

First Things First

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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.

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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.

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

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

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.

Letter from the Editor

Dear Reader,

It is with great pleasure that we bring this publication to you. I use the pronoun, “you,” in the widest possible sense. In the spirit of Step Nine, this publication belongs not to some S.L.A.A. service entity, but to today’s Journal readers and the potential readers checked into treatment centers, braving court-ordered counseling, engrossed in repetitive fantasy, or just wandering through life insatiably thirsting for the next x-lover.

This special issue is another step forward in the development of *the Journal*. To begin with, our cover is fine art from within our membership, generated from scratch specifically to match the theme, without relying on photography generated outside our fellowship. As with all real art, it is already controversial, but I realized just yesterday that the more meaning we give to the cover, the more discussion it will invoke, which is a good thing, so off it goes with all the other perspectives of the various writers and cartoonists that contributed to this issue.

The theme section contains a variety of perspectives on and experiences with the Ninth Step for those who happen to be preparing for that step, including a self-searching piece that nicely ties the theme of amends into the section on world service.

The section on world service is end-to-end edgy and thought provoking, complete with a satirical cartoon so we can laugh at ourselves a bit. Don’t miss the last tiny piece that closes out the world service section. It daringly presents one newcomer’s perspective, reminding us of the end goal of all legitimate service work, as defined within Tradition Five.

Lastly, our Share Space, the section in which members can get current, contains two wonderfully honest pieces to which many will undoubtedly relate.

We hope you are able to gain much from the contributions that follow.

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

Events and Service Opportunities

Twelve Steps Retreat Weekend in the Poconos!

SAVE THESE DATES: December 4th, 5th & 6th, 2009

This retreat is brought to the S.L.A.A. Fellowship by the Greater Delaware Valley Intergroup (GDVI). Visit www.slaadvi.org.

Villa of Our Lady Retreat House is a beautiful, clean and comfortable retreat facility, nestled in the wooded Pocono Mountains. Single rooms, private baths, meals, meetings, fellowship, and the Sex and Love Step Recovery Booklet for taking all Twelve Steps - this retreat has it all.

Experienced facilitators will lead the retreat. The step booklet is a straightforward, back-to-basics guide to sexual and romantic recovery created by and for recovering sex and love addicts. The Conference Literature Committee is currently working to get the booklet approved. Benefiting from the experiences of many retreat attendees nationwide, the step booklet's third edition has evolved into one of the most comprehensive, spiritually encouraging, and easy to follow step guides available today. Booklets will be distributed at the retreat.

The retreat begins Friday mid-afternoon and ends Sunday late-afternoon. Specifics about retreat pricing and exact start and end times will be coming soon!

Location: Villa of Our Lady Retreat House
HC#1 Box 41 Meadowside Road
Mount Pocono, PA 18344

If you have any questions, call the GDVI-SLAA Information Line: 215-731-9760 or enter your question at <http://www.slaadvi.org/contact>, selecting the Corresponding Secretary option.

This S.L.A.A. event was inspired by and is supported in service by members of the Doylestown and Quakertown, Pennsylvania meetings. Many thanks to all involved for the gift of your service to the fellowship.

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, 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 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 or submit a press release just as you would a story through 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.

Question of the Day

What was your most powerful spiritual experience?

A response to the Question of the Day can be a personal story or just a short sentence. Please send your responses to question-of-the-day@theSLAAJournal.org or use the Contact Us page at www.theSLAAJournal.org/contact.html. Responses that are appropriate for publication may be published in the next issue of *the Journal*.

Theme: Amends

My Amends

To me, the experience of making amends has caused me to become a more humble person and to truly care for others. I have been able to come up from the valley of being a legend in my own mind that needs neither people nor guidance. In my active addiction I was very controlling as I tried to manipulate every situation to my advantage in order to get a sexual hit. My motivation for every action or affiliation was to put myself in the position to receive a payoff. Sometimes it didn't work, but

many times it did. I learned to turn as many situations into a sexual experience as I could.

Because a large part of my early sex and love addiction centered on voyeurism and exhibitionism, there is no way that I can make a direct amends. I don't know the names of those I involved or where they are today, so I have to make my amends in a different way.

There are also those with whom I engaged in addictive sexual behavior to whom I should not make a direct amends. Step Nine uses these words of wisdom: "Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others." Although I cannot use the exception stated in Step Nine as an excuse to escape my amends responsibility, contact with a former addictive partner could bring back all kinds of hurtful feelings for that person and could trigger me into attempting to reconnect with that person addictively. Although I regret my decisions to take advantage of all those people and want to set things right, the closest I can come to direct amends in those cases is to live well.

