying, “But hey, it was consensual.” Just because a sexual relationship is consensual, that doesn’t mean it’s morally healthy. Throughout my 5th Step, my sponsor kept saying, “In this situation you both were consenting adults, but he was spiritually sick just like you. And when you’re doing something because you’re powerless over an addiction it’s not really giving consent. You’re high and not in your right mind.” When it comes to sex, I now need to pause and ask myself, “Is this for my greater good?” And I need to think about the other person. I ask myself, “Is this for their greater good?” I can’t always take people at their word because I have an addict in me that can misinterpret and manipulate any situation. To stay centered and on the path of sobriety, it’s helpful for me to outwardly question my motives with the help of my program, my sponsor, and outreach calls. Today I make
sure I get more than merely verbal consent before any sexual involvement. I seek the spiritual consent of my Higher Power through the feedback of my support network. I will check my motives and take a realistic look at the situation with the support of Higher Power and program before deciding to have sex.

November 25
THE THIRD SIGN
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. - S.L.A.A. Core Documents, “S.L.A.A. Signs of Recovery”
The phrase ‘life strategy’ sums up my entire essence of existence. When I read that line in the S.L.A.A. Signs of Recovery, I knew it was me to the core. I lived a life of “if not this one, then bring on the none.” My hunger and dissatisfaction were insatiable. I was never content “winning” the man, the search then had to begin for the one to put on the back burner. It was exhausting always headhunting for future victims while obsessing about the current lover. The object was never to be alone with the realization that my life strategy was insane and killing my soul. Thank you, Higher Power, for S.L.A.A. and the last affair that brought me to my knees in a surrender. And thank you for the people who show up to meetings week after week with their experience, strength, and hope to show me the way.
In this moment, I surrender my will. I ask Higher Power to take away my obsession with and desire to pursue romantic and sexual intrigue. I am willing to heal from emotional dependency.

November 26
WHITE-KNUCKLING
I had enough background in psychology to understand the danger of trying to force myself to believe I had no wanting or desire. I knew that if I did this the desire would not go away, but would gather force and probably ambush me at some particularly inopportune moment. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 29
Every addict has been through it: the earnest pledges to stay away from our substance of choice, the electric tension coursing through our body as we lie in bed, mentally banishing triggering notions from our head. We hold on tight, blood forced away from protruding knuckles, hoping we won’t lose our grip before the urge passes. How long can we hold out? How strong must we be to fight our addictive impulses? If we are working a program, we don’t need to worry about personal strength. If our will power alone could keep us from slipping, we wouldn’t need the steps to begin with. The first step says that we are powerless over our addiction. We need something stronger than us in order to find sobriety. Our Higher Power can hold on tighter than we can ever hope to. No more wishing, or swearing oaths, or white-knuckling. By letting go and letting God, we surrender our will to the one who has all power. We no longer need to fight the addiction alone.
Today, I will let go and let God take the wheel. With my Higher Power, I can make it through any temptation.

November 27
WORDS INTO ACTION
We had to put into action on a continuous basis the principles we had used in our inventories and amend-making. We had to concentrate on making frequent appraisals throughout the day of our own intentions and shortcomings, and to do as much as we could to make these right as they happened. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 97
I can’t just sit around and talk about changing. If I say I’m sorry for something, I have to try my best not to continue to harm anyone. My living amends is to make sure I don’t re-engage in the behavior once hurt feelings have mended. I can talk all I want to about spirituality, but if it doesn’t show in my actions, people will know that I’m deluding myself. Doing a Tenth Step every day and reading it to my sponsor or trusted fellow helps me do this. I can get input if my words and actions don’t match up. Others can see if I am living in fantasyland. Getting current helps too. If people laugh at what I’m saying, I don’t take it personally. I realize that my disease is clouding my thinking and I can take action to stay sober. I pray and meditate and turn my will and my life over to the care of my Higher Power. And then I take whatever steps I need to clean up the wreckage of my past and to live in dignity and grace.
I will not be lazy today. I will take the actions that will further my recovery.

November 28
BLESSINGS
We have received, and continue to receive, many blessings we would not have known how to ask for. Life is open-ended, and wonderful. New chapters in well-being await us. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 103
Since getting sober in S.L.A.A., I daily thank my Higher Power for the peace of mind that passes all understanding and for being blessed with loving relationships, worthy goals, ideals, and purpose. Because of recovery, I have personal fulfillment in my work and play. I have been granted freedom from financial worry and blessed with high levels of health and energy - all of which my addiction would have never allowed or would have destroyed had I continued down the path I was on. Even today, after years of recovery, I still ask Higher Power’s help to continue with all these blessings, to have an attitude of gratitude, and to serve at my highest level in my work with others. It’s a blessing that I get to share my S.L.A.A. recovery and as a result become a channel for healing. The program has uncovered these blessings for me. I never would have been well enough to recognize them or participate in them before. Through my work here, I can feel the source of love which is of God flowing inside of me, through many challenges. I’m excited to see what new chapters of well-being await me.
I will be grateful for the blessings in my life and use them for my well-being and to help others.

