

theJournal

September-October 2008

Back to Basics

A Program of Twelve Steps for Spiritual Recovery



Single issue \$3

Make an International Difference

All you need to write for the Journal is experience with addiction and S.L.A.A. recovery. Any member of Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous, new or seasoned, may submit a piece for consideration. Through the Journal, members of Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous serve together to carry the solution for sex and love addiction worldwide.

Submitting an article is easy. You can email your submission to the Journal using the email address below. You can upload it through theSLAAJournal.org. We accept all common file types. If you do not have Internet access, you can send a CD (compact disk) to Fellowship-Wide Services at the below address. If you cannot type or do not have access to a computer, perhaps someone who does can take dictation for you. We will also accept manually typed or legibly hand-written submissions through the Fellowship-Wide Services address below.

Please read the writing and submission guidelines just inside the back cover before you begin writing.

We ask that you include your phone number so we can reach you to resolve any ambiguity in meaning and your general location or postal code so we can balance the submissions geographically. Please also include your name as the author. You may use a pseudonym or pen name.

You can, if you wish, include your last name with your submission, but if your piece is published, we will replace it with your last initial for purpose of anonymity at the press level. It is the policy of Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous to maintain both anonymity and confidentiality regarding the storage and usage of contact information; It is against our policy to sell it or give it out.

Through the act of submitting a piece, writers waive their rights to compensation in association with the submission and grant all rights associated with the submitted piece to Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous, Inc. to edit, quote, print, publish, and distribute the submission in the Journal or publication of collected works. All published submissions are protected under the copyright of the entire issue in which they have been published.

editor@theSLAAJournal.org

Help us avoid spam email. Please do not give this email address out to non-members or publish it on the World Wide Web.

Fellowship-Wide Services
1550 NE Loop 410, Ste 118
San Antonio, TX 78209

First Things First

Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous Preamble	3
The Twelve Steps of S.L.A.A.	4
Ninth Step Promise	5
Open Service Positions	5
Announcements	7

Theme

Back to Basics	8
Step Ten	11
The End Point	12
In Prison	15

Share Space

As a Woman	17
My C.J.C. Service	19
The Golden Door	20
True Accomplishment	22
Letting Go	23

The Poetic Side

Self Worth	24
Go Away Addict	26
Shoes That Fit	27

The Conference Journal Committee, a service body within Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous, publishes *the Journal* for the good of the international S.L.A.A. membership. Oversight and policy is provided in accordance with the Ninth Tradition.

© 2008 Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous. All rights reserved.

Stories, interviews, personal testimony, and other content contained herein are authored by members of Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous. The opinions expressed in *the Journal* are not necessarily the opinions of Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous, S.L.A.A. Fellowship-Wide Services, the S.L.A.A. General Service Conference, the Journal Conference Committee, or *the Journal* production staff. Motions adopted at the 1989, 1990, and 1991 General Service Conferences chartered *the Journal*, but it is impractical for all of the content of a periodical such as *the Journal* to be conference-approved. Each recovery group can determine its own position on the use of content from *the Journal* at its meetings.

The source for references to the Twelve Traditions throughout this publication is *Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous*, pp. 122, 123, Copyright © 1986 The Augustine Fellowship, Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous, Fellowship-Wide Services, Inc., San Antonio, Texas, U.S.A., and said Twelve Traditions were derived from *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pp. 9-13, Copyright © 1981 Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., New York, New York, U.S.A.

Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous

Fellowship Wide Services

1550 NE Loop 410, Suite 118

San Antonio, TX 78209

+1 210-828-7900 Monday through Friday 9 am to 5 pm CST

Executive Director Kim B.

Managing Editor Douglas D.

Artistic Director Irv B.

Cover Image

Uploaded to Flickr.com Sept 5, 2006 by Flattop341 under the Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic license available at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0>.

First Things First

Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous Preamble

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

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

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

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

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

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

© 2004 The Augustine Fellowship, Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous, Fellowship-Wide Services, Inc., San Antonio, Texas, U.S.A.

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

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

The above version of the Twelve Steps was adapted from the Twelve Steps first published by Works Publishing Company in 1939. Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, New York, granted permission to Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous to reprint the above version in 1986. The forward of Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions (Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., New York, 1952) states, "... the Twelve Steps can mean more than sobriety for problem drinkers." The fellowship of Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous is grateful for the early contributions to recovery made by the founders of Alcoholics Anonymous through the gift of these twelve principles to the public in 1938.

Ninth Step Promise

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. In many instances the values we had thought were ours had turned out to be someone else's, and we had shed or changed these to allow the seeds of our own personal wholeness to take root and grow.

Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous, 1986 The Augustine Fellowship, Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous, Norwood, Massachusetts, pg. 95

Open Service Positions with *the Journal*

We currently have three important service opportunities opened within *the Journal's* service structure.

Managing Editor

The Managing Editor oversees the editorial process for each of the six annual issues of *the Journal*, which includes the content, form, and aesthetic presentation. She or he will determine the themes for upcoming issues, encourage writers to write, request stories specific to upcoming themes, select and approve stories and other content, edit stories, and delegate many of these responsibilities to Editorial Assistants. The Managing Editor is required to join the Conference Journal Committee and must have at least one year of continuous bottom line abstinence. She or he should have the willingness and ability to manage the editorial process for a three-year term.

The person selected from within the pool of those nominated or volunteered will replace the Interim Managing Editor upon Conference Journal Committee election and be presented at the Conference at the 2009 Annual Business Meeting for confirmation.