Today I live a good clean life, with the help of my Higher Power, I

devote myself to sharing my story through writing or at meetings, and I devote myself to doing service in the local and worldwide arenas. I have determined to change my way of life and my thinking so that I might not repeat the failures and behaviors of my past. Being in the meetings on a consistent basis and sharing from my experience, strength, and hope, along with prayer and meditation have been of great benefit, with the strength of my Higher Power.

There are, however, persons with whom I can make direct amends. These may be persons with whom I had a passing sexual experience or those who were wronged by my actions due to personal relationships. For those persons I go to them in humility, explaining briefly how much I regret my past actions, asking forgiveness, if they are willing, and explaining briefly what I am doing today to prevent those behaviors.

In the majority of cases, where I have made a direct amends, I have been received quite well and the amends was accepted without question. Some have even told me that amends was not necessary, but I explained that I needed to make amends in order to set things right between us. In one case, the

person with whom I was speaking told me that he had already forgiven me because I had admitted my actions, although I had not previously spoken with him. It feels good to know that there are people who will still accept me and respect me for changing my life.

There are others, however, who at first accepted my amends and remained on good terms for a while, but later on have cut off all communication. I feel sad that they have taken that stance, but I recognize that I have done my part to set things right, and it is up to them how they react to my amends. I must continue to move on with my recovery in order that I might keep on moving in the right direction. I cannot waste my time worrying about someone's lack of acceptance because that can lead me into feeling sorry for myself, which could lead to acting out again. There are those, unfortunately, who will never accept my amends. All I can do in those cases is make my attempt and move on. I cannot control the feelings of others.

The best description I have ever heard regarding making amends likens it to cleaning up my side of the street. In making my amends,

I must clean up all the debris of my acting out from around me and plant flowers to take the place of the debris.

I know that making amends has made me a stronger and more humble person.

- Garry K., Medina, Ohio, USA

Before and After Amends

Step Nine says, "Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others." There's a lot of talk these days about living amends. Sometimes I wonder if the trend is keeping some people from diligently following through with direct amends. There is something about squarely facing words said and actions done poorly that is good for the soul.

Of course direct amends is not always possible. I was told early in recovery that the reason I have history that cannot be made right is to learn an important lesson: There are things I can destroy that cannot be repaired.

As I heard people in meetings share about making amends at gravestones, I realized that I'd better summon the courage and get it done. We never know when

someone will leave us - or we will leave them. Either way, now seemed to be the time. My sponsor wisely indicated that I should finish the prior steps first, and I wisely listened.

The first direct amends I made was to my mother. I had taken money from her purse to go out chasing girls, thinking I needed a reasonable budget for gas, vodka, and cocaine to actually catch one. None of these plans ever worked, but that didn't keep me from trying again. There was never any money left to put back. Thankfully, I now understand the stupidity of my addictive investments (of other people's money) and the undesirable nature of the goals I had been trying to reach.

I also lied to my mother about where I had been, but the most hurtful things of all were the things I didn't hide. Early on in my life, it was clear that I was obsessed with romance, fantasy, attention from girls, and throwing the best party in town. It must have been hell to watch me go.

Most of the legitimate reasons she had to worry were eliminated as I progressed from Step One through to Step Eight, but to apologize out loud was important to her, and it was important to me. A time and a place were set, and I followed

through. She acted like there was no need for me to say I'm sorry, but I knew the need existed, whether or not she could recognize it. Our relationship has gone through many phases of growth since then, and it is owed to that day of amends that our current relationship is so mutually loving and healthy.

There were amends to my brother and father. There were amends to pretty much every woman I had ever been in a relationship with. There were amends to music stores and hardware stores. There were amends to roommates and friends. There were emotional amends and financial reparations. Nothing was neglected.

The amends to former girlfriends were quite difficult. I had hung up on one young woman who had taken the risk to tell me she loved me over the phone. Although it was a cruel thing to do, I didn't do it to be cruel; emotionally I just wasn't able to hear her words. To make matters worse, a few years after our breakup, I made a fleeting attempt to rekindle the relationship, made a series of promises, and then disappeared again.

When I called her to make amends, she also said that she

didn't feel owed any apologies. I apologized anyway. I'm fairly sure that it mattered. The combination of my love addiction and emotional anorexia would have been torture to any woman who fell prey to my wily charms.

Because some of the amends were to women whom I found attractive, I discussed with my sponsor what my intentions were both before and after each amends to help guard me from flirting instead of doing the amends correctly.

As a result of the amends process, the girl to whom I lost my virginity is one of my longest term friends, the dynamics of my family of origin are sane and loving, I owe no one any money, and my cousin no longer has to feel uncomfortable at the mention of my name. But there is one amends that stands out as unusual.