November 29
SELF-LOATHING
We had…turned this hatred inward, redirecting it against ourselves, using our self-loathing to justify our unworthiness to be loved by others, letting them off the hook! - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 90
How far I was from loving myself when I came to S.L.A.A.! I loathed myself, and all I had done to harm others and to put myself at risk. I did not believe anyone could truly love me, because I saw nothing lovable about myself. After some time in S.L.A.A., I defined my bottom-line behavior. With the aid of my Higher Power, I have been sober from that behavior one day at a time for twelve years. My road to recovery has been full of challenges, and I have had to re-learn how to communicate and relate with others. My Higher Power has loved me through this process. Now I have come to love myself. And by loving myself, I have room and experience to love others. Higher Power has restored a family to me. My fellow S.L.A.A.s’ Higher Power gives me what I need. Because I know that Higher Power loves me, I can love myself.
A day at a time, I don’t act out. I use an attitude of gratitude, and I love myself.

November 30
OPPORTUNITY
Despite all the cultural and rational camouflage behind which our addiction could hide, it was impossible, short of suicide, to kill that innermost voice that whispered to us of life’s opportunities for growth and wholeness that we were helplessly letting slip by. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 70
Opportunity can be a double-edged sword for addicts. Before sobriety, I looked for ways to create the opportunity to act out. If I was success-minded, it was only to find more addictive indulgences. It was more desperation than positive, creative energy. When my love addict took over, the right set of circumstances was a sign that it was meant to be. All opportunities were focused on romance. This allowed my addiction to hide behind cultural and rational camouflage. Everyone wants a relationship, right? I helplessly let everything else pass me by because my addiction was too powerful. Schoolwork, career pursuits, time for family and even time to enjoy nature were not on my radar. My only focus was “him” or the addictive high. S.L.A.A helped me turn that into a more positive search for life-affirming activities. My Fourth and Fifth Steps opened my eyes to a whole new world. It widened my focus to include more than romantic pursuits. I run from opportunities to act out today. I look for ways to increase my conscious contact with Higher Power. All of the beautiful things in life are open to me now because I’m not so focused on chasing a high.
Today I will look for opportunities to have a better life, free from addiction.

December 1
MIND-READING
We could clearly see that the inability of others to take us at our word gave evidence of how distorted their perceptions were. In truth, we could see, in their reactions, much of our own former, addiction-serving “misreading” of the intentions of others. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 116
Mind-reading is a form of fantasy. It’s part of my objectification and sexualization of people. When I’m looking for potential partners, I make up stories in my head about complete strangers – who they are, where they’re going in life, and what their sexuality is. The reality is that I don’t have a clue. The same thing happens when I’m in a relationship. I think my own brain will be more successful in determining my partner’s intentions than I would be if I just asked. As a child, I was afraid to talk about my emotions or inquire about the emotions of others, so I assumed I would have to go on doing things that way for the rest of my life. In recovery, I practice sharing my feelings and thoughts with others so that they may know the real me. When I am unsure of someone else’s intentions, I ask them for clarification. I won’t get anywhere trying to read people’s minds. But if I engage with others, and am willing to be vulnerable and open up about myself, then I get to live in reality. Through this process, little by little, fear fades away.
I will not try to guess what someone else is thinking or feeling. I will take them at their word and really listen to what they’re telling me.

December 2
COMMITMENT
Gaining sober perspectives in the areas of trust, sex and intimacy was difficult. True intimacy, we found, can not exist independent of commitment. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 103
Having experienced infidelity and multiple divorces between my parents, I learned early on that commitment was unsafe and even impossible. I did not see healthy commitment modeled for me so I did not learn how to be a reliable person. Not only did this early learning take a toll on my relationships, it took a toll on my work and my sense of self. I had little trust in others and little trust in myself. Even without these examples, trust is difficult. I had turned other human beings into my Higher Power and became fearful that their unreliability would turn my life upside down. Using the S.L.A.A. tools and 12 steps, I have come to see that faith in a Higher Power could restore my trust in life. I am no longer fearful of turning others into my Higher Power, and therefore my fear of commitment has lessened. But then the real work begins. Having sober perspectives in the area of trust was just the beginning. Sex in a committed, sober relationship has its challenges. I need S.L.A.A. fellows and Higher Power to help me navigate.
I will not be afraid of commitment today because I trust myself and God enough to make the right choices.

December 3
SEX AS COMPETITION
For us, the sexual arena was loaded with treachery and a lot of defensive maneuvering. This caused us a lot of pain and a sense of futility. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 61

I used to be an athlete growing up and it was always like, “Let me show you how great I am. Ta-da! This is the show.” I was always flying around the room. I was never really present. In a crowded room, I always had to have one up on everybody. It didn't usually work out that way, but I felt like if I could get into the sport of any situation, I could feel safe. But having sex as a competitive sport doesn't allow for intimacy. It doesn't allow for me to be the real me. When I’m desperate to win, I usually do a lot of underhanded things. And that doesn’t build self-esteem. Being in S.L.A.A. helped me to learn how to become present and show my true self. I learned it doesn’t have to be a competition, because in any competition someone is going to lose. In a relationship, if someone loses their footing, we both lose. Although people do come and go out of our lives, we never stop relating to them. And relationships are like a scale – the goal is to be centered. If our partner loses and goes down, we may go up for a time and feel like we’ve won, but in doing so we’ve lost our center.

I will not use sex to win anything today. I will only participate if it builds intimacy in my relationship.

