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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:

In this second issue as Managing Editor, I am pleased to bring the message of *renewing relationships in recovery* through the stories of fellow SLAA members. Renewing my own relationships in recovery has been one of my greatest challenges. The events of my childhood combined with the path I took to survive the trauma, resulted in a degree of self-absorption that not only provided a fruitful soil for my addiction, but also created a powerful impediment to developing connections with my higher-power and the people in my life even after I successfully withdrew from my addiction. Not only was my awareness of others underdeveloped, but my prior habit of withdrawal and self-soothing through acting out made it difficult to be ‘comfortable in my own skin’ and engage the people I loved, friends and colleagues in healthy communication and personal growth. My struggle to connect to others has been a long and difficult path and I continue to seek the advice of others as I travel this road. Like me, I hope you will find experience, strength and hope from the stories of our fellow addicts included in this issue of *the Journal*.

On another topic, I am pleased to announce the arrival of Tom B. as our Marketing Director. Tom championed the “Question of the Day” section of *the Journal* and has incredible enthusiasm and willingness to serve *the Journal*. His vision to spread the word to sex and love addicts around the world through the printed pages *the Journal* is a powerful message to all of us who suffer with this dis-ease. I am pleased and honored to have him joining the team.

Finally, I understand that the transition in editors has resulted in considerable delays in getting *the Journal* to print. As a consequence, a number of readers have felt frustrated and story submissions to *the Journal* have declined. I apologize for this lapse, but I am working to get *the Journal* back on track. In addition, The Executive Director, Douglas has done tremendous work on *the Journal* website, <http://www.theslaajournal.org> and I encourage all of you who read this, to go there and see what we now have to offer. Importantly, under the heading of the “Writers Corner” you will find this year’s themes. We

hope you will find these themes will bring thoughtful creativity and we welcome any new ideas.

Sincerely and with the blessing of continued recovery,  
Charlie D.  
Managing Editor, *the Journal*

## **S.L.A.A. Online**

In addition to the many S.L.A.A. resources now available through the Internet, there is e-SLAA. It is located at [www.e-SLAA.org](http://www.e-SLAA.org).

The content and membership of this site is moderated. Members of the Conference Internet Committee are finding that the same mechanisms that make face-to-face meetings safe can be employed in properly constructed e-communities.

Such e-communities provide S.L.A.A. members with positive options for use of the Internet. Some S.L.A.A. members hold positions in their communities or in the world that makes them easy targets for public scrutiny, criticism, or sensationalism. Some just like writing and reading as a part of their recovery experience or want to supplement their current meeting schedule with an e-meeting. There are members who are not located near any S.L.A.A. meetings, do not find the twelve-step fellowships available to them to be helpful, and cannot attend phone meetings for family or work related reasons.

Whatever your reason, e-SLAA may be right for you.  
Visit us at **[www.e-SLAA.org](http://www.e-SLAA.org)**.

## **Upcoming Events**

### **The 2010 SLAA Spring Retreat**

Presented by: San Francisco/East Bay Intergroup  
Where: Happy Valley Conference Center, Santa Cruz, CA  
Event Date: Thursday, April 29, 2010 - Sunday, May 2, 2010  
For Inquiries: <http://www.slaafws.org/events>.  
Held at Happy Valley Conference Center ( <http://www.happyvalleycc.org> ) in the Santa Cruz Mountains amid towering coastal redwoods, our spring retreat is an opportunity to immerse

ourselves in 12-step recovery. We have a variety of speakers, meetings, and workshops that cover a wide range of topics. We also have lots of fellowship, fun, arts and crafts, singing, a Talent / No Talent Extravaganza (with mandatory standing ovation), dancing, games, and lots of other re-creational activities. All activities are voluntary. The retreat center specializes in "home-cooked" meals and basic, clean, accommodations.

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

Presented by: German Speaking Countries Intergroup

Where: Cologne, Germany

Event Date: Friday, May 14, 2010 - Sunday, May 16, 2010

For Inquiries: <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. The event is held in the German language.

### **Eleventh Annual Maine Fall 12-Step Weekend Retreat**

Presented by: Southern and Mid-Maine Intergroup

Where: Living Water Spiritual Center, Winslow, Maine

Event Date: Friday, October 8, 2010 - Sunday, October 10, 2010

For Inquiries: [SLRetreatME@gmail.com](mailto:SLRetreatME@gmail.com)

This weekend will be devoted to an intensive study of the 12 Steps. 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 for the first time. Regardless of where you are in the Step study process, we are able to learn from sharing our experience, strength and hope with each other. Held at the Living Water Spiritual Center is a Retreat House located on 61 acres bordering the beautiful Sebasticook River in the small town of Winslow, Maine.