There was a woman I knew from my local recovery groups that I both adored and feared. I had been in recovery for some time, so I did my best to keep things healthy between us, but when she married I was secretly jealous. To make some brownie points with her new husband I lied to him a pointless lie. I said that I had a photocopy of the letter from Carl Jung to

William Wilson. What I had was a transcription, not a photocopy. It was a small thing, but because of the motive behind the lie, it sat funny with me so his name went on my amends list.

It sat there for years. He and his wife had divorced, both had moved, I knew neither her maiden name nor his last name, and the closest I could come to finding him was the knowledge that he had possibly moved to Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania is a big state, and all I had was a first name.

One day, I was on my way to a meeting, and as I approached the doorway of the building, out came the guy. I called out his name. He smiled.

It turns out that he decided on a whim to drive to the Florida Keys. A few days later, as he passed through a town north of mine, he started to feel like he should go to a meeting, so he took an arbitrary exit and stopped at a gas station to inquire. It so happened that someone at the station knew of a meeting that was about to start. An hour later I decided to go to a meeting at a group north of my town that I rarely attended. This group happened to have two meetings in a row. As this man left the first meeting, I was arriving for

the second. What are the chances of that? About one in a hundred trillion? So I shared my stupid lie and the last name on my amends list could be crossed off.

The amends process is never over for good. There will be mistakes and selfishness and hurts caused again, and there are still those who chose not to have any contact with me because of my past antics. When the time arises, God will provide a way. My job is to remain willing.

- by Kashif, Bal Harbour, Florida

Son to Father

I am a gay man and have been attending S.L.A.A. since 2001. My program has had many ups and downs over the last seven years. Through many bad days and times I have acted out, I kept coming back to meetings.

Step Nine has been a healing step for me. There are three things my sponsor told me to take into consideration for this step. They are the three Rs.

Accept **R**esponsibility
Show **R**emorse
And make things **R**ight

On Saturday, November 29, 2003, I made direct amends to my father during my visit with him for the

Thanksgiving holiday week. I waited as long as I could to make the amends, and just one hour before my flight back home I made my amends to him.

The amends process is about me taking care of my part of damage I have created with the other person. This is the amends I read to him face to face.

Dad,

As I have been in my twelve-step program for the last thirty-three months, I have realized that I am responsible for my own actions. There have been periods of time when you and I have not spoken for months, and for that I am truly sorry. I am making amends to you for the lost time between the two of us and want to work on building a stronger father-son relationship.

For the last twenty-five years I have carried a lot of anger toward you. You and I spoke about this in June of this year, and that has been a mountain lifted off of my shoulders. My story about how you left me at grandma's house when I was eleven was totally incorrect. You helped me learn the truth about that event this summer.

I have always loved you, dad. I've had trouble expressing those words, "Dad, I Love You."

Just before I headed out to the airport my father gave me a big hug at his house and expressed that he was very proud to have me as a son. He told me he loved me just the way I am. He said I did not have to be ashamed of who I am or my past.

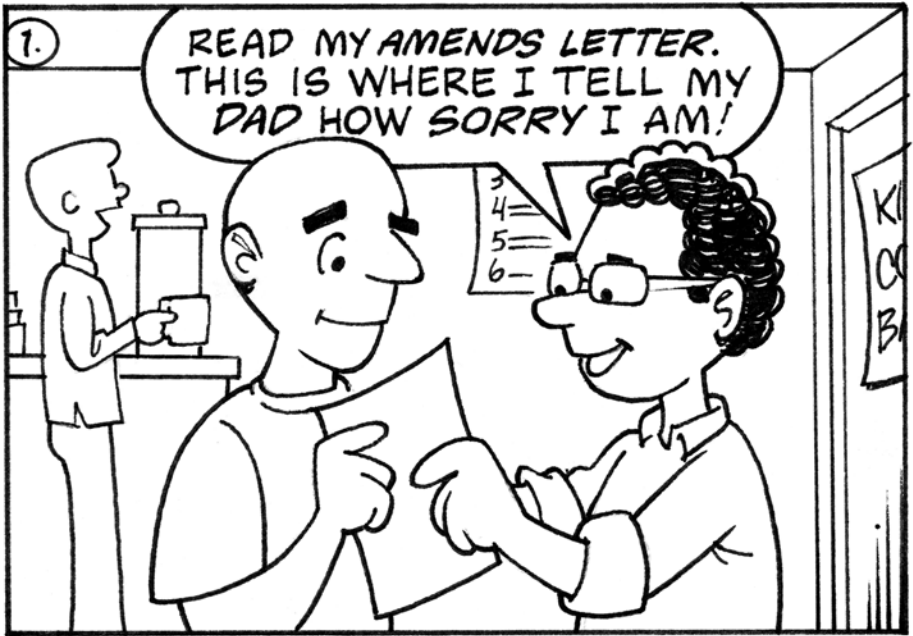
Today I am building a stronger healthier relationship with my father, and I can tell him I love him at the end of each telephone call.

