

The background of the cover is a photograph of a winter forest. The scene is filled with snow-covered branches and small red berries, likely holly, which stand out against the white snow. The trees in the background are bare and dark, suggesting a cold, overcast day. The overall mood is serene and wintry.

# the Journal

November-December 2009

## Working the Program

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 Fellowship-wide Services Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous Inc. to edit, quote, print, publish, and distribute the submission in the Journal or a publication of collected works. All published submissions are protected under the copyright of the issue in which they have been published.

[editor@theSLAAJournal.org](mailto:editor@theSLAAJournal.org)

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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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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.

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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,

Let me begin this editorial by saying that I am extremely honored to be the new Managing Editor of *the Journal*. I have been in the program for 3 years and I am daily practicing a positive sobriety. As I have matured with the program, I have sought to experience my 12th step through service to my group as a Sponsor and Intergroup Representative. I now am grateful for the opportunity to extend my 12th step experience by assuming the position of Managing Editor of *the Journal*.

I learned of the Journal a couple of years ago when I purchased the 3 volume set, "the first 10 years of the Journal". Reading from this collection became my nightly program work. It was truly a "meeting in print" for me. I subsequently subscribed to *the Journal* and regular readings have been a part of my program work since.

As a professional editor, I felt a calling to service while reading *the Journal*. When Douglas sought volunteers for the Managing Editor position, I was quick to answer the call. I am delighted to be accepted to this position and I will strive to continue the outstanding tradition established by my preceding Managing Editors. I look forward with welcome expectation to the words of experience, strength and hope in recovery, shared by you, the readers.

I am also fortunate to have the experienced support of Douglas as the new Executive Director of *the Journal*. I will work closely with him during this time of transition and look to his guidance to continue the excellent quality of publications. I am also honored to have the support of the members of the CJC who will work with Douglas and me to further develop *the Journal* in service to our readership.

As the Managing Editor, I will continue the established traditions of *the Journal*. In particular, I have introduced a new "Question of the Day" in this issue asking you to consider how *the Journal* has helped you in your own recovery. I will also continue to follow a thematic approach for each issue. The theme of the current issue is "Working the Program". As part of this first issue, I will also share with you my own story of recovery and how the program and this new position help my continued sobriety. In addition, there is an aspiring article on why we should serve.

The issue concludes with our usual Share Space containing the thoughts, hopes, and challenges of our readership.

May you find serenity, courage, wisdom and lasting recovery by the faith in your higher power and the words shared within these pages.

Sincerely,

Charles D.

Incoming Managing Editor, *the Journal*



## **Events and Service Opportunities**

### **Events**

#### **Daylesford Abbey Spirituality Retreat**

Presented by the Greater Delaware Valley Intergroup, Daylesford Abbey, Paoli, PA. Theretreat starts Friday 3/12 at 6pm and runs through Sunday 3/14 at 11am

This event will contain a series of workshops and meetings emphasizing “Maturing into your Recovery”.

Please call the Daylesford Abbey Retreat Information Line at: 856-745-4844 or email [SLAASpiritualityWeekend@comcast.net](mailto:SLAASpiritualityWeekend@comcast.net) for more information.

#### **Step study is a key tool to recovery in the S.L.A.A. program**

Presented by the New England Intergroup in Chester, Vermont (2 1/2-3 hours from Boston), Friday, March 26 through Sunday, March 28, 2010. Please contact the New England Intergroup (NEI), P. O. Box 1375, Brookline, Massachusetts 02446 NEI Web Site: [www.slaanei.org](http://www.slaanei.org) Telephone: (617) 625-7961 Email: [vtweekend@slaanei.org](mailto:vtweekend@slaanei.org) for further details.

At this retreat weekend we do an intensive study of the 12 Steps— together. If you have worked on the Steps in this type of format before, you already know its value. If you have not done any study of the Steps, intensive or otherwise, this is a great way to do it, especially the first time. Regardless of where we are in the Step study process, we will all learn from sharing our experience, strength and hope with each other.

#### **German Speaking Countries Conference - Deutschsprachiges Ländertreffen**

Presented by the German Speaking Countries Intergroup, Cologne, Germany, May 14-16, 2010.

For Inquiries please visit <http://www.slaafws.org/events>

Join us for our spring conference “With God on the Journey” in Cologne, Germany. Our conference is held twice a year and you are invited to attend speaker and theme meetings on various topics, business meetings of the German speaking fellowship, our assembly meeting, a fun evening of laughter, fellowship, disco and much, much more. German is the language of the event.