December 4

BELOVED

Our wealth of common experience, our deepening knowledge and understanding of each other, began to fulfill that promise of unfolding love which is what we had always been truly seeking in a relationship. We were now capable of loving and of being immensely loved, redeemed, and filled with grace, and we knew this. Our appreciation of this newfound wealth continues to grow, to this day. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 153

It’s impossible to feel beloved when being abused or ignored. I could never reach that point of intimacy with a partner because of my alternating sex addiction and anorexia. Both are blocks to deepening knowledge and understanding of each other. I was too self-centered to bother trying to understand someone else (a fact that was revealed in stark reality in my Fourth and Fifth Steps). And I kept choosing abusive or unavailable partners to continue the cycle of running away from scary intimacy. If someone really knew me, they would hate me, so why even start the process of really getting to know each other? S.L.A.A. restored my self-esteem and helped me find a Higher Power that I could slowly learn to trust more and more. I first felt beloved by my sponsor and fellows in S.L.A.A., then by my Higher Power and then myself. Only after I was given these gifts was I able to embark on sober dating and feel beloved by a partner.

I will express gratitude today for feeling beloved by myself, Higher Power, and others. If I don’t feel it, I will practice self-care, meditate, or reach out to others.

December 5

UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

One area in which we often experienced difficulty was in continuing to be open and forthright about our feelings and motives, and our expectations of others. We would hide...
disappointment, hurt, fear, or anger under a façade of acceptance...[We needed to concentrate] on our own faults and failures. We were coming to know that our own attitudes and actions were the only aspects of our lives which we stood any real chance of influencing. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 97
The character defect of unrealistic expectations was all over my Fourth Step writing. Sex and love addiction is rooted in fantasy. If I sit in the fantasy too long, I start to believe that life should be that way. I can’t look at my attraction to a married man realistically and still try to steal him away from his family. Ego and pride make me have unrealistic expectations of life. This character defect makes it difficult to stay right sized with my feet on the ground. My sponsor taught me to stop the fantasy before it blew up to become unrealistic expectations. Talking to fellows and sharing at meetings can bring the expectations to light and help me see where I’m being unrealistic. True partnership can only be in reach if I look at the other person as the human being that they are and not try to mold them in my mind into who I want them to be.
I will not try to control or regulate anyone. I will stick to my side of the street and try to have realistic expectations.

December 6
THE TWELFTH STEP
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. - S.L.A.A. Core Documents, “The Twelve Steps of S.L.A.A.”
The key here is the spiritual awakening as the result of the Steps. If my therapist had been able to cure me of my addiction, I probably would have made her my Higher Power and eventually drifted away from program. But the Steps will always bring about some kind of spiritual awakening, hopefully sufficient enough to help us stay sober and want to give back to the program. Spiritual awakenings can vary from little “aha” moments to lightning bolt experiences. Any variety can be enough to help us try to carry the message and practice the principles. No one wants to work for free. In early recovery, when I was asked to speak on the other side of town or to clean up after a meeting, my first thought was, “I should be getting paid for this.” I came to realize that my payment is sobriety. And carrying the message can sometimes be payment itself. When people express gratitude for our service or when we see even hopeless cases recover, it can be very self-gratifying (as long as we stay humble). Practicing the principles in all areas of our lives can be a difficult task. Attempting this sometimes brings out my perfectionism. But if I’m doing a thorough Tenth Step every night and practicing the Eleventh Step, it is possible.
I will try to do (at least part of) the Twelfth Step every day to keep in spiritual fitness.

December 7
UNSTRUCTURED TIME
Even in the midst of withdrawal, we turned to hobbies or new pursuits that were engrossing and would consume some time and energy. As the addictive cravings
lessened, we often found ourselves actively enjoying these new activities and the
discovery, or re-discovery, of talents. We have, among S.L.A.A. members, new Ph.D.’s,
new musicians, new marathon runners, new artists. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 140
When we were in our addiction, unstructured time was a terrifying concept. All we knew
how to do was fill it with acting out and unhealthy behaviors. Acting out let us escape for
an all too brief time, but the costs of that escape were great. So we learned to fear
unstructured time, as it triggered the insanity of our addiction. Now in recovery, we no
longer fear it. We welcome it, as it gives us opportunities to work our program and
nurture ourselves. We read and reflect on recovery literature. We pray and meditate.
We call a program friend. Some of us have taken on new hobbies or gone back to
school. A whole new world has opened up to us now that we aren’t leaving time open
“just in case he/she calls!” In sobriety, unstructured time has become a gift that allows
us to connect with ourselves, with God and with others. When we’re thinking of God and
others, no time is unstructured.
I welcome unstructured time as a gift in my recovery. I will fill it with thoughts of God and
how I can help others.

December 8
KEEP COMING BACK
People found some grievance to serve as an apparent justification for leaving S.L.A.A.
Some other S.L.A.A. member’s personality traits, or some perceived S.L.A.A. "line" on a
topic relating to sobriety, was often used as an excuse to have nothing further to do with
the Fellowship. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 120
The Basic Text goes on to say that, “our group experiences seem to indicate that our
difficulties with open, honest relationships with other human beings make us especially
vulnerable to this kind of excuse to isolate ourselves from the Fellowship.” Even though
we say “keep coming back,” to newcomers, they might not listen and they may leave.
The Basic Text offers guidance on this: “We have neither resisted this type of strategy,
nor have we encouraged it. After all, such individuals ultimately answer, as do we all,
not to the S.L.A.A. Fellowship, but to the personal addictive pattern itself.” I tried to talk
myself out of meetings many times over the years. But I heard so many personal stories
of people leaving and dying from our disease (or coming back and reporting great
suffering) that I stuck around. And the few times I did try to leave, I got so beaten up by
my disease that I came crawling back, begging for help to ease my suffering. The
Fellowship saved a seat for me and welcomed me back with open arms. That helped
me want to stick around. Staying in S.L.A.A. meetings saved my life and gave me a life
worth living.
I will not listen to my disease today if it tries to convince me to leave S.L.A.A. I will pray
and meditate and stay.

