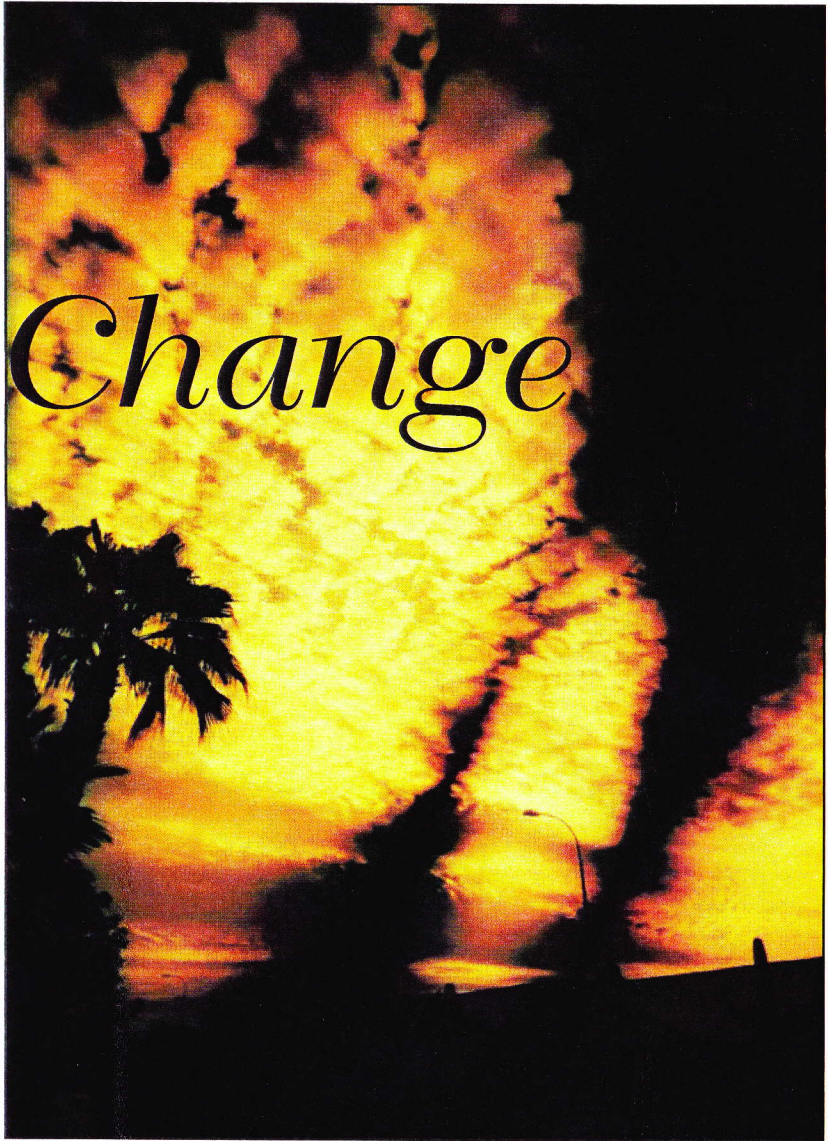


# theJournal

March-April 2009



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](mailto: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
From the Editor	5
Events and Service Opportunities	6

## **A Story**

Nothing Can Take Me Down	10
--------------------------	----

## **In Poetry**

Bring It	18
Fig Leaf	19
Denial	19
My Emptiness	21

## **Share Space**

When I am Different	25
Letter of Commitment	25
Is It Safe?	26

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.

© 2009 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

Managing Editor Douglas D.  
Art Director Irv B.

Cover Image

Cover Uploaded to Flickr.com on November 15, 2008 by kevin dooley, creative commons Attribution 2.0 Generic: All rights allowed for creative work, changes, and commercial use, with attribution.

## 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.

## From The Editor

Dear Reader,

In an effort to put policy into place that would improve the reach of *the Journal* into the S.L.A.A. community and beyond, two motions have been accepted into the item summary for the 2009 Annual Business Meeting and Conference. One motion submitted by the Conference Journal Committee was intended to improve accounting practices surrounding *the Journal*. The other motion was intended to boost the effectiveness of S.L.A.A. outreach via *the Journal* by improving subscription card distribution. Further negotiations to help us improve outreach are ongoing.

Because of the volume of work required to submit motions and negotiate changes in policy, we had constraints on our time that delayed Journal production for two months. Thankfully, we have caught up again and will be able to resume prompt delivery.