## **21st Annual S.L.A.A. Florida Roundup**

Presented by: Florida Augustine Fellowship

Where: Quality Inn, Sebring, FL

Event Date: Friday, October 8, 2010 - Sunday, October 10, 2010

For Inquiries: Visit [www.fafroundup.org](http://www.fafroundup.org)

**BUILDING RECOVERY**

**SHARING THE TOOLS**

21st Annual S.L.A.A. Florida Roundup

October 8th, 9th and 10th 2010

Quality Inn

6525 U. S. Hwy 27 N.

Sebring, FL 33870

For more info visit [www.fafroundup.org](http://www.fafroundup.org)

## **Service opportunities for *the Journal***

*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.

We are pleased to announce that many of the service positions for *the Journal* are filled, but we continue to seek the assistance of a fulfillments manager. In addition, if you are interested in the organization and duties of the individual staff, please go to <http://www.theslaajournal.org/> and click on service structure.



## **Fulfillments Manager**

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

Interested?

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

## **An Invitation For You**

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

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

- We can formally or informally become a Journal Representative for our intergroup or home group, encouraging the use of *the Journal* as a source of topics, letting people know that there are Journals for sale, and ensuring that plenty of Journal subscription cards are always on the literature table.

- We can visit a local organization that deals with sex and love addicts in our area, bringing copies of *the Journal* along with a few pamphlets. The institution may be a treatment facility, a judicial entity, a large recovery club that welcomes varied literature, or a hospital.
- We can work with others to design and oversee outreach projects.

### **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

“As a newcomer, what did a SLAA member do that really helped you, *or* what do you wish someone would have said and done?”

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 has the Journal helped your recovery” Here are some wonderful responses for your edification. They are not presented in any particular order.

“I kept the Journal in my car when I went to work and it helped me feel connected as if I was in a meeting. When I was really stressed out at work, I could go to my car and open it up and just sit there and take a

spiritual vacation knowing that I was being helped by group energy. I also kept a beginner pamphlet that has the signs of recovery and I would recite them a lot in the car and just pray and believe that the blessings that the program offers would happen for me. So, I’m a big fan of the Journal and it’s just so soothing to hear other people’s stories whether they’re related or not to my own life, just the fact that we are aimed in the same direction. That is recovery with a spiritual path.”

-Jill - Los Angeles

“Certainly anyone who has raised their hand and shared at a meeting knows how meaningful, enlightening and transformative it is to share yourself, your story, and your personal recovery with those in the room.”

“For me, submitting the same personal stories shared in the rooms to *the Journal* and seeing them published helps me to realize my own story more fully. The Journal provides a tremendous worldwide platform to anyone in recovery—all the artists and writers inside each of us—to rise up and recognize where we are come from and where we are going, who we are

and who we may still become.”

-Tom, Los Angeles

“It’s like a meeting in a book. I can bring it with me when I can’t go to a meeting, plus the shares don’t stray off topic or stray from the course of recovery!”

- Anonymous, Los Angeles, CA

“It helped me identify as a member of S.L.A.A. when I was a newcomer.”

- Norma M-B, Garden Grove, CA

“It has been great to have a “meeting in my purse” between actual meetings.”

- Julien, Los Angeles, CA

“It has connected me to other S.L.A.A.’s in other places and other circumstances, and given me other stories with which to relate.”

- Cathy G., Los Angeles, CA

“Over the years, the Journal has been like an old friend that I can count on. When I was sure that no one would understand whatever was going on within me at that moment, it kept me from feeling alone. When I missed my friends from the international service community, I could flip open the Journal pages. Often I would see familiar names. And when I didn’t have time for a meeting, the stories provided a

quick pick-me-up.”

- Marcella M., Los Angeles, CA

“It has provided information about recovery from anorexia.”

- Ron G., Los Angeles, CA

## **The Theme**

### **Staying Married**

I was just minding my team, hiring the kind of consultants that could get the job done. Two of the best that I could find had come aboard, and my department’s Director was pleased.