- by Andrew, Denver, Colorado, USA

World Service

Amends in Service

If anyone had told me that I would be doing World Service as a delegate or board member of S.L.A.A., I would have said, "No way." In those early days I was struggling to determine what my sobriety in this program was and working the Twelve Steps. I was not capable of grasping service structure or coping with annual business meetings that run nonstop for four days immediately following three days of board meetings.





Yet here I am, nine years later, up to my eyeballs in world service and having a grand time. Don't get me wrong: Much work went into preparing me for these service roles.

When I was asked to join the board as an appointment to an open position I knew I would have my weekends taken up in conference calls. After all I had been a delegate for two years and knew about serving on committees. I decided to take two days during the week to prepare and orient myself. Of course, before doing any of this I had to pray, consult with my sponsors in all of my Twelve Step programs, and negotiate with my partner for a few months before accepting the invitation.

Then there was the nerve-wracking tension to fill out the written questionnaire and arrange an appointment for an oral interview with two board members. Ten days later I had been approved and attended my first three-hour board conference call. I received a Board of Trustees Manual with all kinds of interesting information about our Fellowship being a non-profit organization with legal and financial responsibilities to the state and federal government in addition to the membership.

Sometimes board service feels distinctly like being back at university with ten different courses to take, cramming for each one.

In addition, World Service stretches my comfort zone and challenges me to come up higher in compassion and the ability to listen to others. The minority opinion must be heard, as I have a duty to safeguard it and to express it if it is mine. I have to put aside my personal wants and needs for the higher good and unity of the Fellowship. I cannot afford to think I know what is best. It is God expressing through the group conscience that must prevail, and I must encourage all to give an opinion.

The hardest part for me has always been saying that I am wrong, I made a mistake, or I will change my behavior. My biggest defect of character is perfectionism, and beneath this is fear, if not downright terror. I lie, cheat, and do just about anything to say or see that I am right and the best. Yet fifteen years of sobriety from alcohol and drugs, five years of sobriety from acting out my bottom line behaviors of sex and love addiction, and practicing the

Twelve Steps has taught me a new way of living that really works.

My daily Tenth Step inventory has been one of the biggest blessings in my life as I practice telling on myself and become willing to live differently. And nowhere else have I found Steps Nine and Ten to be more beneficial than at the World Service level.

World Service demands a level of commitment and truth-telling like no other. In my year on the board and now six months as board chair and supervisor to the General Manager, I have already had my share of amends making. The area in which this has come up most frequently is in emails. I have this need to reply promptly to emails in general and particularly as regards committees that I serve whether as a member, board liaison, or as a concerned party. Sometimes emails are for my eyes only and include private or confidential discussions.

In my haste and maybe a need to fix or resolve issues I have more than once shared information that has caused others concern. I fret and realize that I have done harm and pray for guidance and help to do the next right thing. In each case it has been an amends for the harm I have caused and a commitment

to change my behavior of replying so quickly to emails.

What I have learned about myself is that my character defects are just like my addictive patterns, and I am powerless over them. Only with the help of my Higher Power and a willingness to turn over my need to be perfect or quick, do I have half a chance to stop my behavior and the harm to others.

Something else happens in amends making. I find myself growing in my ability to see things and people differently. I am more embracing of others and less judgmental or critical toward them and toward myself.

I want to thank each and every person to whom I have made an amends, whether a member of the Conference or of the Board of Trustees, for their generous spirits. The grace of this program and working Steps Nine and Ten support and expand my ability to be a trusted servant at the world service level, and I am grateful to serve.

- by Rita H., Montreal, Canada

Fear Not

Muad'Dib, the protagonist in Frank Herbert's novel *Dune* (1965), chanted some wisdom that has done as much for my recovery than any recovery literature has ever done.

"I must not fear. Fear is the mind-killer. Fear is the little-death that brings total obliteration. I will face my fear. I will permit it to pass over me and through me. And when it has gone past I will turn the inner eye to see its path. Where the fear has gone there will be nothing. Only I will remain."

I was sitting and getting current, pretty much oblivious to everyone else's recovery process, since what was going on with me was so important. The woman to my right was at an S.L.A.A. meeting for her first time. She had received a word from her therapist that she might want to get some support. She only shared a little during the meeting, but I remember her saying, "I need to be here." I still don't know why.

My lack of knowledge about her reason for attending that day is not because she worked a horrible program and didn't share what was going on. I could slough it off and say that she probably isn't ready, but I won't lie to myself like that.

How would it be that someone like her, whatever her name is, wouldn't be ready?

She obviously shared something with her therapist that led her therapist to recommend us as a solution. She looked up a meeting for a fellowship with a name like Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous. She drove two towns away to a location where she'd never been, just to meet some sex and love addicts that were total strangers. There are some significant risks there. How ready does a person have to be before we admit that they are ready?