Editorial Assistant

The Editorial Assistant assists the Managing Editor with the above service responsibilities. There can be more than one Editorial Assistant. Each must have at least one year of continuous bottom line abstinence.

Marketing Director

The Marketing Director oversees the existing network of Journal Representatives and cooperates with several other S.L.A.A. service bodies to reach out to sex and love addicts throughout the world by building subscriptions to *the Journal*. She or he is required to join the Conference Journal Committee and must have at least six months of continuous bottom line abstinence. The Marketing Director holds a key public information role within the fellowship, since *the Journal* is a prime vehicle for reaching towns, cities, health care facilities, and countries that do not yet know S.L.A.A.'s message of the hope. She or he will oversee the health of the network of Journal Representatives, building it up to increase *the Journal's* reach and effectiveness. The Marketing Director will use her or his wide network to assist the Managing Editor in finding great stories for future issues of *the Journal*. The Marketing Director may also make improvements to the Journal's subscriber renewal program, which the Fulfillments Manager would then implement. In summation, the Marketing Director's fundamental delegated responsibility and authority is to build *the Journal's* goodwill worldwide, thus boosting both subscriptions and writing submissions and strengthening Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous in the spirit of Traditions Five and Nine. If you dream big, this position is for you.

Fulfillments Manager

The Fulfillments Manager oversees the subscription list and the printing and mailing of each of the six annual issues of the Journal. She or he is required to join the Conference Journal Committee and must have at least six months of continuous bottom line abstinence. The Fulfillments Manager ensures the legibility, aesthetic quality, and durability of the finished copies of *the Journal*. The Fulfillments Manager will evaluate print vendors and manage jobs sent to them. She or he will work with the Executive Director and *the Journal's* Accountant to reduce production costs in the spirit of Tradition Seven.

Interested?

If interested in one of the above positions, email Correspondence@theSLAAJournal.org. If you have a story for *the Journal*, read the inside cover for more information.

Announcements

The South Florida Intergroup is offering sponsorship to any intergroup or group that wishes to host a step retreat in their area. The step retreats can use as a guide either the third edition of the Sex and Love Step Recovery Booklet or any other appropriate step recovery materials that the hosting intergroup or group chooses. Sponsorship includes flyer and registration design, helping with choosing a facility and a date, fronting the money for the step materials, general encouragement, and actually facilitating the retreat (or any subset of these services).

The Mid-Maine and Southern-Maine Intergroups are sponsoring their Ninth Annual Fall Retreat at Living Water Spiritual Center in Winslow, Maine from October 3rd, 2008 at 6:00 PM to October 5th 2008 at 12:30 PM. Contact mmislaa@fairpoint.net for more information or visit www.slaafws.org for a registration form.

The New England Intergroup's Twelve Step Weekend Retreat in Vermont is October 3rd through 5th, 2008. Work through the steps at a farm house during the beautiful New England leaf peeper season. There is also ample opportunity for down time if your schedule is overwhelming you. For more information, visit slaanei.org.

Western New England Intergroup is hosting the 20th Annual Augustine Fellowship Conference, October 18, 2008 from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM in Northampton, Massachusetts. For more information, visit www.geocities.com/wneislaa/ or email wneislaa@yahoo.com.

Healing Heart Retreat (co-ed) to be held in Indianola, Washington, October 17th through 19th, 2008. Visit the Seattle Intergroup website at <http://www.slaa-seattle.org/pages/events.html> for details.

Men's Retreat to be held in Indianola, Washington, January 30th through February 2nd, 2009. Visit the Seattle Intergroup website at <http://www.slaa-seattle.org/pages/events.html> for details.

The Third Annual Step Retreat will be held in Miami, Florida in February, 2009, sponsored by the South Florida Intergroup. The exact dates and location will be announced. Get warm in sunny Florida while experiencing an undiluted presentation of the Twelve Steps and plenty of warm fellowship. Email outreach@SouthFloridaSLAA.com or visit SouthFloridaSLAA.com. For those who can't attend, the step material is available at StepBooklet.com.

Theme

Back to Basics

The old-timers used to tell us, "You don't need to get back to the basics if you've never left the basics."

They considered the Twelve Steps, sponsorship, meeting attendance, and service work essential, having watched hordes of people relapse and either return broken later, disappear into institutions, or appear in the Sunday morning obituary. Some time has gone by. Now I can see what they meant.

Our universal experience is that continual practice of recovery essentials keeps us off the slippery slope back to active addiction. I've seen at least a hundred casualties of complacency and pride over the last two decades. On more than one occasion I drifted into unhappiness and came dangerously close to relapse myself because of my own detours from the basics.

A good survey of what it takes to remain happily sober is contained in our S.L.A.A. Preamble. Near the middle it says, "To counter the destructive consequences of sex and love addiction we draw on five major resources." Then it outlines having the willingness to stop acting out, using a sponsor, going to

meetings regularly, practicing the Twelve Steps, giving back to the fellowship through service work, and developing a relationship with God. [See page xxx.] The words are clear enough, yet many come to meetings, hear the suggested solution, go home, generally ignore the solution, continue in addiction, and return later, angrily claiming that it is too hard to stay sober.

I was once one of these. Addicted to fantasy, romance, dangerous sex, and co-dependent love, I more or less found my way to relapse every weekend. Although I didn't get angry at the program, I always shared, upon returning, some senseless, invented explanation for why I relapsed. The true reason I had relapsed was addiction, and the things that could have kept me safe I didn't do.