Back at home, my husband was still as emotionally unavailable as he had been since the beginning. I wanted more. We both wanted a child, but we were told that his sperm count was too low, and these two worlds met during a period of time when I felt vulnerable and confused. One of the consultants started to indicate his interest in replacing my husband. Looking back, I probably invited it by looking for emotional support in the men I hired - not exactly a formula for marital success, and probably not too career-wise either.

Fortunately, the other consultant had two qualities I have recently come to fully appreciate: He was a great listener, and he had the integrity to tell me the truth at the risk of his stay at the company. For all I know, he might have been just as attracted to me as the other one, but his actual words and actions were much different.

One night, he was working late to meet a deadline, and I decided to work late too, riding the edge of initiating an affair myself. The city was dark when we left the office, and I was parked several blocks away, whereas his car was in our building's garage. He was a gentleman and asked if I needed a ride to my car.

As we drove, he listened to my story about the limitations of my husband's fertility. When we arrived at the other parking garage, I went on about my husband's inability to connect with me and how I was considering leaving the marriage. At that moment, if he invited me to his house, I might have gone there instead of home, but he didn't. I don't remember what he did say, but it was

diplomatic; he neither denied me my right to be frustrated nor joined me in the character assassination of my spouse. We left in separate cars and drove to our respective homes.

The next morning, I went in to the office with apprehension. I was embarrassed by my previous night's ramblings, yet I made no firm commitment within myself not to do it again. I was on a course to the destruction of the commitment of faithfulness I had made before God.

The seed of my recovery was given to me that morning, when the consultant that didn't invite me home requested a private conference room in which we could talk. He did not tell me about S.L.A.A., but what he did say eventually created my Step One crisis and the reversal of my course. I closed the door, and he started a gentle, but direct interrogation.

"Did your husband cheat on you?"

"No."

"Does he gamble?"

"No."

“Has he hit you?”

“No.”

“Does he get drunk?”

“No.”

“Did he run the family’s finances into the ground?”

“No, he makes good money and spends it wisely.”

“Does he leave the house in the evening and stay out late?”

“God, no!”

“Is he a slob?”

“No.”

“Does he watch sports all night long and ignore you completely?”

“No.”

“Does he take you out for dinner or a show occasionally?”

“Yes.”

“So your only complaint is that he can’t connect with you on a deeper emotional level and that, by no act of his own will, lacks what one doctor told you is required for fertilization?”

“... yes.”

“May I be frank?”

“... Okay.”

“In the big picture, your husband is in the 99th percentile for good husbands. You could divorce him and end up with someone much worse. My advice to you is, ‘Stick with him and find out what medical options are available for couples like you who want children.’ Oh, and I also suggest that you avoid the advances of the other consultant. Anyone who would do what he’s trying to do is probably not a desirable mate for you. That is all I wanted to say.”

Although he was smiling in a respectful sort of way, he got up, indicating that we were done. I said nothing, but my face probably spoke volumes. We left the room. Perhaps because of the bond I had already formed with him, I was able to hear his point. The cheap advances of the other consultant began to look cheap and obvious.

I started to receive my husband differently when I saw him at the end of the day. Soon after, my recovery began. It was gradual, but the powerful jump-start given to me by my consultant was what I needed. I started to see the need to connect with women for friendship and support. Smart and emotionally

present men, which had always been at the core of my love addiction, began to feel dangerous, so I steered clear of them.

We did find a doctor who had been successful with fertilization methods designed for couples like us, and in a short time, we were pregnant with twins. They are the love of my life today. Had I not been faced with the truth of my own wandering interests on that day in the conference room, they would not be here to brighten my world.

The path of my recovery led me into church involvement, something I had always avoided out of cynicism and distrust. There were women there who have taught me much and augmented my support network. Thanks to my current sponsor, I have recently begun to read more recovery literature. I've read the entire S.L.A.A. basic text cover-to-cover, the Bible, books on codependency, the Sex and Love Step Recovery Booklet, and numerous other books. I missed the step retreat in the Poconos last year, but plan to make the next one.

All of these events, studies, and

tools have resurrected my marriage. Although all relationships have spotty moments, the entire experience of being married has been very positive for me. My husband seems grateful that I have taken a more spiritual path, even if it is not entirely understandable to him. He has his own path, alongside mine, and we grow together as a couple and individually as human beings.

Today, smart and emotionally present people still attract me, but I can appreciate without engaging with them on a romantic or emotional level that would endanger my marriage. My husband is doing much better with listening and sharing as expressed through words of encouragement and sexual availability. He may not get five gold stars for emotional availability, but I do appreciate that he has risen to a level well above average, and I no longer feel entitled to perfection. I have developed patience and a positive attitude toward the process of developing intimacy, a lifelong project of mine.