December 9
THE THIRD CHARACTERISTIC
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. - S.L.A.A. Core Documents, “Characteristics of Sex and Love Addiction”

Before joining S.L.A.A., I would get into relationship after relationship. Sometimes, I would have a partner who assumed I was monogamous with them, and then have someone on the side. I did this compulsively, repetitively, and without any self-awareness. Inside, I had such a deep feeling of loneliness and deprivation. After going to outside resources for help, talking to people in S.L.A.A., and talking with my sponsor, I realized that it came from experiences in childhood in which I felt deprived. As an adult I was still carrying those feelings with me even though I wasn’t actually experiencing deprivation in my life. I was self-medicating by getting into one sexual liaison after another. Even emotional and romantic liaisons that were non-sexual that were somehow intriguing or thrilling kept me from my feelings. It was a way to escape not unlike how an alcoholic or drug addict would escape using drugs or alcohol. Since I joined S.L.A.A., I am able to acknowledge and accept that sometimes I have feelings of deprivation and loneliness, but I don’t have to act out on them. I can just have my feelings.

If I feel deprived today, I will go to a meeting, share, pray, and make outreach calls.

December 10
CONTRARY ACTION
Many members of the fellowship find it helpful to list behaviors that have a positive, personal element - behaviors that fulfill, nurture, bring healthy pleasure, growth and improve quality of life. Committing to do them can fill the time that we used to spend acting out and can help us grow along spiritual lines. - from the “Setting Bottom Lines” pamphlet

When the impulse to act out comes up, my sponsor tells me to take contrary action. Usually, this means actions of self-care: meditating, going to a meeting, or taking myself out on a date. Sometimes, it can even be as simple as listening to classical music. Self-destruction was always my default action in my acting out days. When I practice healthy habits, I’m less likely to unconsciously beat up on myself if I’m in the midst of triggers. When I encounter a person or situation that used to trigger me to act out in the past, I can stop, pray, and decide the best action to take towards serenity. If I can’t see what that action is, I can call my sponsor or a fellow. (Thank God for cell phones!) Outreach and prayer are great tools of the program. They stop the addict voice of the past that says, “What can I get away with?” and turn it into, “What will help my spiritual recovery?”

Today, if an opportunity for acting out presents itself, I will take contrary action, pray, or make an outreach call.

December 11
SOCIAL MEDIA
I had thought that through time, the S.L.A.A. program, and...psychotherapy, I had let go of M., but I realize now that I had always been holding onto the shred of the fantasy that
somehow, sometime, we could reestablish an intimate relationship. – S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Pages 264-5

New forms of social media arise quicker than we can add them to our bottom lines. They make it easier to reach out and connect with an old flame, and allow us to keep tabs on or stalk ex-lovers. Every “like,” every positive comment, every picture of our ex with someone new, has the power to lift our egos and smash them to pieces. Exchanges of emotional intrigue, that may have once taken months, may now take place in minutes. Yet it is not the medium that causes us pain, so much as our addictive impulses and our capacity to exploit any situation or environment to meet our addictive needs. Living in the modern world may require us as sex and love addicts to set limits on what types of media we consume, or how we consume them. It doesn’t mean we must cut ourselves off from technology completely. Working with a sponsor helps us determine what works best for us in our recovery. That may mean avoiding social media sites, unfriending past lovers, or unfollowing friends so we don’t see their posts. If we are honest with our sponsors and others in the program, we can determine what methods work best to stay sober.

I will not engage in emotional intrigue today. I will identify my triggers and develop a plan with my sponsor to abstain from this type of behavior.

December 12
CHAOS AND DRAMA
We were working at standing still, at freeing ourselves from the tentacled clasp of a frightful addiction which had driven us to such a pitch of self-destroying activity. Simply not doing it took tremendous effort. We were suspending, for the moment, our very real fears concerning the outcome of all this by attending to those tasks immediately at hand. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 109

Before S.L.A.A., I believed that it was normal to bicker and constantly have fresh chaos and turmoil in intimate relationships. That’s what I experienced as a child; that’s what I created as an adult. I ran from it as a child and hid out in my fantasy world. As an adult, I thought life was boring without it. I had to create dramatic situations in order to test my partner’s loyalty or gauge interest. The resulting chaos was always more than I could handle. It became like a snake that would move too quickly for me to catch it. Life as a snake-handler was stressful. It didn’t allow for hopes and dreams. I had a sense that something was wrong in that I could not change it on my own. Through working the steps in S.L.A.A. I have healed most of the long-term baggage that I thought I would carry around forever. The obsession to act out has been removed from me and I no longer compulsively create drama. I no longer inject chaos. I’m happy today. If I can do it, you can do it too.

I will attend to tasks immediately at hand today and avoid feeding my need for chaos and drama. I will turn unhealthy desires over to Higher Power.