## **Service Opportunities**

### **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.

### **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 you are 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.

## Question of the Day

### Next Question of the Day

How has *the Journal* helped with your recovery?

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](mailto:question-of-the-day@theSLAAJournal.org) or use the Contact Us page at [www.theSLAAJournal.org/contact.html](http://www.theSLAAJournal.org/contact.html). Responses that are appropriate for publication may be published in the next issue of *the Journal*.

### Answers from Yesterday

The Question of the Day from the last issue was, "How did you first learn about S.L.A.A. Recovery?" Guidance to our first step into recovery can come from any source, but here are the responses gathered through a regional survey. They are in order of frequency of response.

#### Answer One (47%)

Searching for resources on the web.

#### Answer Two (21%)

From my therapist.

#### Answer Three (19%)

From another person in recovery.

#### Answer Four (13%)

Other sources.

## The Theme

### Working the Program

#### First Steps-Next Steps

Like many addicts, I was born into a family of broken people. My father was an atheistic, violent alcoholic and probable sex addict; my mother was a strict Catholic and at age 18 was raped by her brother-in-law. She became pregnant and was forced to carry the child to term in shame, away from the family, only to give the child up for adoption at birth. The joining of my parents in marriage was an explosive combination.

Life at home was chaos. With continual arguments, verbal and physical abuse, my father's public drunkenness, repeated sexual assaults of my mother by my father, police calls to the home and arrests, my childhood seemed so different from that of my friends. In response, I acted out with petty crime, risk taking behaviors, drugs and alcohol, but none of these

behaviors seemed the answer to my pain.

I believe fantasy was my first step to sexual addiction. I dreamed of being someone else, someone who belonged to a happy family, someone who was not abused. When I found sexual release through masturbation, the addiction was complete. Fantasy and masturbation became my way of dealing with the myriad troubles and disappointments of my life. Sadly, I did not realize that the road I chose would only increase my pain and isolation.

I left home as early as possible and made another step in my deepening addiction through denial of my previous life. Leaving my family and friends behind offered me anonymity to live another life filled with lies. Successful in my professional pursuits, it was easy to let others see only those aspects of my true self I wished them to see. Over time, there was less and less truth in what I showed to others and more false masks of self-confidence and success. Even when I told people of my early life and fears, it was mostly to manipulate them into feeling sorry for me so that I receive my needed emotional fix. I did whatever I

could to be loved, not as I was, but as I thought others wanted me to be. Unfortunately, because of my fear to be myself, I never felt loved for who I was and constantly sought someone who would “fix” me.

My first marriage was the culmination of my pursuit for the ideal woman. She was young, attractive, Christian, and had an apparently happy stable family. For me, she was the angle to guide me on the road to my redemption. Unfortunately, she was in love with the person I pretended to be and not the person who lived with her. I felt misunderstood from the beginning and began acting out immediately with other women. The birth of our child and a move did not stop my behavior, despite my best efforts. I was ashamed of my behavior, but blamed her for much of my despair.

I met the woman who was to become my second wife and immediately became romantically involved. Again, I felt that I had met my savior! I left my first wife and married again. At the time of my divorce, my first wife told me she thought I had a problem with sex. My thinking was so distorted

at that time that I thought she was the one with the problem!

My relationship with my second wife went well for nearly 10 years with only the occasional masturbation and fantasy until I was laid-off at work. The stress of searching for a new job and a move that would take me away from my first child brought the addiction back full-force with masturbation and pornography. This time, however, I vowed to stay in the marriage. Unfortunately, the addiction swept me along and I fell back into extramarital affairs. In distress, I told my wife about one of the affairs, mostly to release my guilt, but rationalizing that it might possibly help the relationship. Sadly, I again blamed my wife for many of my problems. My wife stayed with me and we went into marriage counseling. I also sought personal counseling. My counselor stated that I might have a sexual addiction, but I ignored his concerns. Despite joint counseling for nearly a year, I was still masturbating daily and intriguing with women. I was beginning to sense that something was wrong with me as it was clear my wife was working hard to

emotionally reconnect in our marriage. I hit bottom when my wife found email about an intrigue relationship I was having with another woman. My wife moved out of the bedroom and planned to leave. This was the first step in my recovery.