Leaving my current partner may have been necessary if I had honestly been able to answer

differently any of the questions I had been asked that day, but reality took me down the path of renewal, and my marriage has become just one of the many bright spots in my life.

-Leslie A., Connecticut

### **Renewing Family of Origin**

My mother has both brain and lung cancer and I can't imagine what my family will be like without her. My brother is acting as if thrown back to the terrible twos, having fits of anger at the drop of a dime. My father is asking our opinion, which is completely out of character, and I'm not sure I have any opinions to offer anymore.

All of this became part of a new world that was created when I rejoined my family of origin, after first getting sober and then rejoining the world. Although my family and the world certainly have their shortcomings, I've learned that I do too. In hindsight, during those years of my active addiction, I may have been the most dysfunctional member of my own family.

Recovery brought change. It was part of a spiritual foundation that led to peace, strength of heart, and a sense of dignity. Intimacy,

which had once been too risky for me, became a necessity once I heard people at meetings telling stories of going to grave sites to make amends to parents and siblings. It made more sense to me to straighten things out while everyone was still above ground if possible, so I did.

The other day I said, with good intention, that if my entire family were wiped out in a plane crash, I've left nothing unsaid that needed to be said. I've told everybody that I love them. I've repaid what needed to be repaid, and I've refrained from making negative contributions to family matters. Only positive contributions make it past my lips these days, sometimes as an expression of appreciation, sometimes as a rebuke for the crossing of a legitimate boundary, and sometimes just to express my positive feeling about life. In all ways I have found to be healthy, I have rejoined my family.

And now, the very thing I feared is at the door. My oldest brother died a year and a half ago, with me and my sister-in-law there to comfort him. He died with honor, and I was fully present with him.



Now my mother is facing this new medical risk. The line from Alfred Lord Tennyson's poem, "Tis better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all," is being put to the test.

In the midst of my addiction, I always avoided emotional pain through wanton sex, fantasy, drugs, anger, and obsessive isolationism. Avoidance is no longer as desirable to me as the natural experience of pain that is part of life. And I want to experience it, not out of masochism, but out of the desire for the full range of what experience has to offer. I want to live in truth, balance, and fairness to the extent that that it is possible. Running, which had once been my universal solution, is no longer my first thought, nor my second.

Today, around the world there are many people who, if asked, would say that I have treated them honorably. There are also those who might prefer that we had never met, because I no longer feel the need to tell people what they want to hear when telling them the truth might be more useful. Popularity is not necessarily my goal, but neither

is infamy. My goal is to live my spiritual path by loving and connecting with people, truthfully, without hiding my core beliefs.

It is out of these practices of integrity that began with the Twelve Steps and progressed to higher forms of awareness, from which have unfolded my current solid and loving relationships with my family. Before me is the unknown, but I am sure that it is better than the future that would have been had I not chosen recovery. I am comfortable with what I know, what I don't know, the ultimate end of those with whom I share love, and the finality of my own life.

Franklin D. Roosevelt stated, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself." This is true for me as long as I remain on this sharply defined spiritual path of renewal, love, and the desire to pass our life-saving message to the millions of sex and love addicts who still suffer. My mother, my remaining brother, and my father are alive today, and lunch is planned for Thursday and I am moving forward without hesitation.

Thank God!

- Douglas D., South Florida,  
U.S.A.

### **From Withdrawal to Willingness**

I never thought about wanting to die until I started recovery in SLAA. Facing the pain just overwhelmed me. Prior to entering SLAA for Love Addiction I had been in the 12 step rooms of various programs for 25 years which somehow didn't prepare me for what I was to face in SLAA recovery. Sometimes I think the 25 years was just a warm-up. At other times I think I just didn't yet have the willingness. Call me dramatic and you'd be identifying one of my many character defects that I had to face that first year. Among the others are: Lying, fear, fantasizing, controlling, anger, lack of trust and faith, the list goes on.

I believe the core of who I've been for over 40 years is directly linked to who I am as a Love Addict. Any other addictions have been fleeting by comparison. When I entered SLAA I was in a lot of pain. I would tell anyone who would listen that all my misery was because of my husband's lack of attention, affection and concern for my well-being. What I learned through recovery

is that my pain had absolutely nothing to do with my husband. My primary bottom line became and continues to be to not blame my husband. Early on, I proceeded to break that bottom line on a daily basis until I decided to "do whatever it takes to recover".