Only after I actually followed the suggestions, did I earn the right to claim that it didn't work for me. But I'd never make that claim today. In general, it hasn't been difficult for me to stay sober since I've truly engaged in the S.L.A.A. program. For the most part, I've kept up with the spiritual activities and lived by the spiritual principles of recovery. The reward has been a reprieve from active addiction, as long as I continue the activities and follow the principles.

What was it that kept me and the others like me from living the program? Perhaps the message was not well transmitted to me at first. In hindsight, that was surely the case. It is not always easy to hear the solution in meetings. Not all the people who share at meeting know the solution, and not all the people who know it remember to share it.

But pride was part of it too. I wanted to believe that I had things under control, even though it was painfully obvious to everyone except me that I didn't.

Finally, it was brought to my attention that I was transparent. An old-timer came up to me after a meeting during which I spouted some face-saving garbage. He asked me, "You sound good, kid. But how well is your way working?" I cowered a little and replied, "Not very good." He quickly came back with, "Well, why don't you try our way?"

I wasn't sure if he was being sarcastic when he said that I sounded good. I certainly tried to sound good, but I wasn't being very successful in avoiding addictive episodes, so my denial wasn't even working on me anymore. Tommy became my first sponsor.

The people who were staying sober told us that we needed to make

contact with our sponsor and others who supported our sobriety a few times each day, so I did that. I went to at least one meeting every day for about five months. Tommy suggested some solid meetings where I would hear the solution clearly and got me to put together a weekly meeting schedule. I started a meeting on the night that I would have had to drive a long distance to get to one that already existed. From the beginning, Tommy had me helping set up the room before the meeting and the clean up after the meeting. He told me to pray every morning and every night.

I needed to pray more than just twice a day though. It seemed like I was almost always needing to say the Serenity Prayer. I grew attached to the Twenty-Third Psalm too. It sounded powerful somehow and had something in it about walking through a valley of darkness without fear. The dark valley sounded like my addiction. I remembered from Frank Herbert's 1965 novel, *Dune*, the line, "Fear is the little death that brings total obliteration." All these things helped.

Tommy strongly recommended that I attend the retreats that some of the old-timers were holding on a mountain in Vermont twice a

year. I signed up with apprehension. Driving up to the event was a stretch in willingness, but it was at these retreats that I first heard the solution clearly. The basic message of recovery through the Twelve Steps was spoon fed to us by those who had a passion for it.

I finally realized that I lacked the power to stay sober under my own power. I started to believe that my Higher Power was willing to keep me sober, provided I integrated S.L.A.A.'s program of recovery into my life. I began the Twelve Steps. Soon after, my outlook and attitude about life changed. The desire to act out died down.

Today, there are months that pass without any significant temptation. That is my experience, provided I continue with the program of action and follow spiritual principles in my dealings with others.

In all honesty, I doubt that I'd still be alive today had I just relied on meetings to provide the solution. Without a sponsor and the twelve-step retreats it would have been difficult for me to sort out all the conflicting information that people shared in meetings.

Many meetings don't permit cross-talk, devote a large fraction of the meeting for getting current, and don't read solid twelve-step mate-

rial on a regular basis. In some cases, such a small amount of the important recovery information is shared in meetings that there is little purpose in just attending meetings.

The Back-to-basics Movement is a possible remedy to this dilution of the truth about addiction and recovery. It is beginning to emerge in S.L.A.A. just as it did in Alcoholics Anonymous. It has been evident to me at various S.L.A.A. intergroup and international service meetings over the last year. People who have matured in S.L.A.A. recognize the need for more sponsorship, twelve-step activity, and service activity among our membership.

You may have attended many meetings without yet experiencing anything that feels like solid sobriety. If you don't clearly understand the solution to the addiction problem, find the people and the rooms that can teach it to you and listen. You can spot the people with the solution quickly because they stopped acting out and seem comfortable with a life absent of active addiction. They might smile without any apparent reason and show interest in others without any conceivable reward.

It is suggested that you take their

suggestions. Otherwise, the consequences you've already experienced may seem like nothing compared to what happens later. Sex and love addiction is progressive; if the addiction is not arrested, it will almost always get worse.

Those of us who are living the solution can simultaneously give back to the fellowship and strengthen our personal recovery by sharing what we learned. We can ask new attendees about the difficulties that led them to the S.L.A.A. meeting. We can sponsor them and lead them vigorously through the Twelve Steps if they show signs of interest. Certainly, we should keep talking about the solution, the S.L.A.A. program of recovery, at meetings, even at the risk of sounding repetitive.

I don't want the newcomers at the meetings I attend to walk around in the darkness any more than they already have. It is my duty and my honor to give back.

by Kaleb C., Florida, USA

Step Ten

Step Ten says, "We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it."

Today I found it very necessary to do a Step Ten amends. I was at-

tending our Intergroup Meeting this afternoon and another member made a comment which resulted in my harsh retort, "You weren't listening to what I was saying." I raised my voice and I know that I received a look from other members as if to say, "Why did you raise your voice and snap at someone?" I allowed my mouth to open and my tongue to speak before I had the opportunity to consider my reaction and the words I was about to say.

At first, I passed the blame on the other person for making me angry, which reminds me of my acting out times. I would always blame the other person. I would say within myself, "That person wanted to do that, so it's not my fault."

Yes, it was my fault. It was my responsibility to act as a responsible person and do and say the right thing. In this case, I might have said, "You misunderstood what I was saying. Is this just a part of the information for which you are looking? I will get the rest to you in a few days." I dismissed my actions because I was tired and still a little bit cranky after a long plane trip. I didn't ask my Higher Power to guide my words, so I didn't act like the type of person I am trying to become.