As to the content of this issue of *the Journal*, we are opening to new things, recognizing that change is a principle element in growth and recovery. It is time to publish new types of material, from tiny poems to comprehensive stories of personal recovery, from expressions of denial to the highest planes of spirituality. Imagine *the Journal* as a river that gains its waters from the tops of different mountains and pours into the sea.

We at *the Journal* thank you subscribers for supporting the growth of this vital outreach tool. We are thankful for the many writers who brighten the lives of so many members and friends of S.L.A.A. by making creative contributions of writing and visual art. You are the mountains, and your water quenches the thirst for recovery.

If you're a reader of *the Journal* and have a story of recovery that you wish to tell, we invite and encourage you to do so. See the inside cover for information on creative contributions.

Sincerely,  
Douglas D., Managing Editor, *the Journal*

## Events and Service Opportunities

### Miami Step Retreat '09

Looking for a deeper, more satisfying recovery experience? Come to the Miami Step Retreat '09, held from June 5th through 7th, 2009. The program is twelve-step oriented, so attendees are invited to engage in actual step activity. There is also time for fellowship, recreation, rest, and getting current. You will get a copy of the Sex and Love Step Recovery Booklet, a straightforward, back-to-basics guide to sexual and romantic recovery created by and for recovering sex and love addicts, to take home with you. The Conference Literature Committee is currently processing the booklet in preparation for Conference approval.

Registration includes meals for all three days, two nights of lodging, top-notch facilitation, your personal copy of the step booklet, and great fellowship. The cost is \$229 per person.

Registration flyers and more information can be found at [www.SouthFloridaSLAA.org](http://www.SouthFloridaSLAA.org). You can also email us at [retreats@arts-show.net](mailto:retreats@arts-show.net) or inquire through the [SouthFloridaSLAA.org](http://www.SouthFloridaSLAA.org) Contact-Us page.

### S.L.A.A. is Growing

*The Journal* is a basic recovery tool for S.L.A.A. groups and individual members, and it is a key outreach tool into areas that do not yet have an S.L.A.A. presence. Tradition Nine states that each S.L.A.A. service entity is directly responsible to those they serve. In the spirit of Tradition Nine, *the Journal* recognizes its responsibility to both its current readers and potential future S.L.A.A. members seeking recovery.

To reach more sex and love addicts that do not yet know of recovery, we're stretching further than ever before. We're looking for people with writing, drawing, editing, layout, outreach, web design, production, and printing skills to assist in the creation of the new, deeper, more refreshing publication. Please assist us in creatively carrying the message of recovery.



## **Executive Director**

The Executive Director of *the Journal* provides a leadership example and oversight of publication functions, overseeing editorial work, outreach, artistic direction, and subscription services. The Executive Director reports the status and health of *the Journal* to the C.J.C. each month and monitors and promotes the self-sufficiency of *the Journal* in keeping with Traditions Seven and Nine. Candidates must have at least one year of continuous bottom line sobriety.

## **Editorial Assistant**

Each Editorial Assistant assists the Managing Editor with the editorial process for each of the six annual issues of *the Journal*, including form, content, and aesthetic presentation. Candidates must have at least one year of continuous bottom line abstinence.

## **Marketing Director**

The Marketing Director (also called the Outreach Coordinator) oversees the network of Journal Representatives in the interest of building *the Journal's* reputation worldwide, building subscription volume, and encouraging creative contributions of writing and visual art. The Marketing Director also cooperates with other S.L.A.A. service bodies to reach out to sex and love addicts throughout the world. Candidates must have at least six months of continuous bottom line sobriety.

## **Fulfillments Manager**

The Fulfillments Manager oversees the printing and mailing of each of the six annual issues of *the Journal*. The Fulfillments Manager also ensures the legibility, aesthetic quality, and durability of the finished copies of *the Journal*. The Fulfillments Manager will evaluate the handling of subscriptions and help execute subscriber retention policy. Candidates must have at least six months of continuous bottom line sobriety.

## Interested?

If interested in one or more of the above positions, visit [www.theSLAAJournal.org](http://www.theSLAAJournal.org), select Contact *the Journal*, and send your contact information to us using the web form. We will treat your information confidentially in accordance with *the Journal's* Privacy Policy. If you do not have web access, you can call the F.W.S. Office at 210-828-7900.

## An Invitation For You

Enlarge your recovery by allowing others to get the same benefit that you get from reading *the Journal*. It is a great way to carry S.L.A.A.'s message of hope and practice the Twelfth Step. The fellowship needs willing volunteers of all skills and levels of willingness and availability.

Some sex and love addicts have no meeting in their area or the meetings in their area have become stale and repetitive. Through the variety available in *the Journal*, you can breathe new life into the groups and individuals that need refreshment. *The Journal* also fosters international unity, the core principle of our First Tradition. Here's what we can do together.