The first withdrawal (in association with blaming my husband for my pain, problems, misery, etc.) began while I was on a vacation and plummeting to the depths of despair. I felt in the depths of loneliness and desperation. For the first time in my marriage I was not blaming my husband for my circumstances and the feelings that went along with the withdrawal was much tougher than withdrawing from sugar, shopping, investing, over eating or work-alcoholism. I went to an SLAA meeting and sat with the one other man who showed up for the meeting. I was fortunate in that he was a Love Addict with 12 years of sobriety. He recognized that I was in withdrawal and suggested we just sit and read the Withdrawal pamphlet together. As we read, tears fell and my body shook. He was very safe and I thank God he sent me that sober angel.

When I got back from my trip I realized that the withdrawal was only just beginning. I succumbed to its power and surrendered on a daily basis to God. I knew that my recovery needed to be jump-started so I made the following daily top lines:

1) Read 2 pages of SLAA literature, 2) Make outreach calls, 3) Go to 2 meetings per week and share at every one, 4) Take a service position, and 5) Work the steps.

Thankfully my withdrawal finally ended. As a result I found myself to be a more loving wife and mother, a much less controlling person, a more generous person and most importantly much more connected to my Higher Power. I had some hope.

Now, its six months later and I'd like to tell you that my life is well and wonderful, but I'd be lying. This second year is about taking full responsibility for all the damage I've caused my husband and son due to Love Addiction. I recently withdrew from a huge slip that involved working with a professional man in ways that were triggering to my addict. It was humbling to see how cunning and baffling the disease can be. I had to make bottom lines

specifically around the interaction I had with the man and call for support every step of the way in ending the relationship. It had nothing to do with sex and everything to do with emotional prostitution. Paying "to feel emotional connection" with another.

Fundamentally I feel unlovable and so my recovery is all about healing that part of me that feels so unloved that she will do just about anything to feel loved, even if it is damaging to myself. The desperation I feel when the addict is acting out is overwhelming. It is as if nothing and no one can talk the addict out of what she wants, when she wants it. It has much more of a hold on me than any other addiction that I've experienced. I become a junkie with a mission and my drug becomes praise, power, attention, unhealthy emotional connection and fantasy. Usually it hits when I begin the withdrawal from acting out or withdrawal from a behavior I no longer want in my life.

Honestly, the past few weeks I have been back to that place of "I don't care whether I live or die". Thankfully I now have enough

recovery to recognize that I don't really want to die. I know the truth, which is, the addict is crying out for help. The addict wants to die, not me. It's the death of the addict I seek. It's the death of the old behavior I desire. It's the desperation of the disease which I want to die not me.

It is at times like this that I must work the first three steps rigorously. The short version is as follows:

Step 1: I CAN'T...(handle this problem, stop this obsession, end this behavior).

Step 2: HE CAN...God can handle anything and restore my sanity.

Step 3: I THINK I'LL LET HIM...I surrender to God's will.

Then I can breathe again and my faith begins to come back. At which time the following steps remain:

Step 4: The inventory

Step 5: Give it away to another

Step 6: List my character defects

Step 7: Humbly ask for God to remove them

Step 8: List those people I've harmed

Step 9: Make amends

Step 10: Continue a daily inventory

Step 11: Pray and meditate daily

Step 12: Carry the message

The 12 steps of SLAA are a suggested way of living. They are simple, but not necessarily easy. They always seem easy when I am working with those I sponsor, but when I'm at Step 1 it seems as though I might never arrive at Step 12.

I got a glimpse of what it means to "live a life of recovery". The other day I was having a difficult day with my teenager. My husband was traveling. I was angry and frustrated that my son would not do what I wanted him to do, when I wanted him to do it. Instead of continuing the "going nowhere" conversation with him I removed myself by going into the other room (recovery for me). I picked up my pad and pen and vented my anger onto the page instead of at him (recovery for me). I then made an outreach call (recovery for me). During the course of our conversation I felt immense emotion as I said these words to my sponsor: "...and even though I'm having this challenge with my son I feel absolutely no blame

or anger toward my husband, which amazes me. In the past I would have made this whole thing all about him. He's never home, he's a lousy father, I have to do this all by myself one more time. On and on I would go, but I am amazed. I feel no blame or anger toward my husband. This is my problem with my son. It has nothing to do with my husband at all."