Within minutes after leaving the meeting, the old feeling of guilt, shame, and remorse overtook me. I knew I had caused an offense against a fellow S.L.A.A. member.

I knew that I had to contact the person I had wronged and correct my actions to the best of my abilities. Since I had an appointment I had to make, I wasn't able to make the amends as quickly as I would have liked. During the appointment, when I needed to be doing something else, I was distracted and couldn't concentrate.

When I arrived at home, I sat down and took the time to make that amends. I felt better about myself immediately afterward, and I knew that in the morning I would feel better about myself because the amends was the right thing to do. As I reflect on my day, I immediately know whether I've done and said the right things or whether I've wronged someone. I am glad that I don't have to carry that guilt and shame with me anymore.

I am glad that I no longer have to put off what I need to do either. I don't have to wait until some distant time or place to take a continuing inventory. I cannot bear to carry a load of guilt with me, so I like to make amends quickly. Here is the place, and now is the time. If

I suffer a wound or injury, it is best for me to treat it right away so that the healing can begin.

I am healing at this moment. The other person is healing at this moment. That keeps that wound from festering and eventually requiring much more treatment.

Thankfully, I have been able to learn this very important lesson. I wanted to write about working one of the Twelve Steps in a general way, but my Higher Power told me that I needed to write about my recent experience with Step Ten and be reminded of the importance of that daily inventory and making that prompt amends to others. That is my recovery lesson for today.

I share this experience, not to pat myself on the back because I did what I needed to do, but that my friends in recovery might benefit from today's experience. May you enjoy the peace that comes from the application of Step Ten.

by Garry K, Medina, OH, USA

The End Point

It all started with a simple prayer unlike all the others of my childhood and youth. Prayer had always seemed make-believe. My parents and religious people had me do it, but there didn't seem to be anyone

real listening.

I laid there and remembered the Yoga mediation that had interested me as a child. The final words that great people had reportedly uttered just before their last breath came to mind. The approach of the inevitable overcame my prejudices against religion and prayer, and I spoke to God. My questions about how bad things happen to good people became irrelevant. This was the final gesture, the final opportunity of expression.

I was going to die. I was sure of it. The fact that I was an atheist didn't change my outlook.

I opened my mouth. The whole basis for speaking was different, and a different kind of sentence came out. It was deeper, motivated by fear, but somehow fearless.

That was the last thing I remember about that night. When I woke in the morning, I was truly excited to be alive. I wasn't sure what had happened, but I was pretty sure that it was impossible.

That was my first spiritual experience as an adult. I had had an earlier experience when I was a sophomore in high school, and I was able to dismiss my adult experience in a few days just as I did with my teenage experience. Neither time was I willing to share the

experience with anyone else. Having kept them to myself, I began to doubt that they ever happened. After all, it wasn't very scientific.

That is how it begins - an odd occurrence here, a strange coincidence there. In the most unexpected times, under the most unexpected conditions, something wildly unexplainable happens. Even then, the human tendency is to dismiss it.

How quickly I would admit that I had no scientific explanation for something others saw as a miracle, but when someone mentioned God, I had a hundred reasons why they were delusional. Strange is this resistance of mine. Spiritual ideas keep over the centuries much better than scientific ideas, yet I was always willing to accept some new scientific theory, but I claimed the conviction that life has meaning was detestably stupid.

Crises have a way of cutting through all that. Death, jail, or asylums work well because they're in-my-face signs of personal failure, but the most undeniable failure in my life was when I prayed for Christie. It was a failure not because I prayed badly. It was a complete failure, because I can't explain, even now, what followed.

That's when God really gets my at-

tention, but it happens when it happens, not when I ask. I guess God's not really interested in being proven. God needing to be proven is like me taking an interest in proving my existence to an ant.

I'm a much happier ant now that I'm not looking for a proof either way. All I have to do is remember Christie and my compulsive need for some logical explanation dissolves to nothing. There's a bumper sticker that says, "Screw guilt." I'm not crazy about guilt either, but I want one that says, "Screw proof."

You might wonder whether I've given up asking questions about life. I still re-examine my beliefs now and then, but I don't automatically question the existence of God when my brother is dying or when my tire goes flat, and I certainly don't blame death or flat tires on God anymore. It's not that God can't make a tire flat or manipulate cancer cells.

I'm clear that God can. I'm just not interested in repositioning everything in the Universe anymore. I'd rather let God handle life, death, and the existence of road hazards. I need something simpler to do.

Don't get me wrong. There are things that I'd like to see changed,

but to safely try to effect change, my reason has to be unconditional love. There are times since my spiritual awakening that I've been led by God to encourage change in a community and I've made some positive impact. Certainly the purpose of this writing has something to do with inviting others to develop some spiritual maturity.

I don't have an issue with other people trying to inspire me either. I deliberately read the writings of inspiring people often. With the right motives, it is proper for us to inspire each other, and encouragement is a valuable commodity. Perhaps it is when we are inspiring and encouraging each other that we are most like the loving God we struggle so hard to prove or disprove.

Ultimately though, I can't remove all the nails from all the roads with a single thought. I'm not and never will be God. Flat tires will happen, and people I love will die.

What I've learned to do is to get honest with God, like that night when I was going to die. If God can hear my words, then God can hear my thoughts, so there's no point in faking a prayer. None of my con-artist antics or twisted reasons for doing the wrong thing will make a fool of anyone but me. I might be

better at playing the fool than playing God, but that doesn't mean it works any better.

What works is really seeking God's will, strange as it sounds. The answer that comes back, sometimes subconsciously, sometimes years later, is not as important as the asking.