- We can formally or informally become a Journal Representative for our intergroup or home group, encouraging the use of *the Journal* as a source of topics, letting people know that there are Journals for sale, and ensuring that plenty of Journal subscription cards are always on the literature table.
- We can visit a local organization that deals with sex and love addicts in our area, bringing copies of *the Journal* along with a few pamphlets. The institution may be a treatment facility, a judicial entity, a large recovery club that welcomes varied literature, or a hospital.
- We can work with others to design and oversee outreach projects.
- We can help make phone calls to encourage Journal Representatives and intergroups.

- We can design or print bulletins or posters that raise awareness.

If you think that it is time in your recovery to grow to another level, email us at [willingness@theSLAAJournal.org](mailto:willingness@theSLAAJournal.org) or call our Fellowship Wide Services Office during the hours of 9 AM to 5 PM central time Monday through Friday at +1 210-828-7900 and inquire about becoming a Journal Representative for your home group or intergroup.

## **Publish Your Event**

Let us know about your group or intergroup sponsored events. We will help you get the word out to our readership. You can email [editor@theSLAAJournal.org](mailto:editor@theSLAAJournal.org) or submit a press release just as you would a story through [www.theSLAAJournal.org](http://www.theSLAAJournal.org), preferably several months in advance so participants have time to plan to attend. Event notices must be received at least one month prior to the issue date. The event notice deadline is December 1st for the January-February issue, February 1st for the March-April issue, April 1st for the May-June issue, June 1st for the July-August issue, August 1st for the September-October issue, and October 1st for the November-December issue.

## A Story

### Nothing Can Take Me Down

*{Editor's note: Chairpeople selecting this story as a meeting topic may wish to divide the story in half, reading four pages at each of two consecutive meetings.}*

If the home into which I was born was a boat, one could say it had been rocking dangerously long before I had been conceived. My arrival was the beginning of the end of my parents' marriage. My father, skeptical that he was my father, promptly had a vasectomy after I was born. He would see to it that my mother couldn't attribute to him any further babies she might bring home from the hospital. He moved out, and Bernie, an alcoholic man, replaced him.

My two older brothers, about nine and twelve at the time, despised me immediately. I was, as far as they were concerned, the reason daddy moved out. Bernie learned to despise me too, and when he drank, he became violent and abusive to my mother.

I graduated from a son to my mother's surrogate spouse by the time I was five, becoming

proficient in running to the neighbors for help. This infuriated Bernie, who joined my older brothers in their hostile regard toward me. The three of them severely verbally abused me. My emotionally unbalanced mother took the side of the man who was feeding her children. Nobody was on my side.

At some point growing up, the abuse went from verbal to sexual. This was the only time my brothers had any use for me. I looked forward to our nighttime secrets. In the traumatic, unstable, and terrifying home I lived, the sexual activities brought me comfort. My oldest brother, the main instigator, made me feel loved. By day he was a tyrant, but at night he let me do things with him that I found pleasurable.

I became, without question, addicted to sex by the time I was seven or eight. I lived for it. I couldn't wait for bedtime.

But I was not my brother's only play toy. My slightly older sister, often became a target of his advances too. While I looked forward to the nighttime activities, my sister did not. I knew what rape was by the time I was seven. I would later learn through therapy that witnessing abuse can be just

as traumatic as firsthand experience. I had witnessed a tremendous amount of trauma. Through it all, I continued to live for bedtime, where, at least for a little while, I found comfort within the predatory clutches of my oldest brother.

Profoundly distorted messages filled my little, vulnerable head. Women were not second-class citizens; they were at best eighth or ninth. They were certainly incapable of taking care of themselves. The most they could hope for was to be sexually available for men. Men who were masculine and powerful were abusive, dominant, and successful at sexual manipulation. Since I had become sexually addicted, I assumed women, in general, craved men as much as I already had.

But little boys are not supposed to want to have sex with older men. "There must be something terribly wrong with me," I thought.

When I was seven, my mother discovered me playing Doctor with a cousin. She then took me to a psychiatrist, which was incredibly terrifying and humiliating. I would later find out that he told her I thought of myself as a girl. He may

have been right. Very little made sense to me in the world of clueless, neurotic adults who inhabited the asylum I called home.

At age twelve, I moved out of my mother's home, with all its trauma, and into the home of my father and stepmother. The man who questioned whether I was his, quite to my relief, agreed to take me in when I asked. To this day, I am grateful that I had the sense and courage to change residence.