Three and a half years later, I have withdrawn from my addiction, worked the steps diligently and kept my bottom lines. I got a sponsor immediately and have had the honor to sponsor others. I have done service as secretary and intergroup representative. I speak with my higher power daily and make program calls regularly. I have come to see that I can be happy in my own skin and see others as fully human and not simply as sexual objects. I now have satisfying relationships. I am practicing a positive sobriety.

During my recovery, I read all three volumes of *The First Ten Years of the Journal*. Not only did I find faith, hope and courage through these readings, but I was inspired by those who put their own stories in print for the benefit of others. I became a regular subscriber. As a professional editor, I also felt called to service in support of the *Journal*. When

I learned of the opening for a new Managing Editor, I was excited and quickly applied. I am pleased and honored to have been offered the position. My life has been a series of steps, sometimes in unexpected directions. As the new Managing Editor of the *Journal*, I am taking my next step in service to the SLAA community. I am grateful for this opportunity.

Charlie D., Sacramento, CA

Managing Editor, *the Journal*

## Self-Esteem

### Empowerment Building

My name is Eric EE and I am a sex and love addict. My sobriety date by the Grace of God is 5/4/92. My bottom lines are no sex outside of a committed relationship and being here now. My top lines are to leave this world a slightly better place than the way I found it and to do two good deeds every day, one of which does not count if anybody else finds out about it. Please take what you want, need or can use from my words, and feel free to leave, ignore or delete the rest.

That-a-boy!

That-a-girl!

What does it mean to build self-esteem? Ever build a house of cards? It takes patience and perseverance and care and balance. Unfortunately, a house of cards doesn't take much to make it all fall down. Cards aren't great building materials. Making a house out of Legos on the other hand is easier and sturdier. Anybody out there remember Lincoln Logs? You can really make a nice house out of those.

I still like looking up words in the dictionary. Especially words I think I know the meaning of. Pride is one of my favorites. There are two types of pride, like there are different types of building materials. One is a very good one and one is an equally bad one. When I choose my building materials I am predetermining what sort of structure I will end up with. Pride based on who I am, what I can do, what I truly believe is right can make for some pretty good, stable, strong and reliable building material. Pride based on my favorite fantasy and legend (the one about me) doesn't work very well. It tends to be flimsy because it doesn't have a foundation in fact or truth. It is usually based on fabrications, misinterpretations, half truths and sometimes outright lies.



Pop quiz! Not to beat a dead horse, but Who's the father of lies? What did he get his pink slip for?

This is a program of rigorous honesty (please note it says rigorous not brutal). To be rigorously honest with myself means a lot of personal acceptance. I'm a pretty average human being. I am not terminally unique and my problems, challenges, opportunities, or gifts are not world changing events (although they do affect my world like they were). They are just my life today. I'm not Ghandi or Mother Theresa. I am also not Hitler or Stalin or Idid Amin Dada. I'm just another face in the crowd. When I accept that and deal with myself accordingly in a fair and honest way, I get along all right. I can accept that there is room for improvement. I also need to recognize and honor myself when I do something right. I need to be aware of what I can do and do well. I need and want all the honest, positive strokes I can get. I don't want negative strokes (although I need to hear them and detect any truth there may be in them). I have still got a committee in my brain housing group that will give me all the negative strokes I can stand real or imagined (mostly imagined).

So, here is another little pop quiz. Last time you messed up, how much time and effort did you spend beating yourself up? OK, now last time you did something right, how much time and effort did you spend rewarding and honoring yourself? Is that a balanced equation? Does it make sense?

Everything I have read on parenting, self parenting, re-parenting (or dog training for that matter) all say the same thing. Positive re-enforcement is essential for altering behavior. As the behavior improves you can provide less and less positive re-enforcement but you still have to provide it. Unfortunately both my parents are dead. I am not going to get any positive re-enforcement from them. Instead, my higher power provides me with a boundless source of positive re-enforcement. I have to be looking for it and recognize it when I see it (for some reason I don't get the burning bush or the handwriting on the wall, and I am jealous). An attitude of gratitude helps a lot here. Gratitude opens up my eyes so that I can see what my higher power is up to. I also have to do some of it myself.