God's will tonight was to write this down just as I've written it. I don't know why. Maybe you do.

by Douglas D.
Interim Managing Editor

In Prison

Several years ago, I spent a few months in a state prison convicted of sexual offenses against minors. I am not proud of that, but it is a part of my story, and it has had a large impact on my growth. I'm not going to go into the sordid details of my past actions other than to say that I manipulated as many people as I could to get my sexual fix. I have additional bottom lines as being a voyeur and an exhibitionist and using people of any age and of either sex in order to fulfill my quest for dangerous sex.

Having that background out of the way, I want to tell you what it was like behind the razor wires and inside the prison walls. It was very lonely. I was isolated from all of the

things which I knew and all the people and things that I loved. Although I was incarcerated in a unit with nearly two-hundred other inmates, all serving sentences of varying length for their individual crimes, I was alone. I had no one with whom I could talk or give me the support I needed. I hadn't yet heard of S.L.A.A., and even if I had, I was far from ready to admit my need.

Since the sex offender is the classification of prisoner most despised and the one most likely to receive retribution from the other inmates, I couldn't even talk about what I had done. If I did have to say something about my reason for being there, I would rely on denial of the facts, claim to be a victim, and beat around the bush. The survival instinct kept me from answering the question directly.

If I only had someone in whom to confide. If only I had someone with whom to talk and feel safe. I didn't truly trust the Psychiatrist I had talked with because he seemed to almost doze off as I spoke. I could not trust the Chaplain because the chaplains seemed to be glorified corrections officers who would just as soon give you a ticket (citation for some offense) than to be someone who was available to talk.

Fortunately, I had some family and a few friends who would write to me on occasion and encourage me. I never could admit to them at the time the real nature of my wrongs. I still lived in denial - denial of the facts and denial of my responsibility for my actions. I always blamed my victims for my actions. I always said that they made the first move and I was weak and followed them into what they had suggested.

At that time, I could not recognize that mine was a progressive disease which had continued to grow and manifest itself in various ways over the period of about forty-five years.

After being incarcerated for nearly four months I was transferred to a sex offender's camp. At last, there was a realization that I was going to be around others who had committed similar acts. The camp contained people who had committed all manner of sexual offense, and I could feel some relief since I did not have to fear for my life. I found a few with whom I could talk a little more openly, but still none of us had any inkling that we might have a progressive disease. The judicial system had told us that we were morally depraved and that we should be locked up and kept away from normal, right-acting people.

We had a sex offenders program which, at that time, consisted of six hours of watching movies made for television and taking a psychological test. I did not understand, I could not comprehend that I had a much deeper problem than anyone could understand. The proper information to begin some type of recovery was not available to me. Oh, that there could have been some literature available and that someone inside the institution would know that there was help available for people like me.

The director of the offender's program had no idea that there was help available or at least did not let anyone know if she did know. The only Twelve Step Programs available were Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous, and, since I didn't have a problem with either alcohol or drugs, I could see no need to go to them. I knew that I wasn't like them. I was someone who was a good, God-fearing person who made a little mistake and had to pay the price for what I had done.

What I really needed was answers to the questions which I had within myself as to what I had done. I needed some literature to read. I needed a pen pal on the outside who would have understood the things which I had done and would

have been willing to share his experience, strength, and hope with me in order that I might be able to achieve some sobriety and serenity in my life. There were no answers to be found within the walls at that time. As I completed my sentence, I was assigned to another camp. Since I was a minimum security risk, I could roam the yard all day long and talk with a few people who had been transferred to the same location. There were over fifteen-hundred inmates there, the majority of whom had

sexual offenses, but I was still all alone.

The most important lessons which I learned while in prison were that prison is not a place to make friends for life and that I don't want to go back there again. I was alone, and there was no one to help pick me up and set me in the right direction. That would have to come later.

Please reach out to those who are in prison or in halfway houses.

by Garry K., Medina, OH, USA

Share Space

As a Woman

Although I've never, to my recollection, struggled with taking the lead in something as a woman, I know I am fortunate. I've watched as some of my friends and associates have shed their femininity, assuming that it was a necessity to be a female leader. Others betrayed their abilities by avoiding leadership altogether, imagining that they would be less attractive to men as leaders.

I've watched both men and women become hard and unemotional, thinking that hardness was the

price to be paid for success. I've heard people in the S.L.A.A. fellowship tell others with the gift of leadership that they were control freaks and needed to practice acceptance.

I've been lucky because of my family life. I was lucky again because of the women who surrounded me when I came into recovery. I'm not afraid to take the lead. I'm not afraid of not taking the lead either.

In my sexual past, my partners would resent any strength they saw in me. I became angry and dominated them. It fed my sex addiction.

For me, sex addiction was more

obvious than the love part, but I've come to understand that my claim of sexual liberation was a cover for the feeling that I was trapped in a world with no love. My plan was to create love by being good in bed, but all I ever created was co-dependency, which eventually led to my partners' resentments. After seven years of recovery in S.L.A.A., only two of my former lovers have been willing to meet with me for my amends to them. My sponsor tells me that the others are my reminders that there are things that I can do for which there is no undoing.

Today I am careful to protect my heart and the hearts of others. I don't need any new resentments or new people on my Eighth Step list.

For me, that is the first step in leading anything. I need to be going in a worthwhile direction myself. All the energy I used to try to inspire others came out of my sex-addicted spirit. I wasn't inspiring. I was a danger to myself and others. It is no wonder to me today why so many of my ex-lovers ended up in therapy. One of them committed suicide a few years later, and I've often wondered what part I might have played in their decision.