December 13
DECEPTION
Most of us were riddled with insecurity and feelings of inferiority. We were terrified that if we gave up the “con,” and the defects which gave rise to and supported it, we would be viewed with contempt and would never find anyone to “love” us again. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 85

In active addiction, I thought defects were my friends. I thought it was natural and that everyone lied to get ahead. No one revealed their true selves at parties and in nightclubs. They had to have a con in order to find someone to go home with. My endless predatory search drew me to the places that I would most likely find sex. I had to live that life of percentages, because I was too insecure for the quiet, intimate, patient way of getting to know people and becoming intimate before having sex. Putting on the “con” was exciting. The risk of getting caught brought an adrenaline rush and feeling of superiority that was difficult to give up. And past experience taught me that whenever I revealed my true self, I was abandoned or viewed with contempt. No one wanted to deal with my problems (maybe because I met them in a bar). My sister met her husband in a bar and lied to him about being a smoker. They’ve been married for twenty-five years now and have two kids. There was always proof in the world to rationalize my defects. S.L.A.A. taught me to let go of my rationalizations and defects and become vulnerable. Through working the Steps and following a dating plan, I was able to ease my insecurity and become intimate.

I will be as honest as I can today. I will practice self-love instead of deception to heal my insecurity.

December 14
SOCIAL ACCEPTANCE
In relationships with others we let go of self-serving power and prestige as driving motives. This left us open to the discovery of just what it is that makes any relationship with people, whether professional, personal or social, worthwhile. We found that in relationships with others we had only as much to gain as we had to share. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 102

I always craved social acceptance but felt like an alien who was abandoned on this earth without a map. I also blamed my inability to connect on others: My parents moved me around the country too much; they didn’t allow friends over to the house; my boyfriend was controlling and jealous so I couldn’t go to social events. The list of excuses was long. But when I truly looked inside, I knew that I was only finding ways to hide out, because I felt that I would never be accepted for who I was. And my way of hiding out was usually to numb out in fantasy about a relationship saving me and meeting all of my needs. I didn’t need the social acceptance, because I had “him.” But that wasn’t reality. “He” was usually never there for me. When I found S.L.A.A. and started going to fellowship and social functions, I found where I belonged. I was able to be a total nerd or to fall apart emotionally and people loved me through it and understood. And when I got sobriety and started giving back to the S.L.A.A. community, I started getting acceptance from the outside world, too.

Today I am happy with who I am, and if others accept me, that’s great!
December 15
LIVING IN THE PAST
Our feelings about [love interests] often had taken on, during withdrawal, the rosy glow of sentimentality and idealism, especially in circumstances where the former spouse or lover had been living a considerable distance away from us. We were not thinking about the old, chronic, and perhaps only dimly recognized breakdowns in communication which had formerly crippled us. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 147
While it is good to learn from the past, as sex and love addicts we learned the wrong things. Many of us still live in that time, trying to protect our inner child from being hurt and abandoned. But we are adults now, and we live in the present. The past is no longer our reality. We are not as powerless as we once were. We can nurture that hurt inner child and nurture our adult selves in the process. Now we deal with what is immediately in front of us. God takes care of the future, and he’ll help us surrender the past, if we let him. The pain and abandonment of the past led us into addiction. By not letting go of it, we abandon ourselves. Others love us in the present. The past is but a small part of who we are. God changes us into people who live in the present and act from our hearts.
I will surrender the past to God. I will live in this present moment where my new life of acting from the heart resides.

December 16
PRACTICE
We discovered that we needed to continue to live out the values which emerged in us through our recovery in S.L.A.A. in all areas of our lives. We had learned to work toward a high standard of honesty, openness, sharing, and responsibility, and to treasure the feeling of purpose and sense of belonging which accompanied these values. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 102
We strive to practice 12-Step principles in all areas of our lives. Part of the five “S’s” in the S.L.A.A. Preamble to the basic text is: “Our practice of the Twelve Step program of recovery to achieve sexual and emotional sobriety.” We practice the 12 Steps and then we get a spiritual practice. In Step 7 of the S.L.A.A. Basic Text there are clear instructions on spiritual practices: “This new partnership with God, in which we accepted direction about just what part of our spiritual being needed exercise, had amazing results. As we practiced thoughtfulness toward others, really giving without holding onto the expectation of reward, impatience slipped away.” When we ask God to remove a defect, it doesn’t just magically disappear. We may have a momentary reprieve or see what’s hidden behind the defect. We have to practice “doing the right thing.” Even if we fail to change ourselves, we can use our mistakes to learn and improve our conscious contact with Higher Power. I heard the old saying, “Practice makes perfect,” my whole life. But the 12-Step program emphasizes progress not perfection.
I will strive to practice the 12 Step principles in all areas of my life today.
December 17
THE SIXTH TRADITION
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. - S.L.A.A. Core Documents, “The Twelve Traditions”
When we have one goal and focus (Tradition 5- Each group has but one primary purpose - to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers), the Fellowship has more of a chance of survival and can help more people. Addicts (especially sex and love addicts) tend to want to be all things to all people. That's why we need boundaries that are clear. No matter how great the cause, we don’t endorse, finance, or lend the S.L.A.A. name. Addicts often have a lot of bad ideas and waste a lot of time debating whether they are bad ideas or not. Even if we put our money and time into worthwhile endeavors, we are still taking resources away from our primary purpose. I have read every book that a particular famous psychologist has written on sex and love addiction. But I wouldn’t tell my home group to sell his books at our literature table or donate part of our rent to his foundation. If we did so and this man was found to be a fraud, people would lose faith in our group. Individually, I can buy his books and donate. But the group needs to take care of itself. I will focus on carrying the message today and let others worry about outside enterprises.