In order to do positive re-enforcement successfully I need to be aware of several things based as close as possible to reality. First I have to know what I have done in the past that didn't work for me or I need to improve. I also need to know what I have accomplished and am capable of doing. Oddly enough this sounds like a fourth step sort of issue. Next I need to know where I am right now. I need to be as honest as possible about where I am and what I am feeling right here and now. I need to honor those feelings and recognize my limitations. A Little like a tenth step sort of deal? I don't have to cram this down anybody else's throat but I need to do it for myself. It is not fair to bring guilt or shame to anybody else because of how we feel. Our feelings are our property. Nobody else 'makes' us feel anything. Finally I need a plan. Who do I want to be? What kind of person do I wish to become? What can I do to head in that direction? What are my goals and aspirations? What do I want out of all this recovery stuff? Hmmmm... does this sound like twelfth step? To quote my least favorite software company, "where do you want to go today?" I am going to go somewhere and I do have a choice. If I do nothing and

choose nothing my bet is I will end up with nothing.

If I get a little serendipity that's just my Higher Power showing me what an abundant, loving and caring sort of character he is. I don't want to get into a theological discussion I'm not qualified for anyway, but I have done nothing and I can do nothing to earn God's Grace towards me. I personally believe Grace is God's Riches at Christ's Expense. Since it is the Easter season I'll admit that I am still working on the concept that if it was just me, he would have gotten on the cross anyway. That's a terrifying humbling thought to chew on. Really messes with a puritan work ethic.

So what can I do to reward and honor yourself for my minor successes and accomplishments? One thing that helps me a lot is to take my right hand, place it on my left shoulder, pat three times and say, "that-a-boy." Now this may seem silly, but it also feels good (in an odd wholesome sort of way that takes some getting used to). It's the kind of weird, oddball, freaky sort of behavior for which I am personally renown. It also works! It takes me about one hundred that-a-boy to equal one aww-shucks. So I need every single that-

a-boy I can lay my hands on. May I offer some advice to avoid looking silly? Start giving away all the honest that-a-boys or that-a-girls you can manage. Give away all the hearty (not arm wrestling) handshakes and wholesome (non sexual and non flirtatious) hugs you can manage in a day. Look people in the eye and tell them ‘well done,’ ‘I’m proud of you,’ and similar honest re-enforcing comments. If you like the way someone did something say, “I admire how you did that, can you tell me how you did it?” This is a neat trick, you might make someone feel good and you might even learn something! Do not miss any opportunities! Don’t fake it either. Keep this up and it will come back to you. Celebrate other people’s success and they will celebrate yours.

Used to take me a thousand that-a-boy to equal out to one aww-shucks. I’m down to a hundred these days. I still got to work on getting all ten hugs I need a day for good health. As the saying goes, it is “Progress not perfection”.

I need to ask if, “self empowerment” and personal responsibility are ever a part of this program, or if everything is

assigned to a third party (The Higher Authority)?”

WHOA! Now, that is a final exam question for a Ph.D. in twelve steps if I ever saw one.

As addicts, until we get into actually working the twelve step program we are dragging around one heck of a burden of self. We don’t even try and turn our will and our lives over to the care of a Higher Power of our own understanding until step three. After all we have to come to believing a Higher Power in the first place before we can turn our will and our lives over to it, and we have to believe that we cannot do it by ourselves, our lives are unmanageable. I have learned that the first three steps can be paraphrased as Came, Came too, Came to believe, or I can’t, He can, I think I’ll let Him.

The Twelve steps are a spiritual program, there is no way around that. If you can’t accept a spiritual program, I personally think you need another program and I wish you the best of luck. You may be wasting your time and energy here and this dis-ease is out to kill you and destroy the lives of everyone you care about in direct proportion to how much you care about them. I think that’s too

serious an issue to waste much time around.

As active addicts a few of us have developed some really minor issues with our EGO (Ease GOD [Good Orderly Direction] Out). I would like to suggest getting out a dictionary and looking up the word PRIDE in it. There are two definitions or meanings. One is good and necessary for our recovery and the other one can kill us. The one that can kill us might be a really good thing to get rid of, maybe NOW? What we do have to do in order to work this program is let go of our EGO completely. Nature abhors a vacuum. What belongs in that God shaped hole left by our EGO is Good Orderly Direction or God if you prefer. By letting go of our EGO we relieve ourselves of the burden of self. Otherwise I think trying to work program while hanging on to our EGO is like swimming the English Channel wearing a weight belt. You Might make it, but why put yourself through all that extra effort?