My sponsor tells me to keep my focus on my own actions, so I do. She

tells me to let it go, and I have. She has modeled real leadership, and I follow her model.

Today I sponsor three women. It may be the best kind of leadership in the recovery world, and it is badly needed. There are, in my opinion, too few people, women especially, that are available for sponsorship. I was taken through the steps, and, upon reaching the Twelfth Step, I was told to pass it on.

She didn't request this of me. She said, "Now is the time to carry the message." I was pretty sure that she would have asked me to go find a disinterested sponsor if I wasn't interested in passing on what I was given freely. I never tested the issue. When my sponsees test me, she gives me a speech about duty, honor, and God's will to share with them. She says, "How spiritual can I be if I hoard recovery?"

Because I'm committed to my recovery, I am committed to the three who have shown their commitment to me. With that as my core form of leadership, all the other opportunities at work, in my family, and in my neighborhood tend to stay on a healthy track. I am grateful for all of those who have made it possibly for me to find sanity through the Twelve Steps, a

relationship with God, and the honesty of the S.L.A.A. community.

by Daniella P.

My Service with the Conference Journal Committee

What I love most about service work is the ability to work on relationships and carry out the traditions in a practical way instead of just thinking about them. I have served on the Journal Committee for nearly three years, as Chairman for the last two, and it has been a tremendous growth opportunity. The Basic Text (p. 122) talks about the traditions protecting the fellowship from external and internal threats, calling the internal threats, "that destructive inner demon: self-serving, personal willfulness."

Tradition Two reminds me, "our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern." The Journal Committee has gone through many changes this year. We have adopted a new service structure. [See page xxx.] We've tried to streamline our meetings to make them more productive by creating an Executive Director position, moving the oversight of the Journal production within the duties of that position. This allows the Committee to focus

on other Journal issues like increasing involvement and communicating better with the S.L.A.A. fellowship.

Tradition Two always reminds me that every member of the Committee has a voice as important as everyone else's. The Journal Committee adopted a new structure and, at the urging of one member, realized that sobriety requirements were needed for each position.

Over the past few years I have set an agenda for the Committee's continuing old business and its new business. Most prominent has been looking for a new Managing Editor for the Journal as the length of service for the existing Managing Editor had been six years. Sometimes I would be amazed as the group conscience of the Journal Committee unfolded before my eyes, not as an expression of my self-will, but as the gift of a Higher Power.

We created an Art Director position to work on graphics for the Journal. We created an Internet Technician position to allow the Journal to have a more independent presence on the Web. We created a Marketing Director position to increase subscriptions as well as submissions from writers. We cre-

ated a Fulfillments Manager position to handle renewals and oversee printing and shipping.

There are other positions currently filled by Fellowship Wide Services that may be outsourced at a future date, the printing and shipping of the Journal for example. The new service structure is similar to A.A.'s structure for its publication, The Grapevine, and it is expected to work well for this publication.

When I walked into my first Journal Committee meeting, I didn't know what to expect; it was my first year as a Delegate to the S.L.A.A Conference. The opportunities for growth were found only by my continuing to show up. Now it will be time for someone else to carry the message as Journal Committee Chairperson. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve on the Journal Committee.

by Kim B., Massachusetts, USA

The Golden Door

When people enter into recovery they are typically at an extreme low point in their lives. Coming to their first meeting is something of a last resort, an act of desperation, an admission of failure, or a condition of probation. Any port in a storm will do. We first saw it as a badge of shame and dishonor and a

closely guarded secret, something we must do because we are weak and deeply flawed. Hopefully no one will ever find out, and if we try hard, we will be cured quickly and won't have to attend many more meetings. If we are extremely lucky, maybe after our cure we can once again lead a normal life and pretend we never really needed recovery in the first place. Perhaps we could put the whole awful episode behind us.

My initial impression of my recovery group was of a haphazard collection of the walking wounded, assembled together in a refugee camp for condemned souls. Our sins and defects were not identical, but we all shared a similar kind of tragic and shameful fall from grace and were trying to redeem ourselves. This type of redemption was like a long term penance for our seemingly unforgivable sins. Since our past cannot be altered or erased, except perhaps from our memories, this was the least we could do. If we were successful with recovery, maybe our loved ones and God would someday forgive us and release us from our shame. Who knows? Maybe someday we would even forgive ourselves.

After a while I began to realize that we all shared another bond in our

recovery. Deep down inside the main reason we were there was because we wanted to be better people. Our acting out behavior had not only been offensive to our loved ones and to society at large, it had also been profoundly offensive to the true and better self within us. We had let our selves down. We were ashamed of our behavior and wanted to take the opportunity of recovery and use it to rediscover who we are. What had once been a dark door opening into a room of shame where doomed souls huddled together in misery then transformed into a golden door, leading into a room filled with love, hope, and serenity, where a truth-seeking brotherhood and sisterhood of pilgrims embarked upon a spiritual journey of self-discovery and purposeful existence. In a more mundane sense, these so-called pilgrims were really nothing more than people struggling with the typical dilemmas of life.

Regardless of which of those characterizations we may have at any particular moment, the truth of the flip side of recovery is that it offers each one of us the rare opportunity of self-fulfillment, serenity and, as corny as it may sound, enlightenment and transformation. It introduces, or perhaps reintroduces, us

to the quaint notion that we can share in life's grand purpose and that what we say and do makes a difference in the world.