No more would I come home from school and see the phone ripped off the wall so that my mother couldn't call the police when the man she chose to share her bed with was beating her up. No more would I hear my sister cry in the next room because of the unwanted sexual perpetration of my brothers. No more humiliating name-calling from my mother's boyfriend or my brothers.

Living with just my father and stepmother was indeed much safer, but life with them was also loveless and sterile. I tried desperately to achieve and maintain a perfect identity, partly because I wanted this man's love and partly because I was afraid I would be sent back to live with my mother should I be perceived as

anything less than perfectly mannered. I quickly became a straight-A student and a youth group leader at my church. The community recognized my gifts. I desperately hoped my father would notice them too.

Beneath my neat, squeaky-clean image lied a deeply disturbed adolescent sex addict, who now missed the bedtime escapades with my brother. To get a hit, I used to make numerous obscene phone calls, soliciting men for sex. I tried to arrange sexual meetings with guys from school. I stole pornography magazines from drug stores. I committed acts of bestiality.

Numerous antacid prescriptions from Ohio State University's medical center proved useless, as the turmoil in my gut churned away from the inescapable, impending reality that I was attracted to other men. Having already been brainwashed that I was a worthless sissy by my mother's boyfriend and older brothers, the last thing I wanted to do was to prove them right by joining the homosexual population, which, in the late 70's, was still regarded by many as a terribly sick, perverted lot.

I tried running from my dilemma, immersing myself in Bible studies at Ohio State, forever walking around campus with a Bible and a highlighter. Counseling, however, helped me realize that being a homosexual was okay - as long as I wasn't simply using another man strictly for sex.

In the spring I met a man who I fell for. Larry was my first. I was absolutely smitten with him, but he was finished with me after a few days of sex. I was absolutely crushed.

Later that summer, I frequented gay bars back home and had numerous one-night stands, but nobody compared to Larry, who I still sorely missed. My stepmother once overheard a conversation I was having and immediately asked me what was going on? I came out to her right then, at eighteen years old. Immediately we scanned the yellow pages together, looking for a psychiatrist who could help me.

Her reaction of disgust and her imminent desire to heal my illness was most humiliating. I had trusted her - been honest with her, and now I felt betrayed.

My father was more understanding but his loyalty was to his wife, who simply could not have a homosexual living in her



impeccably decorated Americana country home. I promptly moved out and found instant solace in alcohol and drugs. I used to talk to myself in drunken tears on a cassette tape recorder. The writer in me always had a desire to document my struggles, which I did. I didn't know how to talk to other people - only to myself.

Despite my promiscuous partying, I still longed to impress the man I assumed was my father. Somehow between bathhouse excursions and drunken interludes I managed to graduate from Ohio State's School of Journalism and soon began a career in public relations. My alcoholism would not have it, and I was soon fired from my first job out of college because of heavy drinking.

A few years later, shortly after getting arrested for driving while intoxicated, a friend suggested I try an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting. At my second meeting, I became the willing participant of another's romantic advances. Nine months into my sobriety, when this man and I split up, so did my relationship with Alcoholics Anonymous. I was far from being ready to sober up.

While in A.A. however, I met a man who mentioned another

twelve-step fellowship called Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous. He told me how he was an incest survivor and how he had been using anonymous sex as a way to feel loved. When he shared his story with me, something sounded oddly familiar, but my denial system prevented his words from going anywhere just then.

A few years later, in Tampa, I discovered I was HIV-positive. It helped tremendously that I was already involved with somebody who also tested positive. Barry was able to console my shock and my fear and all the overwhelming feelings inherent with discovering that I had a fatal disease. About six months later, our relationship ended, and I found myself returning to the adult bookstores and bathhouses, now single and HIV-positive.

"Something is terribly wrong with me," I again thought to myself. The thought that I could infect somebody else with a dangerous virus through my sexual acting out terrified me. I realized I was continuing the behavior that led to my infection, yet I could not stop. This was a pivotal moment in my life.

For the first time, I realized I was powerless - a slave to anonymous

sex - and could not do anything about it. I discovered a phone number in the phonebook for sex addiction. The number turned out to be a marketing tool for a rehab center in California. While waiting to go to rehab, the man on the other line suggested I go to an S.L.A.A. meeting, so I did.

It was the most terrifying thing I had ever done. I showed up with all the secrets in my head of the sexual exploits - all the perverse, filthy, disgusting realities of a sordid life of carnal lust. Nobody knew the extent of my dependency on sex, not even my closest friends of whom there were very few. The thought of unveiling this information in a well-lit room with so many other people was overwhelming.