Now the Higher Power of my own understanding gave human beings the gift of free will and He does not renege. We always have free will. The twelve steps are a suggested program of recovery. Nobody can make you do this work. The twelve

steps do not work by osmosis. You can't get the benefits by sitting around and listening or reading and not actually doing the work. What you get out of the steps depends on what you put into them. Now, if you really want to be self empowered consider this. There may be an omnipotent, omnipowerful, omnipresent superior intelligence who would just love to be your ally in life. This is a know all and do all kind of character. We can't even begin to vaguely imagine all the things He can, will and wants to do for our benefit. Now getting an ally like that would be really self empowering right? We're talking a nuclear power level of self empowerment here. You can get His help really easily and really quickly but you have to do one really hard thing first in order to get it. He's a gentleman and he likes to be asked first. He doesn't go sticking His nose into people's business if He isn't invited. He's watching, He knows what is happening, He is just dying to help (in fact some of us choose to believe he actually did die to help), but He wants to be asked first.

Stay sober just for today

- Eric EE

## Share Space

### How Much Is Enough?

How much service is enough service? How much do we have to “do” to say we did “enough”?

I was a last minute delegate for to the Annual Business Meeting in July 2008. No one else from my intergroup wanted to step forward. I did not even know what a delegate was. I know that I prayed for God to bring something to me to help me with my new task. I had numerous commitments already. I remember my sponsor saying maybe it is too much. It *was* way too much. I said to her that it was an answered prayer. Being of service was already helping me to navigate and stay afloat in a very painful personal relationship. I knew that this was the “push” that I was looking for; the one that would make me grow. I had no idea just how “right” I was going to be.

Someone asked me to be of service and I said “yes”, and next thing I know, I am sitting in swampy Florida wondering, “what does C.P.I.C. ( Conference Public Information Committee) stand for again”? I had acronyms stuck in my head for days and my brain became one big bowl of alphabet soup.

I showed up to the CPIC meeting and it was what they referred to as a “dark” committee. Meaning it was “inactive”. I thought to myself, “No wonder we have problems as a fellowship. We don’t take outreach seriously.” And that began a huge adventure. No one wanted to be chair, just like no one wanted to be delegate. Once again I was voted in not because I was “qualified”, but because I was willing.

Last year, I dreaded being chair. I really resented it. I felt a lot of pressure to be perfect at something I knew nothing about. Several months into my first year as delegate the same people that created an atmosphere of “perfection” and “do it now” were gone. They just vanished. My fellow delegates stepped down, other members of the committee left for various reasons and there were only three of us left. One of them was our board liaison. The other one was Douglas, the managing editor of the Journal.

I was chair of a committee when I knew nothing about committees. I resented it, hated it and eventually didn’t even host conference calls. I just dropped the ball. I resented that the very people that had such high expectations of

me weren't even around to see me improve. I realized it was not about how well I did something. I was still hanging on, yes imperfectly, but I was still hanging on. I managed to get back on the plane this July. I missed EVERY deadline that a delegate had. It cost my IG an extra \$50 in late fees. I did pay my IG back. I felt that was the only fair thing to do, but I was so discouraged. I knew I was heading into another year of "do this" "do that". I was overwhelmed and BURNT OUT.

Then this summer I thought that I was "off the hook". I thought that surely someone else more qualified, more reliable, more whatever would step forward. Someone might have been interested, but I was the only candidate. Yeah. But I met new faces this summer. No one treated me like I was a "bad" chair, or like I was screwing up. Everyone seemed to be a heck of a lot more interested in helping the addict who still suffers than taking my inventory and judging me. People were grateful.

In one meeting I knew from the passion and ideas being expressed that I had finally found kindred spirits. My reinforcements had arrived! I knew that this summer everything was going to be okay. I

realized that hanging in there, imperfectly, even disappearing from time to time, but sticking it out somehow, was what it was all about. I realized that by simply keeping the committee in "active" status no matter how much I screwed up, that I had kept the door open for all of you to walk in and start dreaming. I learned a huge lesson.

Then, as time went on, people got back to their lives. Some people missed several conference calls or were out of town etc. I got emails little by little expressing regret and remorse and guilt and "I will do better, I am so sorry" and I heard myself in these emails.

I realized that if I did not change the environment for all of you, I was going to indirectly encourage delegates and others who were willing to be of service to be just like me, full of remorse, guilt, maybe resentment at all of the "work" and eventually just plain "overwhelmed".