My sponsor replied, "That's you living a life of recovery".

For today, I am willing to go to any lengths to recover from this "heart" disease called Love Addiction.

For today, I am willing to make different choices.

For today, I am willing to pick up the phone, pick up the pad and pen, piece up a piece of SLAA literature.

Today I am willing to be willing and to see where it takes me and I wish for you, my friend, the same willingness, one day at a time.

-Anonymous, Sacramento, CA

### **God is My Answer**

Love Addiction is a disease of desperation. It's desperation for attention, affection and love. The

addict will be temporarily satisfied with a fix at anytime, in any amount and from anyone. It's pathetic to watch the way a love addict will manipulate, lie, and even cheat in order to get a fix. I know. I'm a Love Addict.

I did not have a name for who I was in relationships. Sex Addict was not an accurate description for the way in which I acted out. Sure, I had a number of men I sexually acted out with in my 20's, but by the time I married at age 28 that form of acting out was over. That's when the Love Addiction kicked in. It would be another 20 years before I'd see that although no longer a "sex" addict, I was indeed still an addict.

The proof that I was an addict was evidenced by the fact that I felt so unlovable. I felt so desperate. I felt so lonely. I felt so hopeless. I felt so unloved. This was despite my being married to the same man for 20 years, having a wonderful son, many friends and family, a thriving career and an abundant life. Outwardly, I appeared happy. It just didn't make sense. I had been in 12 step programs for 25 years, worked a rigorous

program, sponsored, provided service and still I was not happy.

The day I walked into SLAA and identified myself as a “love” addict was the day my life began to change inwardly. There was a man who each week checked in with “I feel loving of my wife and family and free from addictive addiction”. I wanted to strangle the guy. It was painful to hear him say the words that I wanted so desperately and yet seemed to elude me over the years. I was convinced my husband did not love me as that man loved his wife and I was sure he never would. I certainly didn’t feel loving toward my husband and in fact, was known to often say to close friends, “It would be so much better if he just died”. That’s how much pain I was in.

It took 6 months of meetings twice/week, working the steps and numerous outreach calls to break through all the anger I felt toward my primary “love object”, my husband. I was so invested in blaming my husband for all of my problems that I couldn’t even begin to look at my part. I chose a sponsor who supported me in my self-righteous victimhood. It took a year for me to see how she was not helping me see my part, but

instead was only adding to my problems. I got a lot of fuel out of badmouthing my husband to that sponsor and she was happy to encourage me to do so. When I realized that I was never going to progress by being supported for being a victim, my first breakthrough occurred. I began by telling the “whole” truth. I used the meetings to gain my courage. I would practice on the group level by telling the truth. An example is that I would say, “I come to the meetings to get attention from the men”, or “Sometimes I get a hit when someone comes up after the meeting to praise me about my recovery”. I told the truth any opportunity I got. No sugarcoating. My behavior had been to lie by omission, to just not tell you everything. I call it “selective truth telling to avoid conflict”.

I stopped blaming my husband for my problems. I stopped acting like a victim. There’s a huge difference between being a victim (which most 12 step people are in some way) and acting like one. Acting like a victim is a choice for staying stuck. The day I decided to get off the victim soapbox is the day

I began to heal from Love Addiction.

My love addict, though, is very sneaky. She will do almost anything to get validation for “being right”. The next big step in my recovery was when I began to be honest with my husband. My way of relating to him prior to recovery was to tell him only what I wanted to tell him so that he didn’t have to ever know about all my flaws which keep me secure in my self-righteousness. Guess what? You can’t have an intimate marriage by not telling the whole truth about who you are. So I took baby steps and began to be more honest about whom I was. It was uncomfortable. It still is uncomfortable, but I have more intimacy than I’ve ever experienced. It scares the day lights out of me. I didn’t grow up telling the truth about myself. I did not grow up letting others know about who I really am. I did not grow up having closeness. My hope is that someday I will feel comfortable being intimate. I keep coming back to SLAA because the women who have more recovery than I do assure me that my day will arrive. I’m choosing to believe them until I have the faith to know it without a doubt.

Then there is my relationship with God. Currently I am working on trusting God with regard to the love addiction. I still do not fully believe that God is with me everyday, all day long. I have to make outreach calls to be reminded. My vision is to be a Steward of God’s Love. My goal is to express God’s love by being a loving wife and mother more often than not. That’s not a reality for me yet. I believe the only way for me to become more loving is to be open to God’s grace. I believe the only way for me to feel lovable is to open to God’s love. Then the desperation, loneliness, fear and despair will melt away.