I don't remember what was discussed in that first meeting. I only remember struggling not to cry. Although I desperately wanted to, I fought against the tears. Crying would be an admission that I belonged there. It would be like going to the authorities and telling on my brother. I didn't want to blow the whistle on the life preserver that had, until then at least, kept me afloat.

Instead, I stared at the specks of color in the Berber carpet, trying

desperately to remain in a weird sort of disassociation. After the serenity prayer at the end of the meeting, I bolted out the door, got into my car and drove away, looking in my rear-view mirror, relieved that nobody was following me. I resolved right then and there that I would not go to another meeting until after rehab. I wanted a safe environment first, before I unloaded a lifetime of secrets. So off to rehab I went.

In rehab I learned of terms such as post-traumatic stress disorder, as I relived some of my most nightmarish childhood memories. I left with a renewed sense of hope as I planned to face myself in S.L.A.A. meetings, which I did. But it wasn't easy and I couldn't stop acting out no matter how hard I tried - no matter how badly I knew I needed to. When I returned to the rooms of S.L.A.A. after a slip or binge, I felt tremendous shame. I projected that I was being shamed and judged by others, but looking back I'm certain it was all in my head.

My disease kept me in shame so that I wouldn't let others help me. Being HIV-positive was just another convenient reason to feel less than the others. I used my health condition as an excuse. I

rationalized, "HIV-negative people in the rooms couldn't possibly understand me and what it's like feeling like a diseased, unwanted leper, whom nobody in their right mind would want to be with." HIV got me into the rooms, and HIV kept me from staying there.

I was quite impressionable. I met a few people in S.L.A.A. who hated A.A. and the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous. Being new to recovery and unable to formulate my own opinions, I embraced their views. Although I needed A.A., I stopped going, dismissing the fellowship in general. I kept getting drunk as I tried to make sense out of the work I was doing in psychotherapy and in the S.L.A.A. rooms. I missed the safety and structure of rehab. I wanted to go back.

I had heard then that prison inmates received free benefits for such issues. I planned to rear-end a police car drunk so I could get thrown in jail and get help for my sex addiction. Instead I admitted myself to a lock-down psychiatric hospital where I stayed for seven days. Although I resumed going to A.A. meetings, I detested them severely, convinced that half the members were in denial of their sex and love issues and the other

half were just plain rude. I thought that I did not want what they had.

After I had managed to gain about six months of alcohol sobriety and perhaps a couple months of sexual sobriety, I accepted a job offer in New Orleans. I moved away from my sponsor, my support system, and the fellowship, thinking that I was up to the task, but I was not. I began acting out.

Although I accumulated some alcohol and drug sobriety, I still harbored tremendous resentment toward the A.A. fellowship in general. A nine-month relationship with an A.A. man ended with him breaking up with me, just when I had been fantasizing that the two of us might buy a home and build a life together. The impact of his breaking up with me hit me hard. Soon after, I stopped seeing the therapist I had been seeing, stopped going to A.A. altogether, and went back to alcohol and drugs.

I attributed my high-intensity, high-paying, commission-oriented job as the reason for my downfall and quit, thinking, "It's the wrong job for me. I need something far more spiritual." I thought of pursuing a career with the Peace Corps or working in a

rehab center somewhere mopping floors and scrubbing toilets for free room and board.

My drug use escalated. Soon afterward, my home went into foreclosure, and I spent some time in jail. My weight went from 190 to 135, since I never slept or ate. I focused all my attention on getting more drugs and watching more pornography.

At one point I recorded a suicide speech on my camcorder, convinced I had passed the point of no return and that my body would eventually be found in a pile of drug paraphernalia and porn. All the while I clung tightly to forty year-old memories of incestuous scenes with my oldest brother, convinced in my addiction that reliving them was the only way to find satisfaction and peace.

My mother eventually came and picked me up as I moved back to Florida, just weeks before hurricane Katrina. At the same time, my oldest brother also lost everything he had due to his own drug habit. The two of us siblings now slept in my mother's spare bedroom. The man who had molested me - the man for whom I had spent a lifetime looking in the eyes of anonymous strangers - now shared a bedroom with me just as

we had forty years ago. It was the irony of all ironies.

Realizing I could no longer afford to hold my judgmental opinions against A.A. and N.A., I returned with what they call, "The Gift of Desperation." I grabbed a sponsor immediately, before I could talk myself out of it. I began working the steps as if my life depended on it, which it did. Eventually I found my way back to S.L.A.A., where I again immediately found a sponsor and began step work.