December 18
FEAR
Deep-seated fear still lurked behind the scenes, prodding us into making unreasonable demands and attempts to extract absolute security from our personal relationships and endeavors. Only slowly and sometimes grudgingly had our provisional use of a Power greater than ourselves given way to a more regular reliance on this Power for guidance. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 98
Fear motivates nearly every action in the addict’s life. It was instilled in us during childhood. Every time we witnessed what speaking up would lead to, every time we felt judged for sharing our feelings, every time we saw the model of what we wanted to be and realized that we fell short, fear was there to paralyze us. Most people are familiar with Franklin Roosevelt’s famous quote, “We have nothing to fear but fear itself.” Maybe it's a cliché, but it’s true. It is only fear that holds us back and tells us we cannot be ourselves. It is only fear that leads us to cling to qualifiers or return to the computer for more acting out. If we are to combat this fear and live freely, we must remember that our Higher Power is in control. Faith in God erases fear. When we give our will and our lives over to our Higher Power, fear no longer runs our lives. We can live free, accepting life on life’s terms, and know serenity. When I am standing next to what looks like an imposing mountain of fear, I can use the tools of recovery to knock it down to a climbable molehill.
December 19
QUICK TEMPER
The quick temper we asked God to remove was checked momentarily; we could suddenly feel the defensive fear that was hidden behind the anger, and find the courage to act on faith rather than fear. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 89
My dad was a rageaholic when I was growing up, so I always tried to avoid lashing out in anger at anyone. I worry and find it difficult to manage the fear. When worrying reaches a boiling point, it comes out as anger, and I lose my sense of humor. I don’t realize that there are stages to a quick temper. First, the fear and worry, then the defensiveness, and then the anger. If I’m worried about losing my job for months at a time and someone makes a comment about my performance, I get defensive and explode in anger at them. The program taught me to meditate and pray. I read in a recovery book on Step 2 that I could take a year break off of worrying. I don’t know if I’ll be able to do that for a year, but I’m mindful of the fear and practice every day. Today, when someone comments on my performance, I take a realistic look at my behavior. Are they right? I try to change where I can and if I can’t, I have faith that Higher Power will show me the way in each situation.
I will not let fear cause me to lash out in anger today. I will have faith that Higher Power is there for me.

December 20
EMPATHY
Yet here I was, not acting out addictively and actively reaching out for others with whom to share the awareness I had found about my addiction. There was a great sense of warmth in discovering, experiencing and sharing a common bond with...other people. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 36
It was always difficult to understand or feel what another human being was experiencing in my acting out days because I was so self-centered. I never even noticed or cared what another person felt unless it affected me. Being able to sit in a meeting and actually listen to everyone’s open and honest sharing has helped immensely. I hear people talk about things that I’ve experienced before and I relate. Even if I haven’t experienced what they’re talking about, I usually have felt the same feelings. Sometimes I feel like my empathy goes too far and I’m depressed for the rest of the day or crying when I don’t mean to (after all, I am trying to heal my co-dependency). But I’ve come to realize that if that happens, it just means that emotions are surfacing that I need to look at. And there’s a lot of supportive energy when sadness is shared in a room full of people who are capable of empathizing.
I empathize with others and am grateful that I can be present enough to do so today.

December 21
SELF-FORGIVENESS
Through the Fourth Step process, we realized that pride and willfulness had hidden the yearning of a lonely and fearful child, an emptiness that cried out to be filled. We did not
cause it, and we could not control it. In this realization was the beginning of compassion, our first glimpse of self-forgiveness. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 81

Before program, I couldn’t deal with the shame that I felt over my acting out behaviors. I tried to numb it out and blame it on alcohol. But in my heart, I knew I was broken. I thought I could deal with the yearning, loneliness, and fear with my search for “the one” in, of all places, bars and nightclubs. But as most of us know, that’s usually not a good strategy. It just created more shame and emptiness, a feeling that there was no hope in the world. One night stands and public liaisons with married men do not create good self-esteem opportunities. Hearing people share their experience in S.L.A.A. gave me hope. I brought all the shameful acts out in my Fourth Step and my sponsors said they had gone through the same experiences. I realized I was not alone. I didn’t have to be that fearful child lashing out at the world anymore. I could be kind to myself and forgive my actions instead of engaging in self-destructive acts. S.L.A.A. gave me a new freedom and joy in fellowship and newly found respect of myself and from others. I will forgive myself for my past addictive behavior and I will not act out today.

December 22
GOSSIP
I became terribly disillusioned toward the end of ninth grade when I discovered that people were gossiping about me just as much as I gossiped about them...Emotionally, I had adopted [a “Lone Eagle”] stance to the world - I spoke to no one about my inner life. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 233

It doesn’t say anywhere in our 12 Traditions “thou shalt not gossip” (although it does break anonymity). It’s human nature to talk about other people. But I learned in program that gossip mixed with anger is a polite form of murder by character assassination, feeding our ego by proclaiming our own righteousness and putting ourselves above the people we are talking about. We aren’t trying to help them. Gossip, by definition, involves details that are not confirmed to be true. I always tempered my shares early in program because I was so afraid of people talking about me. In my family, gossip is dangerous because it is character assassination and is used against me to make me feel shame. Over the years in program, I’ve learned to forgive the people who gossip about me. I realize that they are spiritually sick. And I don’t have to fear that their words will destroy me. The people who know me love me and know that the gossip is untrue. And the people who don’t know me will either get bored and focus on someone else, or will come to see the truth. All I need to do is stick to my side of the street and focus on my life and the rest will resolve itself.