Some of you have received emails from me personally saying "don't worry about it", "thank you for everything that you DO", and "hope to hear you on the call" etc.

But I wanted to send this out to everyone.

If we do not create an environment of grace and understanding for one another who will?

How much service is enough? ANY service is enough. I remember Douglas saying to me “whatever you do is more than was done last year”. He always reminded me that I “took over” a committee that was not even active and that simply making it active again was more than what was being done before.

And you know, it really is from his encouragement that I was able to grab hold of the philosophy I am trying to live by and share with all of you.

We delegates are of the few that took a lot of time out of our “already filled with service commitments” schedules and signed up to do conference committee work. So many members expect so much of us because we are “delegates”. Are we delegates because we owe our IG something, or are we delegates because we are willing to be of service and care about the fellowship and those in it and those who could be in it? Do we “owe” our IG because they paid for a plane ticket? We showed up. Others didn’t. But we did. And we continue to do so, “imperfectly”.

Many of you who have joined this year are not even delegates. I know a member of my IG thinks that it is only the delegates that go to ABM’s that are interested in committee work. Boy do I have news for them. We have many members of the CPIC that are not delegates. They have a heart for the addict still suffering and are willing to be of service. To those of you who have never even met me, or the rest of the committee, I especially want to thank you for your participation.

Non-delegates are special members because they are not on a committee because they “have to be”; they are the ones who are here because they want to be. I thank all of you for your hearts and willingness to be of service. It is so encouraging.

Well, enough with the story. I really wish you could have seen what it looked like last year. We have grown so much. Each and every one of you has done so much service. And I am totally grateful that all of you have taught me to hang on to a passion for the newcomer. It doesn’t matter what we do for service. What is our service doing for us? Is it changing us? Does it encourage us, inspire us? Mine does. My service

“commitments” inspire me. You guys inspire me. Thank you for that!!

Your very grateful Chair, Monique

## **Happy, Joyous, and Free Well, Working on It**

Step One states, “We admitted we were powerless over sex and love addiction - that our lives had become unmanageable.”

I have struggled with admitting that I am a sex and love addict. My sponsor and members who have heard me share can attest to this. Mostly, I have struggled with the word, “addict.” It had, or I gave it, some pretty negative connotations.

To me, an addict is someone who is out of control, untrustworthy, and causes pain, lots of pain. So, why on earth would I want to identify myself as someone like that? My ego resisted.

Eventually, Higher Power introduced a particular definition of addiction along my path. I then realized that I could take a loving position toward myself while still identifying myself as an addict. I’d like to share that definition in the hope that it may help someone else.

Addiction - “Fear; running from self; not knowing how to love one’s self.” That pretty well described me; I had fear, I ran from myself, and I didn’t know how to love myself. I used people, places, and things to avoid being present to myself.

This definition provided me with a loving, objective perspective, a perspective that I hadn’t been able to find or give myself. Today, whenever I feel uncomfortable with identifying as an addict, I turn to this definition once more to ground myself and open my heart.

I remind myself that in any given situation, I’ve done and still do the best I can with what I have, depending on where I am in my recovery. As much as my ego might want me to believe that I am my dis-ease, I am much more. Slowly, with time, patience, willingness, working the Twelve Steps, going to meetings, meditating, praying, trusting, and doing service, I am better able to love and accept myself - addiction and all - and that has made all the difference.

Thank you S.L.A.A. for the new ways I’m learning and practicing to behave and think towards



myself and others. Thank you,  
Higher Power, for my recovery.

-anonymous, Canada

## The Fiend

Evening, day's end, is near, and I'm  
tired, taxed from the day's  
happenings. I want to take comfort  
- reward myself for my efforts. How  
delicate its entry!

This, my most unguarded time,  
frightened by the options of  
comfort I desire - fantasy: awaiting  
abyss of demolition - oh yeah baby!  
The process of reluctant consent  
has begun.

I sense its charisma and quickly  
summon my feeble resources to  
defend myself. In times gone by, all  
attempts to assuage the Fiend's  
fondness have been in vain. Its  
supreme weapon is entrenched in  
my psyche.

It feeds on my self-reliance; it pokes  
at me with temptations; it knows I  
will retreat to isolation; it  
barricades my doors to deliverance;  
it is a mysteriously filthy fighter.

It scratches at my skeletal layers of  
fortification, knowing all the while  
I will yield to its passion, and crack  
open like the egg of the sparrow and

bow before it with disgraceful  
surrender, weakened once again  
by the Fiend.