I am really blessed today that I'm smack dab in the middle of one of S.L.A.A.'s strongest communities, the Tampa Bay area of Florida. I am equally grateful for my renewed gratitude for A.A. and the work I'm doing there. I see that my problem isn't alcohol, drugs, or sex; I was never given the adequate social and interpersonal skills needed to get through the day when I don't get my own way. I never quite grew up.

Today, with the support I have in both fellowships, I am learning to execute twenty-four-hour stretches without self-destructive behavior. I am learning to love myself as I get as far from my faulty thinking as I can, through service work and helping others. I not only have hope today, but a

sense of gratitude that God would not let me destroy myself despite my most earnest attempts to do so. At the time I am writing this, I am coming up on six months of sexual sobriety, which for me is the record-breaking miracle of all miracles. I recently picked up my one-year chip for continuous drug and alcohol sobriety too, for which I am truly grateful.

I used to think, "I was born this beautiful child of God, but then my family-of-origin stepped in." Now I know that I am a beautiful child of God because my family-of-origin stepped in. I hold no resentments against any of them. I cannot afford that. Forgiveness is the key - especially to myself.

My S.L.A.A. family helps protect me from my faulty thinking and from myself. I shared with my sponsor something I realized to be true during the Second Step: "All the pain and chaos will work itself out as long as I don't act out." I see it in the eyes of my recovering S.L.A.A. family everyday. Their understanding, support, and warmth keep me coming back for more.

- Anonymous, Largo, Florida

## In Poetry

### Bring It

Away with the waits  
for baggage-filled ladies,  
for short scenes galore,  
of witless expressions,  
of false devotion  
and counterfeit love.

Away with empty stares  
of dress avant-garde,  
of smiles that never happened  
but always seem imminent,  
sprung from mutual desire  
for pointless illusion.

Bring me the feeling  
that I am enough  
to bring to a party  
and rest in mine own arms,  
to walk with both hands  
set to give and receive  
whomever may pass willing  
to share an embrace.

Away with the games  
of losers and losers still  
with words that would cut  
like the playground accident  
with dripping wet legs  
and laughter from friends.

Away with my power  
to commandeer your love  
and bring to its knees

your hope of enchantment  
as nothing becomes  
of either intention.

Bring me the best of Your hand  
and the holding of mine  
as with or without sex  
we manage to comprehend  
with no extra words  
and absence of excuse,  
as sand trickles through  
but never runs empty.

Away with the closet  
with old smells and webs  
of spiders long gone  
and dehydrated roaches  
that once saw some life  
but now live with the dust.

Away with their judgments  
that guess I must do  
regardless of my truth.  
Their mind is a screw  
that unintentionally pierces  
the peace of my soul.

Bring me the greatness  
to do what I please  
with pleasures of grace  
that need not recede,  
that opens the door  
to gratefulness dear  
with endearing shouts  
of wealth from the poor.

- by Jackie K., Manhattan



## **Fig Leaf**

Whether a man or a woman,  
there is little difference.  
Their recoil is universal.  
Common cold aside, all day they hide.

Hidden are the intentions  
that guide the unmentioned interventions  
of the mind.

“Just in time,” I say.  
When the Devil does his deed,  
the view of what would be  
is ne’r seen through the weeds,  
but today could never see the day.

- by Scott T., Cambridge, Massachusetts

## **Denial**

I didn’t do it and don’t even know  
what you know, but I know:  
I wasn’t there,  
so I couldn’t have.

Ask anyone.  
I was above the fun that others had.  
But I’ve not been bad.  
I’ve only been sad.

Sad that I didn’t get my prize,  
not since a child,  
not since I was one.  
Never did I have any fun.

So I am a Saint.  
Ask my last date,  
although after our time

I sought another fate.

The first round is not enough,  
never enough.  
I'd love to give love,  
but above insipid stuff.

I want more,  
what I pretend to deserve,  
and take and take  
until raw and sore.

But I'm not that one  
that takes more fun  
than what is my due,  
due straight to the core.

I'm due my take.  
There is no fake.  
intention of mine  
as I pour more my whine.

But I didn't do it.  
I didn't take this.  
I didn't cheat that.  
Though I may have spat into the Devil's hat.

The payoff was good.  
I'm sure of that.  
I sometimes lose  
but often get back.

I'm young enough  
to live it up,  
to make a buck,  
or chase good luck.

I'm lucky already,

for all that's come,  
but I want more luck  
'cause I'm not dumb.

I take and I take  
with nothing to lose,  
with nothing to hide  
but everything true.

- by V., Connecticut

### **My Emptiness**

Vast pit,  
bottomless abyss.  
Cold, unfeeling, unloving.  
Scary.  
Uninviting.