Each day I have to say, “God please remove the desperation, please remove the control, please remove the bad choices so that I might be a loving steward of Your love in all my relationships. Fill my heart with trust, faith and love. Remove the fear that keeps me from my greatest good. Thy will not mine be done. Amen.”

A few weeks ago at a meeting during feelings check-in I said, “I’m feeling loved and I’m feeling loving of my husband and family”. I meant it because now I only tell the truth. I meant it



because by the grace of God and working the program I am beginning to heal. It's a miracle that's been granted to me by God. He's doing for me what I couldn't do for myself. When I began SLAA recovery I had no hope, little faith and no trust. Now I have some hope, more faith than before and a little trust. When I showed up 18 months ago I thought, "Well I'll hang out here for a year, take what I like and leave the rest and be on my way". That was the Love Addict's Happily Ever After Version of Love Addiction recovery. The reality is that I have some recovery, but I have a long way to go in order to experience intimacy in all my relationships. Leaving SLAA, for me, would not be a wise choice. SLAA offers me experience. SLAA offers me strength. SLAA offers me hope. But in order for me to experience the promises of SLAA recovery that I'm worthy of, I need to keep coming back.

It's unfortunate that I (as well as all SLAA members) did not get loved the way we could have, should have and would like to have been when we were growing up. It's also sad and in many cases downright tragic. Yet to

stay stuck in the past of could have, should have and would like to have been is a waste of the life I can have, should have and will have. I can learn to be loved. I can learn to love. I can learn to make wise and loving choices for myself. SLAA promises me a different life if I am willing to do what is suggested. I've had 48 years of feeling unlovable, lonely, desperate and hopeless. I'd like the rest of my life to be different. With God and SLAA all things are possible, even a life of emotional sobriety and love!

-Anonymous, Sacramento, CA

## **Share Space**

### **Angel**

I was having a particularly difficult time in withdrawal and was struggling to resist returning to an unsafe place that, until now, I had successfully avoided. During the night I had a dream that included my qualifier, his father, and a man who knew much about me, but whom I had never met before.

I woke up feeling upset with a name strongly repeating in my mind like a song you can't forget

....

The name was Rafael... I don't



know anyone by this name. A small voice echoed through my consciousness the word *archangel*.

I called a trusted girlfriend and also met with my therapist in order to process my dream.

I realized that this message and its association to Rafael the angel were profound. He appeared in bodily form to let me know that I needed to release my creative soul and express my artistic abilities that had been suppressed for so long. By following my inner voice, a healing will occur. It is that likely that my healing involves changing my career as well. In addition, the dad and qualifier portion of my dream represented incomplete inner child work that arose from the 4<sup>th</sup> step work that I am doing at this time. I am sure that much more will be revealed in time.

Thanks to the fellowship of SLAA. I am grateful for continued clarity....

A.

### **Simply Blessed**

Dearest Newcomer:

What would you say if I told you that coming to the fellowship of Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous

was no accident; that it was ordained by a Higher Power who chose to grant YOU the honor of getting a chance at breaking the cycle of generations of dysfunction?

Improved eyesight to see things you have never seen before, remodeled ears with which to attune to higher frequencies, a psychic change, freedom from bondage and the acquisition of a moral code are only some of the gifts that are free for the taking if you are truly committed to working on healing your emotional and mental dis-ease.

Before I go on, let me point out that everything shared here solely reflects my experience, strength and hope and does not necessarily represent the opinions of the SLAA fellowship as a whole.

A bit about me

I am a straight female sex and love addict (amongst other things) who joined SLAA in July 2000. During the first fifteen months I showed up only sporadically, rebelling against the likeliness that I may just happen to be one of 'those sick people'. Unwilling to relinquish my means of a good time indefi-

nately, I embarked on a relentless binge, ending up in self-destructive territories I had previously sworn to never visit again. In October 2001 the bottom fell out. Brought to my knees, an unheard-of willingness and yearning to relearn just about everything I knew came over me. I asked someone to become my sponsor, and started working the steps. This marked the beginning of the most incredible journey of my life. It was painful, but at the same time so rewarding that I have not looked back since.