Yes, it's passion, the lure, the  
Seductress Demon! As I play  
possum to its offerings, I am  
executing as two entities, each  
running in chorus from and to its  
devouring.

The anxious child begging for  
offerings as though they were  
candy canes of Christmas.  
Deceptive Gifts wrapped in good  
reason and exemption from  
consequences, unveiling the  
ruptured nipples of the Fiend's  
glittering breast, and their  
breathtaking spell while  
ceaselessly kidnapping my  
innocence, untying my  
subordinate body from my  
frenzied mind, sucking me down  
into the Fiend's drenched mouth,  
rendering me powerless as always,  
swallowing my life like delicious  
nectar, digesting my soul into the  
gorge of the fiend.

Dishonored once again, I have  
acted out. I have become the  
Fiend.

-Rich D., New York City

## Witnesses

In the film *Shall We Dance?* [Miramax Films, 2004, written by Masayuki Suo and Audrey Wells], Beverly explains to a detective about her marriage to John Clark.

“Why is it that people get married? Because we need a witness to our lives? There’s a billion people on this planet. I mean, what does any one life really mean?”

“In a marriage you’re promising to care about everything. Life is an endless series of things. Good things and bad things and terrible things and mundane things - all of it. All the time. Every day. You are saying, ‘Your life will not go unnoticed because I will notice it. Your life will not go unwitnessed because I will be your witness.’”

We live a lifetime, and no one else witnesses it in its entirety, not even our parents as most of us outlive them. Neither do our children, who arrive when we’re adults and are so busy with their own lives that they seldom pay attention.

We develop a sense of ourselves by being listened to - being observed. Children say, “Mommy, watch me swing,” and, “Daddy, throw the ball

with me.” A smiling baby, attracting the attention of others, is asking us to become a part of his or her experience - to witness his or her existence.

Perhaps the most constant witness is a spouse, a significant other. When we exchanged our vows thirty-five years ago, I agreed to listen to her, to verify the experiences of her life, good or bad, to share her joys, her disappointments, and her moments of failure. I agreed to see her through from beginning to end. She agreed to do the same for me.

She has been my witness through more than two decades of recovery from sex and love addiction. Despite my imperfect sobriety, we have grown over the years to trust each other and be loving and affectionate many times each day. I thank God for my partner.

I’m also grateful to God for another group of witnesses. I go to Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous meetings each week, and I am heard each time I get current. During those moments we listen to each other, without interruption and without judgment. We witness one another’s lives, the painful

moments as well as accomplishments. We call it sharing experience, strength and hope.

-Rich S., Colorado

## **Entry into Life**

My name is Kristin, and I am a sex and love addict. I found out about S.L.A.A. a few years ago through my friend who had attended.

One part of me is a sex and love addict, and it feels to be that part of me that exhibits a state of hyper-vigilance at all times when I have a new love interest. You see, my only love interest was my father. The interest that I had in my father was that of getting his love, gaining his love and ultimately keeping his love. But my father was incapable of loving.

But I have never been loved in the way that I wanted to be, so I have had to be open to loving myself rather than waiting on someone to love me first. I spent my entire life trying to get someone to love me. Father Charles, my spiritual guru from India, thinks that I am normal.

This past August of 2008 my oldest child moved out, in a sense - left for college in New York City. That

day, into the evening, I experienced a very strong turning point in my life. On the eve of that very night, I went into a state of withdrawal and have been there ever since. This is a very key and important time in my life. I'm growing up sexually and spiritually, and I'm learning how to remain still and very true to myself.

Who am I? I have this really nice way about me; I am very kind. I am a forty-three-year-old single mother of two beautiful and wonderful children. I raised my children alone for ten years as of this very month, from December 1998 to December 2008.

- by Kristin, New Jersey

## **A Lovely Way To Live**

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

I am grateful to be sexually sober today. To me, that means I have a choice about intimate relationships, have options. Instead of fighting off all the compulsive junk in my mind and

heart, like I used to do all the time, I find enjoyment and fun in learning about real love that lasts and what my part is in it.

Learning to love for real is difficult, yet so much easier than that other thing I used to do. It's so good for me to remember that, one day at a time.

I'm so grateful for the increased connection to my Loving Power that comes through living recovery. New doors have opened for me here, new doors to better feelings, and then better and better life opportunities as time goes by.