My haven.  
Ugly but familiar.  
I can lose myself there  
in the vast emptiness:  
the caverns of my thoughts  
and my imagination.

The Siren's call -  
an invitation to the place of my fantasy  
awaits there.

Although scary and repulsive,  
it is my home.  
Its ugly familiarity seems  
less threatening than the unknown.\ So I go there  
rather than facing myself.  
I don't have feeling there.

I can be in denial  
and pretend that all is well.

I am not threatened  
especially by myself  
for, when there,  
I need not acknowledge my Who.

Yet when I am there,  
even though it seems familiar and comfortable,  
I cry out.  
I am hurting.  
Alone.  
Afraid.

The chasm  
is filled with fear  
and the fear of fear itself.

It is vast,  
overpoweringly vast,  
and empty.  
I must fill it,  
but I am not able.

I am not smart enough.  
I am not good enough.  
I am not loved enough.  
I am not accepted  
by myself.

So when I am trapped in my special place,  
that endless void,  
in my innermost self,  
I pretend that I am somebody else -  
anybody else -  
because I just won't do.

That cute little boy.  
He is innocent.  
He is accepting.

He has not yet learned to be afraid.  
If I could be that boy,  
then I would be good enough.  
Good enough to fill the hole.  
You, young boy over there!  
Will you fill this hole?

Or how about you,  
you teenage Adonis  
with the boy-god body  
and the cock-sure coolness  
of adolescence?  
Can you fill this hole?  
Oh, that young man passing by over there  
has everything that I am missing.  
He is ruggedly handsome.  
Trim.  
Athletic.  
He is outgoing.  
He is self-confident.  
He is in control.  
He is admired.  
He is the center of attention.  
He is accepted.  
He is loved.  
He can fill my emptiness, can't he?  
If only I could be him,  
I would be able to fill this hole:  
The ugly emptiness that I live in  
where I am powerless  
and not in control.

When will I learn  
that these cannot fill me?  
In truth,  
they likely have their own emptiness  
that they are powerless to fill.

How can they then fill mine?

I must venture beyond my thoughts  
to the scary, unfamiliar place of  
my feelings  
and connect with my innermost Who  
there.

The lone occupant  
in the vast emptiness:  
That frightened little boy.

Cowering.  
Trembling.

Alone.

Afraid.

He is my Who,  
hiding in one of the remote caverns  
in the gulf that separates me  
from finding myself.

I yearn to find my little boy -  
to wrap my strong arms around him  
and comfort him and tell him that  
he is loved and accepted  
and everything will be all right.

If I can find him  
I can learn to love him.  
He will be safe.  
He will be happy and free,  
like a little boy ought to be.  
And we won't have to live in my emptiness  
anymore.

- by Robert, Santa Clara, CA



## Share Space

### When I am Different

Editor's Note: This honest submission from an anonymous source has been printed in the interest of presenting, without judgment, the full range of perspectives experienced by those with a desire for recovery.

I love a boy. I told him to marry me but he could not for many reasons. Now I'm married to another guy. My life is good except my husband does not satisfy me at all, physically or emotionally, because I don't love him.

After talking to my boyfriend, I feel I can perform any life task much better than anyone. But whenever I need to talk to him and he is busy or not giving attention to my emotional need, I feel schizophrenic; I weep all the time and lose rest.

I have not ever had sex with my boyfriend. I had sex for the first time in my life with my husband and got pregnant. It feels as though we never had sex because, whenever we've tried, it has been painful for me; it feels like rape.

My physical need is obligatory to my boyfriend only. I never even used to masturbate. I don't need

sex, but I can't live without kissing, hugging, and loving my boyfriend.

I bless myself by kissing and loving my boyfriend throughout my life on regular intervals so I can be happy.

- Anonymous

### Letter of Commitment

Fellow SLAA members,

I'm a forty-year-old woman who has been a member of S.L.A.A. since 1991, when I joined to enable me to withdraw from my compulsive love relationship. I'm also addicted to sex, and one of my bottom lines is masturbation.

I've been abstinent from relationships since 2003, but now I believe it's because I'm afraid to get involved and possibly become obsessed with someone else. I have not had many relationships, but every one of them was addictive, both emotionally and sexually. Out of the forty questions for self-diagnosis, I answer twenty-eight with a, "Yes," on most occasions. Even when I'm not in a relationship, I seem to be sexually obsessing about a particular man.

I know that this man is not good for me and that a relationship would not work, yet I still obsess about him. I haven't found an

S.L.A.A. sponsor with whom I feel comfortable, so I haven't had a sponsor for a few years. I also need to return to attending meetings regularly.