I pray for the strength to be open and honest, even when I’m afraid of gossip. I will have faith that Higher Power will help me if I ask.

December 23
MILESTONES IN S.L.A.A
This shift in our attitude from need to hope brought us to another fundamental milestone in our recovery. We had laid the first foundation stone for the acquisition of faith. We had
seen that it was possible for us to live through the pain of withdrawal without returning to our old patterns, and we sensed that the Power to do this was coming from outside ourselves. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 76

When the FWS store started selling Step chips, I thought it was strange. But when I gave my sponsee her Step One chip and realized what a milestone it was to work through the Steps with someone else, I realized the value. Admission of powerlessness, having a spiritual experience, letting go of long-held resentments, making amends, recognizing and letting go of character defects, and being comfortable carrying the message are all milestones in recovery. The list goes on and on. If we stick around long enough, we get to experience them all. We constantly grow and change. When we get through pain without going back to our old patterns, we know that the addiction doesn’t have its power over us. The Steps are the blueprint and we are the architects. Higher Power doesn’t change us without our help. Loved ones may not see each milestone as it happens, but they see the changes in us. We know that although S.L.A.A. is hard work, it’s a much better way of life.

I will recognize and celebrate my milestones in recovery today.

December 24
INDEPENDENT

I had never learned a sense of independent thought. All my responses to life were gauged in terms of what my parents would expect of me. While this is undoubtedly true of many people, I’m not sure it lasts well into most people’s thirties. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 198

It started with my parents. The message of my upbringing was, “You have no common sense, so let me control you.” Independent thought was met with rage. How dare I speak out? Children are to be seen and not heard. I carried that into all of my relationships. If I had my own thoughts or expressed some need, I would ruin the relationship. I desperately needed to avoid a dismal future of becoming some old cat lady trudging to the grocery store by herself. Those were my options. Not the vision of what I am today! S.L.A.A. taught me how to feel comfortable in solitude and take care of my own needs. It helped me discover new hobbies and find a purpose in life. I don’t have to shut down my dreams in favor of preserving relationships anymore. If someone has an opposing thought, I discuss with them instead of plunging into paranoia that they will run screaming from me. When a task needs to be done, I don’t search for the rescuer who will do it for me and then control me because of my inability to take care of myself. I do it on my own, my and (hopefully) God’s way. I can be confident in my independence because I rely on Higher Power.

I will rely on God and myself today and know that my thoughts and dreams matter.

December 25
LISTENING
Whatever decisions were to be made would have to be the result of really being able to hear the other’s points of view - not just listen, tolerate, and dismiss the other. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 60

I read an article that said talking about ourselves releases dopamine. Some people get addicted to this and talk too much. We need to learn the art of listening. I think that’s what S.L.A.A. teaches us. No crosstalk means that we have to sit and listen to a thirty-minute speaker or three-minute share without interrupting them with our self-centered thoughts. We may have those thoughts, but we don’t say them out loud. And we get to practice concentrating on what the speaker is saying instead of ourselves. Meditation teaches us to listen for God’s will. I learned to listen to my sponsor when I hit enough brick walls to realize maybe she had some experience, strength, and hope to help me out of that kind of pain. I found my intuition in S.L.A.A. (something that was never present in my acting out days), and began to listen to myself. Listening takes patience and humility. The article also said that we get bored after thirty seconds of listening to someone else. The boredom is a lack of dopamine. With sobriety, we learn to get appropriate amounts of dopamine from healthy activities, instead of being addicted to getting more at all costs.

Higher Power, help us to put our self-centeredness aside and listen to others with empathy and compassion.

December 26
SUPPORTING S.L.A.A
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 the contributions of its membership and is free to all who need it. - S.L.A.A. Preamble

When I dropped coins in the 7th tradition old-timers would say, “How much money did you spend on your addiction?” Thousands. And it would have been hundreds of thousands if I had continued in my disease. But why should S.L.A.A. be supported entirely through contributions of its membership? Because of our 7th Tradition. If I don’t support S.L.A.A. monetarily and with service and attending meetings, it won’t survive and I will consequently die in my disease. It can’t be free to all who need it if we aren’t doing volunteer service work and giving donations. I always thought of it as a one-way street. S.L.A.A. supports me. But after the Program supported me for a while, I realized that the ones who stuck around and stayed sober were of service and really cared about making sure S.L.A.A. had a future. When old-timers do the work “for fun and for free,” newcomers realize the idea of humility. It helps us stay nonprofessional (Tradition 8) and stick to our primary purpose (to carry the message). We don’t have to be swayed by any one contributor’s opinion out of fear of losing their donations. Today I will support S.L.A.A. to the best of my ability.

December 27
CASUAL SEX
I sedated my anxiety, sadness and emptiness with a lot of casual sex...going to bed with - the guy I met in the laundromat, the guy who worked in the liquor store, the guy who lived upstairs and his roommate, and the man I met when my car broke down. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 212

If you take the emotion out of the word “casual” it means “not permanent.” I preferred sexual relationships this way (except when I couldn’t get enough on demand). “Let’s keep it casual” allowed my social and emotional anorexia an excuse to flourish unnoticed by me. When emotions are involved, “casual” means “relaxed and unconcerned.” This has made me realize that I have never had casual sex. It was never relaxed when I was on the hunt for the drug to sedate my anxiety or uncomfortable feelings. And even though I acted unconcerned, I was secretly very concerned all the time. I had all kinds of fears swirling around in my head that I never let out. Usually, numbed out feelings came back full force or more the morning after an encounter. Being in a constant state of needing more just to feel even doesn’t ease anxiety. After years of sobriety in S.L.A.A, I’ve come to find that many things in life can be casual, but for me, sex isn’t one of them. I need some permanence and concern.