The reason I don't know her name or her story is because I didn't ask. No one did. I don't even remember her name, although she introduced herself twice.

After the Serenity Prayer, the members of the group chatted with each other like a clique. The woman left and stayed gone.

If, when I first showed up, everyone had been too afraid to say, "Welcome. My name is *whatever-their-name-is*," I wouldn't be writing this story today because I wouldn't be sober. That much I am sure of.

Fear isn't just the mind-killer. There is no better way to kill a

fellowship than to be too afraid to do outreach. It's like that old recovery joke: "I finally found the number of a local Paranoids Anonymous group, but when I called, they said, 'How did you get this number?'" That is what S.L.A.A. is like, and that it is a relatively small fellowship.

An S.L.A.A. friend does statistical analysis for a large insurance company. Out of curiosity, he decided to estimate the number of active sex and love addicts in the United States. Apparently at least five million citizens in the United States show up in statistics as having sexual and romantic compulsions that result in life-threatening or debilitating consequences. Why are they not S.L.A.A. members? Are they all not ready? Who am I to decide if someone is ready anyway? Isn't that between each person and God?

Last month, someone from the intergroup called and asked if I would help take a meeting into a local treatment center. I declined. After all, what would the patients and staff think if they found out that I was a sex and love addict? How stupid is that? I hung up the phone, remembering the old slogan from the largest of the fellowships: "You have to give it away to keep

it." Is it a coincidence that that fellowship is largest?

Since I stopped playing God in Step Two, I think I'll assume the next person who shows up at a meeting is ready. I think I'll call the intergroup back, throw my name in the hat, and stop pretending that my time is so much more precious than everyone else's. If I'm wrong, I'll have lost nothing but vanity and fear.

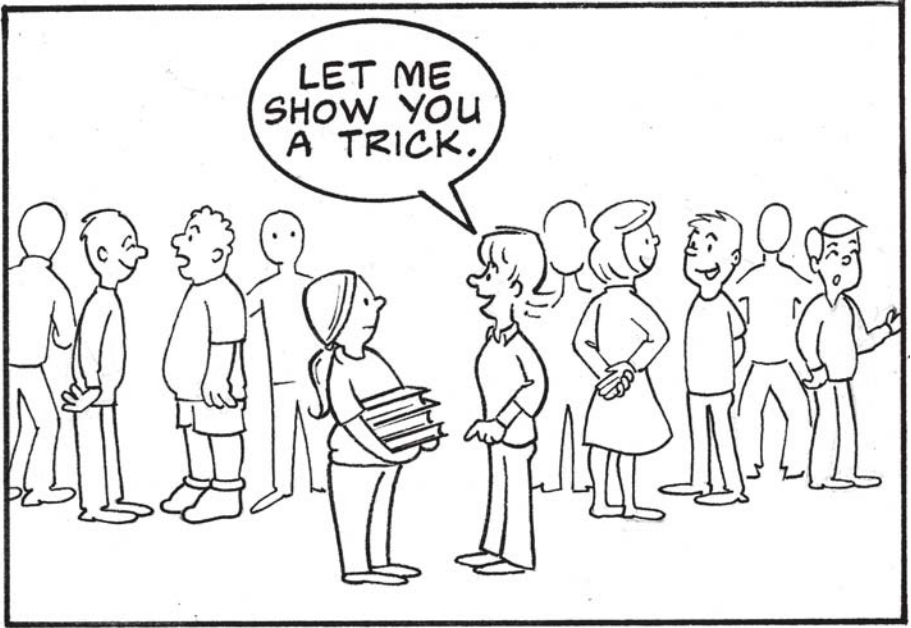
- by Jeanette A.

Lessons in Outreach

I have been doing outreach for various recovery-related events for twenty years. I've also managed the marketing budget for several businesses. This article contains some things that I've learned in relation to S.L.A.A.'s twelve media guidelines to illustrate how we might do outreach without any problems.

It is possible to let people know about S.L.A.A. recovery without creating a media nightmare. Web traffic, mailing lists, and the appearance of recovery literature in bookstores and libraries are not things that attract media attention. There are only two events that traditionally bring media attention. One is when





someone's sex and love addiction leads to a crime like jealously murder, rape, or sexual abuse, especially of a child, and that type of media attention ends with the jury verdict. The other one is when someone from film or politics creates sensation by dumping one person for someone else. That type of media hype is milking off of the fame created by governmental position or the big movie studios.