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

Throughout the nine years I've been in program, I cannot remember a single time when I surrendered in step one, said yes in step two, and then turned it over in step three, that it has not turned out well - not one single time. My recovery has not been perfect or according to my expectations, but the great thing is that I can surrender again and make a new choice.

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

- Nancy M., Warwick, NY

### **The Thrill of the Chase**

I was recently reminded of my old addictive behavior. A friend shared how he had been chasing the forbidden and the shame he felt afterwards. It reminded me of the times when I was still involved in the chase of sexual excitement and personal pleasure and the accompanying feelings of shame and guilt.

I grew-up during a time when people openly challenged the norms of faith, morals, respect of authority, political and social standards. I felt society had truly left the Victorian era and entered into a new age of change with the motto of "If it feels good, do it." Everyone was out for the thrill of the chase, to find their next great excitement. In those days, however, I still sought to uphold traditional values. Later, I began to realize that there was a whole new world out there. I succumbed to the thought that I was missing

something and sought to discover the things that others were doing.

Though I did not realize it at the time, I had already begun to act out in sexually inappropriate ways, but my actions were solitary. I was experiencing the thrill of the chase for sexual pleasure without any type of commitment.

For nearly forty years that was enough.

I did not feel much in the way of guilt and shame for my actions during this time since they did not involve others. The time finally came, however, when I began to look for people with whom I could engage in different types of sexual activity. I was able to find needy individuals who agreed to fulfill my wishes.

At first there was some guilt and a sense of wrong attached to my actions, but I persisted. I rationalized that since the other person was a willing partner, maybe I really wasn't doing anything wrong. I could justify my actions by thinking that it was just a way for the other person to repay me for my kindness and generosity to them. I even felt that I was making a positive difference in their lives by helping them through difficult situations, even giving

them a place to stay, food to eat and clothing. I felt that I was fulfilling my mission in life by helping these needy people when really I was only fulfilling my sexual fantasies. People would take advantage of me because of my kindness. They would use me to get what they wanted and didn't seem to mind that I would ask for sex in return. At first they were little things but then as time progressed I would ask them for greater sexual favors. I felt that they owed it to me and I was going to get whatever I could. After all, I was providing for some of their needs. Soon, I would feel that they were taking advantage of my kindness and that I was not getting anything in return, so I would send them on their way, only to have them later return for more sex.

This pattern repeated itself over and over.

If the other person would not give me what I expected of them, then I would quickly end the relationship. I now believe that there was some shame and remorse for my activities whenever I would break things off with these partners. I would try to justify my actions by telling myself that they owed me for what I had done for them and that if it took

sex to get a payback, then that was what I was going to do.

Even all of that was not enough.

I still felt that overwhelming need for sexual contact and I began to pursue illegal activities. Oh, the guilt and shame I felt when I first began to act out with those who were under age. I was filled with fear that I would be arrested for my actions, but even the fear of legal consequences did not stop me from the thrill of the chase. That which was forbidden, that which smacked in the face of all societal norms, was my goal.

I would get an adrenalin rush as I pursued my next sexual conquest, but then once I had fulfilled my fantasy, the thrill was gone. It was over before it had barely begun. Unfortunately, the chase gave me more than I wanted; it also gave me guilt, shame, fear and legal consequences.

Was the chase worth it? Most definitely not! I had become a monster to be feared. I was someone who had become untrustworthy and dishonest. I needed help; my life had become totally unmanageable.

Today, several years into recovery, I still enjoy the thrill of the chase, but, today I do not chase sexual

fantasy. Instead, I pursue a full and fulfilling life in sobriety. I know that I can never achieve perfect sobriety; I have to pursue my goals one day at a time. I have to remain a person who is completely involved in my recovery along with other sex and love addicts. I have to listen as they share from their struggles, their failures and their triumphs. I have to be open to using all of the tools at my disposal to maintain my sobriety.

I truly enjoy the chase in which I am involved today much more than the chase of those many earlier years. Today the rewards are greater. They are serenity, peace, a sense of dignity, self-respect and discipline. Through all of my trials and through my recovery, my Higher Power has always been there to show the way. Today, I follow the directions of my Higher Power and I no longer lose the thrill of each day.

- Garry K, Medina, OH

# Write for the Journal

Please refer to just inside the front cover for writer qualifications, copyright information, and information about submitting a piece.

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.

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