It is true that we bring our wounds into recovery with us and that our recovery program is a tried and true method of healing those wounds for those of us who apply it fully. I believe that it's also true that we start off in a weakened and somewhat helpless state because of our addiction has literally gotten the better of us, and we desperately need help. Perhaps the most important work in recovery occurs only after we are healthy again and can see beyond our flaws and defects to glimpse a new life filled with joy, serenity, peace and love awaiting us. I know that sounds kind of corny and perhaps grandiose to many people. But it is nonetheless somehow true.

I have a theory for why that is and why its success does not depend upon any particular philosophical or religious doctrine. My theory is that our natural state of being is one of happiness and joy but that our life's experiences interfere with our natural happy state just like dark clouds interfere with the abundance of natural sunlight streaming into our atmosphere, casting a shadow upon the land. The recovery program, little by

little, step by step, works at clearing away those clouds so that sunlight can follow its natural course and illuminate the earth below. Recovery doesn't change who we are or add anything to us, it simply removes the obstacles that prevent us from experiencing who we are and sheds light upon the joy, serenity, peace, and love that is already there, like a goldmine waiting to be discovered.

That is the well-kept secret, the flip side of recovery, and why recovery is not just a kind of hospital for people with flaws, defects, and addictions. Imagine a hospital where you go in for open heart surgery or cancer treatment and you return home not only restored to better health than when admitted but, as a bonus, you can now run marathons and climb mountains as well. It is a puzzle to me that the world has not embraced a program of universal recovery and taught it in the schools, on the streets, and on TV. Instead, it is reserved for people like us, with such badly screwed up lives that we have to seek refuge in a strange room with a haphazard collection of extraordinary, ordinary people. It is in that room and with all those people that we discover our common humanity and in our own clumsy way accidentally stumble upon the

beauty, the love, and the unique opportunity of this great gift of life.

by Tim K., Ohio, USA

True Accomplishment

Every person's heart may be described as a sanctuary. Every act of letting go and letting God is a step toward our Higher Power. Every individual can appreciate that she or he has a far greater potential when serving as part of a greater fellowship than when acting alone.

How is this potential realized? It is realized when people develop their abilities to the utmost, assume the responsibilities that they have been given, join together toward a common goal, and become members of a greater whole. A collective will be incomplete unless it includes every individual, allowing each to fully develop. None of us can reach our full potential until we can join with others this way.

The possibility exists of forging a unified whole from a diverse membership only because each member already shares a fundamental connection. Every person is connected through a Higher Power. Despite the differences between individuals, they are bound together by this basic similarity, just as every particle of matter is main-

tained in relationship with each other by our Higher Power's creative energy.

One way to keep a balance sheet first requires an inventory taken of the resources available and then a reckoning as to how these resources have been used. These concepts are also relevant in service. A person must first take inventory; he must know who he is and what he can do. Afterward, he must periodically determine how well these abilities are being employed, and what has been accomplished.

The order of this sequence is significant; awareness of the existence of one's potential serves as a prod, spurring the realization of this potential.

by Irv B., Connecticut, USA

Letting Go

One of my greatest fears has been to become promiscuous. It was such a great fear that it changed my perspective on myself and how I was to be treated.

Fear of my sexuality created a sense of loathing, as well as self-righteousness. If I could somehow get enough strength to stop having certain feelings, then I could have a purer union with someone. I could reinvent the idea of being

virginal.

Sexual energy is precious. How did it distort into compulsive acting in or out? For me, it was a form of punishment and grief, a way to distract myself from the fear of facing myself alone. Fantasy was one way to keep the loneliness at bay, as well as the reality of needing to gain social confidence with men. If I were to actually date and be approached by a man for a relationship, my purity might be in question.

What is purity? And how serious must I be about this with the energy as it is? I have attended many meetings. They've taught me red flags about relationships, but I was also using meetings to scare myself into oblivion. Where were the couples who didn't face fear with sex? Obviously not in the media! Was there a place where humor could be found in relationships of an intimate nature?

There was the answer. I was looking for a relationship; I wasn't living it. I had been wanting to find someone without first owning my own power and my own bottom lines. For many years, I had a dream of my qualifier and reuniting, and that dream had embedded itself into my heart as a living, breathing reality. We haven't spoken in twelve years.

He was not a fantasy in the sense that he had continued to live in my heart to remind me of the recovery that was still remaining within. I wasn't being honest with myself. It was an intuition that had been thwarted by years of struggling with an eating disorder and getting taken care of, by the grace of God, at several treatment centers.

I was waking up, leaving the safety of medical havens, into the world of letting go and giving into the grief of the artificial versus the real. I would miss him, but in his memory I could reach out to my

brothers and sisters in recovery, and step out into the Sunlight of Spirit. Sex didn't have to be scary. Why? Because it could not be compartmentalized as pure or spiritual or demeaning. The feelings were just there, reminding me to stay in union with myself and to remember that my negative behaviors were just signals that I was alone and afraid.

He will be with me in spirit. And together we can do what we could never do alone.

by Grace, Seattle, WA, USA

The Poetic Side

Self Worth

On whom can a lonely soul depend
To fill the needs buried deep within?
To whom can he turn to share his love.
And to whom can he turn to share his sin?

Is there anyone out there
In whom he can trust?
Is there anyone out there
Who will share his lust?

He is alone in the world,
This has always been so.
If there is anyone out there
He does not know.

He found out early
That if his need were to be met,
On his friends and his family
He should not bet.

So he turned to the only one
To whom he could turn,
When deep within
His feelings would burn.

He found he was the only one,
On whom he could depend,
He found he was the only one,
Who would stay until the end.