Our Recommended Guideline #1 says, "We try to avoid drawing undue attention to S.L.A.A. as a whole from the public media." A bunch of sober people reaching out a helping hand to the sex and love addict who still suffers might make page seventy-four of the Happy Herald, but S.L.A.A. members doing outreach won't earn a ten-second interval in mainstream media. *[S.L.A.A.'s Twelve Recommended Guidelines for Dealing with Media and Public Relations Opportunities immediately follows this article.]*

It is true that, as we carry the message of recovery through sponsorship and public information activities, we should make no statement about anything but what the addiction was like, how we discovered recovery, and what freedom from sex and love

addiction and the byproduct of a great spiritual connection is like. That is our protection. We avoid sensationalism.

Our Recommended Guideline #2, which says, "S.L.A.A. has no opinion on outside issues, hence the S.L.A.A. name ought never to be drawn into public controversy." Focusing on the solution is all that is needed to keep to that one. We make no comments on the guilt or innocence of those charged with sex crimes, and we make no statement about government policy, current events, or hot topics.

Our Recommended Guideline #3 says, "Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion. (We do not court publicity.)" One thing is for sure: Attraction requires visibility. No one can join something that they don't know about. Those of us doing well in our recovery from anorexia know that there is no way to socialize without being social. We need to shed our fears and create visibility in appropriate ways. That is as true of the group as it is of the individual.

What crosses the line between attraction and promotion is what we are presenting and how. Telling our story honestly and clearly is

not promotion, it is attraction. Making Conference-approved literature available to those who might refer people to us is not promotion; it is a vital public information function. Publishing the meeting times and locations of those meetings that have agreed to be published is not promotion. If we are invisible, then we have forgotten the primary purpose stated in our Fifth Tradition. We are supposed to be carrying a message.

Courting publicity is calling up MSNBC with something sensational. If we were to find a famous person among our membership and ask them to give S.L.A.A. the thumbs up during a syndicated broadcast, that would be courting publicity. However, if some unknown S.L.A.A. member calls a studio and shares that she masturbated allot but then found a God of her understanding through S.L.A.A., the Associate Producer (if she even gets to speak with an Associate Producer) will get off the phone as quickly as possible. Sobriety is not sensational. For us to gain some visibility, we will have to pay for it. We're just not that newsworthy.

Recommended Guidelines #4, #5, #6, #7, #10, #11, and #12 outline

for us how to arrive at a true Group Conscience on matters related to the public before making any statements. These are all smart guidelines and should be read completely. There are intergroups and committees that are, according to Tradition Nine, directly responsible to those they serve. Decisions related to the public should be made carefully and slowly.

Recommended Guideline #8 urges us to avoid becoming a spokesperson for S.L.A.A., which is merely a restatement of Tradition Eleven with a few more specifics added in.

Recommended Guideline #9 is smart. It says, "We avoid participating in public forums, workshops or other media events in which there appears to be any possibility that S.L.A.A. would be pitted against opposing or adversarial viewpoints, or spokespersons representing other interests or causes." There are too many times when a naive media newbie enters an interview thinking that they will finally be heard only to find out that the show that the Producer intends is a fight between two opponents. Everyone is indeed heard, but no one gets heard the way they

thought they'd be heard. Media is always hungry for sensation.

In between these guidelines and the Twelve Traditions is an enormous amount of space. With thoughtful consideration we can do quite a bit.

We can find ways of putting S.L.A.A. basic texts in every large metropolitan library in the English-speaking world. We can print business cards with the address of an S.L.A.A. web site and the words, "Are you a sex and love addict?" We can email notices of new meetings to a list of those who have opted in to receive notices. We can create online communities where the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop living out a pattern of sex and love addiction and a willingness to share mostly about the solution. We can post on recovery web sites with a high volume of visitors a list of meetings that have given permission to do so. We can write letters to therapists, treatment centers, and clergy, stating that S.L.A.A. is a valuable supplemental tool for those seeking help. We can start meetings in hospitals and institutions. The list of what we can do goes on endlessly.

We can get even more creative than that. With our backs to the camera or in silhouette, a dozen of us can

talk openly about how bad it was, how good it has become, and how grateful we are, and we can edit it all into a well-produced video and stick it up on YouTube anonymously. Even something as bold as that fits within the Twelve Traditions and our media guidelines.

I wrote this article to help create a more informed group conscience about S.L.A.A. outreach. I hope I've broadened people's views. In my twenty years of service and outreach, I have never once seen a media catastrophe come out of trusted servants doing God's work well. The only thing that seems to come out of outreach is precious sobriety, mine and someone else's.

- by Kaleb C., South Florida, USA

Recommended Guidelines

S.L.A.A.'s Twelve Recommended Guidelines for Dealing with Media and Public Relations Opportunities.

1. We try to avoid drawing undue attention to S.L.A.A. as a whole from the public media.
2. S.L.A.A. has no opinion on outside issues, hence the S.L.A.A. name ought never to be drawn into public controversy.

3. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion. (We do not court publicity.)
4. Any unilateral action, by any S.L.A.A. member acting on his/her own, to place S.L.A.A. before the public media, at any level is expressly discouraged.
5. Group conscience-based decisions need always be made regarding the appropriateness of accepting or declining any and all media or public relations opportunities, and, if an opportunity is accepted, regarding in what ways to respond, within the spirit of these guidelines.
6. All media or public relations offers which are extended to S.L.A.A. under condition of a "deadline," which, in order to accept such an offer, would make it necessary to circumvent or short-circuit appropriate group conscience decision-making regarding the offer, should be declined.
7. Public relations or media situations which are entered into need always be handled by at least two sober S.L.A.A. members. Participating S.L.A.A. members should make it clear that they speak only as individuals, and not for S.L.A.A. as a whole. No S.L.A.A. member should ever be in a position in which there is the appearance that he/ she speaks for S.L.A.A. as a whole.
8. Any S.L.A.A. members involved in responding to media/public relations offers should utilize first name pseudonyms for this purpose. Visual anonymity is strongly recommended in all media situations involving T.V., film, or video. We need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, T.V., film and other public media.
9. We avoid participating in public forums, workshops or other media events in which there appears to be any possibility that S.L.A.A. would be pitted against opposing or adversarial viewpoints, or spokespersons representing other interests or causes.
10. The appropriate level of "group conscience" to be consulted in matters of media or public relations is that level which represents the geographical area of S.L.A.A. to be impacted, or affected, by the prospective publicity. Media/ public relations opportunities which would affect a larger level of S.L.A.A. Fellowship should be referred to the "group conscience" body operative at the larger level of

S.L.A.A. Each level of “group conscience” within S.L.A.A. may, if it chooses, appoint a media/public relations conscience committee, responsible directly to the “group conscience” which appoints it, to serve as the “group conscience” decision-making body regarding media/public relations offers, at each respective S.L.A.A. service level.

11. Any media/public relations opportunities which have an aspect to them which could potentially affect S.L.A.A. as a whole, should be referred to the “group conscience” decision-making body operative at the Fellowship-Wide level, c/o the Board of Trustees.

12. It is recommended that media/public relations decision-making at any level of “group conscience” be preceded by one minute of silent meditation, so as to clear a channel through which the guiding God presence behind S.L.A.A. may make itself felt, helping to ensure that “group conscience” decisions will truly reflect this Power’s design for S.L.A.A.

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Whistling in the Dark

I’ve been whistling around in my darkness, wondering when my husband or my boyfriend will find out about each other or my on-line romances and secret sex-capades. One of my students asked me why I keep sixteen irons in the fire. I said, “In case fifteen of them leave me.”

I went to an S.L.A.A. meeting and told my story. There were men and women there that seemed pretty happy and normal. They welcomed me and told me to come back. What a relief. I think I’ll go back. All this secrecy is exhausting.

- Tammy, Texas, USA

Question of the Day

What was your most powerful spiritual experience?

A response to the Question of the Day can be a personal story or just a short sentence. Please send your responses to question-of-the-day@theSLAAJournal.org or use the Contact Us page at www.theSLAAJournal.org/contact.html. Responses that are appropriate for publication may be published in the next issue of *the Journal*.

Share Space

Just a Normal Man?

I have been a sex and love addict for nearly twenty years. But it has taken six months in recovery to realize how deep and far back my addiction went. I thought that all boys masturbated compulsively to porn when they were teenagers – that it was normal. I also thought that young men masturbated, even when they had a steady girlfriend at a university.

I was having regular sex for the first time, but I was also masturbating on top of that. Men are sexual beings and crave sexual contact, right? When I was having sex with my girlfriend, I was always on the lookout for other women to have sex with. But all these things were acceptable in my head. The story I told myself was, “I’m just a normal man, I need to sow my wild oats.”

I began with Internet pornography, intriguing on websites, and ended up sleeping with prostitutes. I told myself, “Don’t worry, everyone does it”. One day, my wife, exasperated at my lack of emotional connection, found a text message from a prostitute arranging a meeting. That was my first rock bottom.

I thought that I was a bad man and that I should be rightfully punished for what I had done. My wife called me all sorts of names, yet she stood by me. We went to counseling together. I also went to a life coach because I wasn’t happy with my job and we thought that some coaching on that would fix me.

However, I continued to intrigue on websites and agreed to meet some women one day for sex. My wife had checked my emails and saw that I had arranged to meet these people. She printed off about fifty pages of emails detailing my interactions. She threw the pages at me shouting, “This is not the action or behavior of a sane person”.

I now know that that situation was my Higher Power helping me find recovery. I suddenly knew that she was right. Showing amazing compassion, she suggested that I go into a treatment centre. I readily agreed. I had reached a new rock bottom.