I want to begin my S.L.A.A. recovery over again, and I'm committing to starting now by writing this to you.

- by Linda Q. from Philadelphia, PA

### **Is It Safe?**

I am so excited about spending time with my boyfriend to begin our house search for when we'll be married. The entire process is planned out in my mind. Finally, we're moving forward, and the sweet anticipation is captivating me!

But now, ten o'clock the night before, he's calling to say that he's canceling our Friday-night plans. Not only that, but he won't be going with me to my friend's surprise birthday party Saturday night as planned either.

Quietly disappointed, deflated, and not even interested in objecting, I calmly state that I'm extremely tired and need to get to sleep. He understands, and we hang up.

"As thrilled as I am about going house shopping, its falling through is a most magnificent thing," I try to convince myself. Then I remember, "If my own plans could be that exhilarating through my short-sided eyes, how much more phenomenal could my Higher Power's plans be for me?" He is long-sighted and takes me to places infinitely grander than I could dream up.

Believing that, I turn out the lights to sleep. No - lights back on - thoughts spinning. I write six pages in my journal.

Lights out. Lights back on. Where is that sticky note with the mantra my program friend share with me yesterday? "I trust my Higher Power completely and I don't have to be anxious for anything."

I want to sleep. Lights out.

Lights on.

"Okay. It's you and me God," I say. You and me. I know that it can be a good thing because I have been here before, but I want to sleep. I'm exhausted. I can't! Here we are. You and me. I remind myself that I get my biggest best surprises of all when it is just God and me.

Then it comes to me: I have more than enough to keep me

completely satisfied this weekend! I trust my Higher Power completely, and I do not have to be anxious for anything.

Lights out - back on - but not out of anxiousness this time. I just had the best thought and I need to write it down on a little sticky before I forget it! After several episodes of light on, write a sticky, light off, I write seventeen stickies that cover my night stand and finally go to sleep.

Even in my sleep, I'm so excited that I get up at 2 AM to sing and spend time with my precious new puppy. Here's what is on the stickies.

"I am worthy of living a happy, joyous, and free life. A life where love is abundant, healing is welcomed, humanness is accepted, and sweetness is naturally pure."

"I am equal in dignity, respect, and worthiness. I treasure me! I honor my time. My time is valuable, and I am worthy in every way. I enjoy keeping company with those who value the same things I do."

"His life is his. Moreover, I am doing a remarkable job of dealing with my own life. I am healing at a rapid rate."

"I forgive him for being unable to show up and for not being ready. I

honor his process. I will not intrude on his goings on. I will continue to nurture my goings on and keep collecting valuable information about how we relate."

"I forgive myself for misplacing my trust. This is a powerful journey!"

"I forgive myself for wanting a relationship to work so badly that I would trust someone who is untrustworthy. I graciously, willingly, honestly, completely surrender!"

"It does not matter that he chose to drop me to the floor, figuratively. The floor is not where I belong. His poor choice does not rule over me. I choose to stand up, dust myself off, take my rightful upright position, and move on. The way he chose to treat me is between him and Higher Power. I am healing at a rapid rate. I am beautiful."

"My life is a masterpiece that I'm delighted to experience."

"I chose this relationship because I chose this time to heal. I do not have to live like this permanently."

"The fact that he mistreated me is less important than the fact that I willingly chose to enter the sanctuary of human intimacy with him."

“Intimacy is a place where I am safe - a sacred place to be my real self. I may choose to enter this sanctuary with him, but my well-being does not ever rest with a person. It rests in the creator of the entire structure of intimacy itself: God.”

“We chose to enter together. Then I choose to accept the gifts of making that healing choice here in this sanctuary - sacred and safe. I’m safe now as always because I am connected to God. I’m safe and sound at all times.”

“The gifts within (the sanctuary of intimacy) are mine to keep regardless of the outcome.”

“Therein, once having discovered my real self, I have experienced something no one can ever take away from me again. The courage to enter ultimately led to healing the need to stay. I no longer have to search for that which already resides within.”

“I graciously, willingly, honestly, and completely enter the sanctuary because the potential pain is temporary and the potential gain is permanent.”

This entire epiphany that comes in the middle of this sleepless night, when I had no one to turn to but my Higher Power, marks the difference between being alone and

being in solitude. Sweet, safe, solitude.

My prayer is, “My God, I love you with all of my heart and soul. I give to you my heart and soul. Please give to me the strength and the courage to follow your will.”

- by Pam C., Texas

# 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.

July-August 2009, Amends Stories

September-October 2009, Healthy Sexuality

November-December 2009, Spiritual Experiences

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.

the **Journal**