Then one day he met a man
Who he thought was very nice,
He put his trust in this new friend,
But in the end he paid the price.

This friend took advantage
Of the boy,
He made him into his little
Sex toy.

From this relationship
The little boy learned,
That sex was the way
That love was earned.

When he grew up
He was still very shy.
With women he failed.
He couldn't even say, "Hi."

So into himself
He turned once more,
And there he found
The perfect whore.

Inside the man
The child still lives,
And he thrives on the sex
The older man gives.

Sex is what gave
The child his worth.
It's the reason he knew
He was put on this earth.

It was the only way
He knew to get love,
And love is what he wants
Much more of.

by Gerald W.

Go Away Addict

Go away addict, I don't need you.
Go away addict, we're all through.
You've filled my head with lies and deceit,
Illusions of fantasy that were never concrete.

Always at my side stuffing me with more,
But when I was done, I felt worse than before.
I did what you asked, and all I felt was shame,
You had so many ideas, but they were all the same.

I followed your lead for so many years,
Leaving me consumed by my pain and tears.
I feel those urges when I'm powerless or deflated,
Promises of good feelings to make me elated.

So much trickery you have used on me in the past,
To get me hooked into a tailspin so fast.
I believed you were a friend, but those were lies I was fed,
I'm seeking peace and serenity, so get out of my head.

I've had enough of the "quick fixes" and "highs",
No more running from feelings, it's OK to cry.
One thing is clear, you are a demon of ill will,
Enticing me with temptation for one last quick thrill.

I have found a solution, a recent discovery:
A program of fellowship and twelve-step recovery.
It offers everything you promised but failed to provide,
Happiness, strength, and hope, and all this from inside.

It took great courage to define a bottom line,
Working this thing called sobriety one day at a time.
If you come around looking for me to play,
My answer is this: "Forget it, no way!"

So that is it my addict, farewell to you at last,
Our time together is over, I'm putting you in my past.
You convinced me I didn't need anyone, but that's not true,
Go away addict, the one I don't need is you!

by Hill R.

Shoes That Fit

I walk into the shoe store.
I love shoes.
I see the perfect pair.
They are just sitting there on the shelf.
They look good.
I'll look good in them.
People will know just how wonderful I am
when they see me walking in those shoes.
I ask the sales clerk for the shoes in my size, ten and a half.
He tells me that they do not have my size.
I want those shoes.
"Bring them to me a size up and a size down!"
I demand.
They will work.
I walk around in the size ten shoes.
They hurt.
But I'm convinced that if I walk around in them for a while
they will stretch and I will be able to wear them comfortably.
I take them home and squirt the shoes on the inside with alcohol
and I walk around.
They never feel good.

The following week I go to the store and purchase
the size eleven pair.

They are too big.

I keep walking right out of them.

In order to wear them I have to drag my feet around
so that they don't fall off.

The bottoms of my feet are blistered from trying
to hang on to the shoes with my toes.

I toss those shoes aside as well.

I return to the store.

What's wrong with me?

Why don't these shoes fit.

Why can't I wear them?

What can I change about myself to make the shoes fit?

I return to the store.

I tell the sales clerk how much I want those shoes.

I ask him what he can do to make it fit.

Instead, he shows me a pair of shoes that fit.

They really are right for me.

They feel good.

They flatter my feet and my outfit.

I realize that this is the pair I should have tried all along.

I overlooked them when trying to make the other pairs fit.

There is nothing wrong with me or the shoes.

We just aren't right for each other.

I leave, happy and serene in the pair of shoes
that were meant for me.

It's no different with my addiction.

For years it never occurred to me that perhaps

I was trying to fit into situations that weren't for me.

But as I turn to my Higher Power,

I am now being shown a life that Higher Power
designed for me.

One day at a time, I am Honest, Open, and Willing
to let Higher Power's will, not mine, be done.

by Neata, Hyattsville, MD, USA

Write for the Journal

Please refer to just inside the front cover for writer qualifications, copyright information, and information on submitting a piece. Priority may be given to submissions related to one of these tentative upcoming themes.

November-December 2008, tentative: Honesty Stories

January-February 2009, tentative: Acting Out is Anorexic

March-April 2009, tentative: Spiritual Awakening

Submissions may be edited for readability and appropriateness prior to publication. Professional writers often rewrite their pieces several times before submission to avoid placing the burden of correcting spelling and grammar on the editorial staff. Amateur writers would do well to read what they have written and rewrite it until their ideas are expressed clearly, as would their professional counterparts.

Thrift is important; don't say in many words what could be said in a few.

All submissions must include citations for any references or inclusions that require attribution by law.

Writers are asked to avoid commenting on issues unrelated to recovery from sex and love addiction and to maintain their focus on their personal experience. In pursuit of this focus, writers can use the first person singular pronoun, I, and avoid references to specific people and locations.

Pieces with an appropriate tone for publication in the Journal will proclaim what is good and useful rather than what is wrong or improper. This tone will assist the readership in the development of a positive outlook toward growth and personal recovery.

We ask that writers do not use the Journal by name as a professional reference or as a writer's credential. Public disclosure of membership in S.L.A.A. is expressly discouraged.

The 1989, 1990, and 1991 General Service Conferences of Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous adopted motions that established the Journal. These charter statements indicate the purpose of the Journal to be the growth of the S.L.A.A. fellowship and its individual members. Because traditionally our common welfare comes first, assignees or volunteers of Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous, Inc. select material is based on their understanding of the application of this purpose at the time of selection. No guarantees of publication are expressed or implied.

theJournal