Treatment was the best thing I ever did. I could only afford one week, but I dived in with great willingness. I was a desperate man. I was hurting everyone I cared about, and I couldn’t stop myself. I knew I needed help.

I came out of treatment and went straight to one of the S.L.A.A. meetings in London. I sat and listened to people's experiences in addiction and recovery and took heart in the similarities to my own story. I realized I wasn't alone.

I found myself a Sponsor, who I truly believed has saved my life, and began to work the programme. I have been working the Twelve Steps, going to meetings, making calls, and taking care of myself. I had treated myself so badly for such a long time that I didn't realize what having compassion for oneself could be like.

My wife and I are currently separated and I have moved out of our house. Six months ago that would have caused me such fear and anxiety that I would have acted out straight away, but now, I'm living with a friend, and I'm okay with my wife and the future. Each day is as it comes, and I can only look after my own health and well being today. I cannot control other people, places, or things. When difficult issues come my way I am able to ask my Higher Power for guidance and let life find the best way.

I am about to complete Step Six, having been rigorous and fearless in Steps Four and Five. I am truly

looking forward to working on giving away my character defects. I already have a much better life than I did before, even if it's not as I had envisioned it. I want to make amends to the people I have wronged and live an open, honest, and truthful life. That is what I am trying to live out every day.

My friends and family have noticed a huge positive change in me, and that can only be good. If you have come to the difficult realization that your life is unmanageable and you need help, the S.L.A.A. programme is here for you. For the first time in life, I walk around with my head up (because I have compassion for myself), and my eyes open (because I am ready to experience life and whatever it may bring to me).

Keep coming back, because it really does work if you work it.

- by David B., London, UK

Single in a Couple's World

They are everywhere, strolling down the mall, hand-in-hand, casually filling the shopping cart at the grocery store, sharing a familiar bag of popcorn in the movies. The illusion of being surrounded by happy couples simply navigating life together

brings a pang of jealousy that I can't ignore. I've stopped trying. It's real. Now I attempt to honor it rather than continuing to deny it. I pause, feel the feelings, and whisper the Serenity Prayer - again.

My mind wanders to the safe isolation of my home, my comfy sofa, a well-stocked fridge, and the DVD movies who yearn to be my friends. Here in the safety of my domain, I know I can avoid the enemies: Rejection, abandonment, pain, and yet another withdrawal. That's the problem with years in the program. I know now that this solitary life, although absent of my acting-out behaviors, can't claim real sobriety or solid recovery. If I follow this fantasy, I'm simply making a new friend named anorexia, the archenemy of the single person.

The author of the S.L.A.A. Basic Text warns, "There is a danger ... in choosing a life alone. It may be that, as we find intimacy with self and become involved in our new lives, we come to enjoy our own company to the exclusion of others. It is one thing to be comfortable and fulfilled by ourselves, it is quite another to become self-centered in our isolation." (pp 141, 142) Self-centered in isolation versus self-care, the distinction isn't always

clear to me, so I turn to the inevitable: Dating.

I must have kissed dozens of frogs. Oops, make that sipped coffee with dozens of frogs. Many of these frogs appeared to be handsome princes on the exterior, but by the second cup of java, it became clear that they were not emotionally available for a relationship. They hadn't done the work. The warts were impossible to ignore. I pause to congratulate myself. Pre-recovery, I would not have noticed the warts at all. Or worse still, I would have thought I could remove the warts. I know now, they aren't mine to remove.

The problem of surviving as a single person in what appears on the surface to be a world filled with happy couples prompts me to go again to our source. The S.L.A.A. Basic Text says, "With the rigors of withdrawal behind us, we had made our peace with the prospect of living within the behavioral limits necessary for our lives to be sober. ... The degree to which we could maintain honesty and openness, and our ongoing commitment to S.L.A.A. ... would be the barometer of whether or not there was a possibility of developing a partnership." (pp 153, 154)

It seems to me that is the crux of the solution: Maintaining honesty and openness, and an ongoing commitment to the S.L.A.A. program. If I work it, I experience emotional sobriety, and if I can recognize it in myself, theoretically, I can recognize it in others. I think my goal is to surround myself with emotionally healthy people, both as friends and prospective partners - people who recognize their imperfections, own them, and learn from them - people both in and outside of recovery. Maybe the number of folks in this category isn't huge, but they are out there, and I can find them and nurture friendships with them.

I feel hopeful as I write this. I hope I can embrace solitude in a healthy way and still interact with others willing to share a bag of popcorn. I'm a gratefully recovering sex and love addict.

- by Ava M., Austin, Texas, USA

[A Final Editor's Note: Further views of singlehood that challenge the commonly held beliefs that singlehood equals solitude and that the formation of couples magically creates happiness will be presented in the next two issues of the Journal.]