I will not fool myself into thinking I can handle casual sex or that it would solve any of my problems. I will seek real connection instead of numbing out.

December 28
THE SEVENTH SIGN
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. - S.L.A.A. Core Documents, “S.L.A.A. Signs of Recovery”

Talk about low self-esteem! Putting myself down used to be one of my favorite things to do. A friend in S.L.A.A. broke me of that habit. Whenever I was around her, she would only allow me to say nice things about myself. Doing my 6th and 7th Steps also helped me realize that I am human and make mistakes. I don’t have to let perfectionism rule my life and make me feel like I’m a piece of crap. My sponsor always said, “To have self-esteem, do esteemable acts.” Being of service accomplishes that. But even when we deal with all those feelings of low self-esteem, this sign of recovery can be difficult. Many of us have been abandoned our whole lives. And we have been immature, refusing to take any responsibility for our lives. Through my work in S.L.A.A. I was able to stop going for the unavailable people who would surely abandon me, and instead choose the trustworthy, reliable person. With all of this, I finally learned to feel comfortable in solitude. The person that I used to be was no fun to be around and it was dangerous to be alone with her crazy thoughts. But the person in recovery is pretty great! Who would have ever thought I would say that about myself?

I will take a quiet moment to myself today and give any fears of abandonment or responsibility to Higher Power. If I feel uncomfortable in solitude, I will look at those feelings and try to understand them.
December 29
JUDGMENT
Today I can compare that calm, centered feeling to a candle burning steadily. That small flame guided me on my path. When it burned steadily, I was usually on good spiritual ground. When it flickered or went out, I was headed for trouble. The process of stopping what no longer worked, and learning new ways to add things which did work, was pretty smooth. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 249
Good judgment is not my strong suit. Making considered decisions was never appealing to me, much less within my reach. I was so powerless over my addiction that I had to rush into everything without really thinking about it. Getting it done now was imperative because so many things in my life tended to evaporate into the ether. In my chaotic, hurried existence there were no sensible conclusions. The things that made sense to my diseased mind were insane in reality. I did some crazy things thinking it would make my qualifier stay or come back. And whenever faced with the choice of two actions, I always chose the easiest, which is not always the healthiest. Program helped me with judgment by teaching me to ask fellows, pray and meditate, and write. Tenth Steps, pros and cons lists, and journaling all help me consider a decision in depth. I still may choose the wrong path, but no one can say I didn’t make an effort and I usually learn something useful. Out of it all, I can be proud of the fact that I’m more aware than I was in the days of my addiction. Seeking God’s will keeps me centered.
I will not rush into decisions today. I will pray, meditate, and write until the answers come.

December 30
TURNING IT OVER
We came to understand that if we were unable to prescribe our own treatment for sex and love addiction, then we would be better off turning “our will and our lives over” to the God of our understanding, even if we did not know what might happen as a result. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 77
How do we turn over our will? Clear instructions to become ready to do this are given in Step 3. First, we look at where our beliefs have been faulty (relationships, personality traits, and values). Then we stay clear of addictive entanglements and pray. We pray when we get up in the morning and say a thankful prayer when we go to bed at night. Once on the path of turning it over, we will often be attacked by doubt, fear, and longing - voices telling us to go back to our old lives. We can stay on the path of conscious contact with a Higher Power of our understanding by sharing at an S.L.A.A. meeting, taking time for reflective solitude, and gaining insight into ourselves and our addiction. Insight comes from a thorough 4th Step. But it can also come from dreams, psychotherapy, meditation, or sharing. Once we refuse to waste our energy on addiction, and instead turn to Higher Power, the insights are able to come into view. I will let go of old ideas and choose Higher Power’s will today, not my own. If any action seems to go against God’s will, I will avoid it.
EXPERIENCE
As we realized how helpful this network of support was, we sensed that a belief in any specific God or divinity was unnecessary. Our need for faith could be answered with an affirming hope, a sense of the possibility for spiritual guidance that was already apparent in the experience of the S.L.A.A. members who preceded us. - S.L.A.A. Basic Text, Page 75

Those in S.L.A.A. who have many years in program and have sponsored many people can teach us a lot. They keep coming back and offer us examples of how to deal with life. Even if they have difficulties, they continue to show up and face their responsibilities. They keep the S.L.A.A. network of support going and are living proof that the program works and there is hope. Just the fact that they’re in the rooms instead of out there creating havoc and demolishing lives is enough. Sometimes they say things that newcomers remember and it can give them hope. They share their experiences in sickness as well as in health, so we can see how far they’ve come. We can ask questions during fellowship and maybe get some insight into how to handle our own problems. There weren’t many problems that my sponsor hadn’t come across. She always shared her experience, strength, and hope and that helped me come to an answer. If she hadn’t experienced it, she had a group of other long-time sober people to ask. The Fellowship helps me deal with life sanely and soberly.

I will draw on the experience of others today if I need to. If not, I will share my experience and try to be helpful.
2017 AGENDA Appendix B
Motions and Items for Discussion
2017 S.L.A.A. Annual Business Meeting,
July 25 – 28, 2017
Fourth Version – July 25, 2017