Here are two scenarios that may help you determine whether you are ready or not:

#### Scenario 1

Do you long to bolt from the meeting room? Are you sitting in your chair, listening to only bits and pieces because let's face it - you are too preoccupied fantasizing about how to have the ball of balls, granting yourself that ultimate finale with your drug of choice yet one last time because tomorrow you will clean up your act for good? Uhum. Sure! Do you fear that if you committed to getting sober, the SLAA police would cut off your fun, your lifeline, and your way of coping with the excruciating agony of

your hopelessness, shame, guilt, and loneliness? Once the meeting ends, do you act out either some or all of what you promised yourself?

#### Scenario 2

After a life of (self) abandonment and abuse and possibly too much participation in the above-mentioned behavior you are humbly sitting in your seat, desperately clinging to every word that falls from other people's mouths. The willingness to surrender to a Higher Power no longer sounds like Chinese to you; instead it has become something you now yearn to practice and explore. At this point, you may or may not entirely believe in this unseen force but what the heck— you are more than interested in giving it a fair trial because going back to burned bridges and a pile of rubble no longer serves as an option.

If you see yourself relating to plot number two, chances are, you have already begun to climb out of that pit. Not to scare you but if you happen to qualify as a low bottom case like me, you will find an intimidating obstacle course once you reach the top. Walking over hot coals, through fire, may

be even infernos, swimming through arctic turbulent waters, jumping into a pen having to wrestle wild tigers; navigating through mine fields, all for the priceless gift of serenity, will be some of the stumbling blocks that are going to try to steer you away from your goal. "I can't go through with this," you will shout, but— DO NOT FRET! Your Higher Power has got your back.

It might prove well to dump everything you have ever heard, read, seen, experienced, and learned, and erase it from your head computer hard drive so that HP can download to you a new kind of software; stuff needed to support you on your trip through the mountains and valleys of withdrawal and recovery. Performing a regular virus check is highly advisable. Remember, by becoming serious about making HP the most important cause in your life you are committing yourself to living according to spiritual laws, which will result in a rebirth as a spiritual being. You now no longer work for yourself, running the show by your unaided will, but for the one who has all power. Like they say in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous that one is God, may you find him/her/it now! Life as you knew

it no longer exists, so why not simply stop trying to control it?

With that said, I guess, I will see you when I'll see you. Just know that the view on this side of the hill is nothing less than spectacular; something you don't want to miss.

Namaste,  
-Birgit W., Glendale, California

### **My romantic interlude**

This is a story of a woman I met in a local tavern while I was still in College.

She walked over to the bar where I was drinking. Later, I joined her in a booth with some of her friends. At one point, I asked her the color her eyes. She said "Hazel". Then I asked what color is hazel and she told me that her eyes were sometimes green and sometimes orange. She told me that her eyes changed once a month. I asked her "why once a month". She got a twinkle in her eye and never did answer that question.

One thing led to another and we ended up having sex in her dorm room. I left immediately. Later, I would encounter her in strange places on campus. Occasionally, I would have lunch with her.

Every moment that I spent with her was extremely special to me. I do not know if that was because she was my first girlfriend, or if it was because she was so special.

A man asked me if she was my girlfriend. He asked that if he approached the table where we were sitting, would I introduce him to her? He told me that she was so beautiful that he wanted to hear the sound of her voice. When he did come to our table, we invited him to join us. He refused and said that he had gotten what he came for. She actually looked like a very young Bridget Bardot.

I thought that I did not deserve to be with someone as beautiful as her.

Some time went by and I finally mustered up the courage to ask her if I could have sex with her again because “I was really horny”. She agreed to have sex with me under one condition: I was not to leave her bed until the next morning. I agreed to her wishes and went about my business. Then, it hit me: **IF I STAYED WITH HER UNTIL THE NEXT MORNING, SHE WOULD CERTAINLY LEARN EVERYTHING ABOUT ME AND I WAS CERTAIN THAT SHE WOULD HATE ME.**

I thought this because of how much I hated myself.

I arrived at the agreed upon time and found her sitting on her bed Yoga style wearing a really pretty blouse. I was very careful not to get close enough for her to touch me and told her “I do not want to have sex with you”. She asked “Why”. I told her, “Because I do not love you”. She immediately said, “I know that that is not true”. I said, “It is true”. She became more emphatic and repeated, “I KNOW THAT THAT IS NOT TRUE”. Then I said, “It is true”. Then, she emphatically repeated, “I KNOW THAT THAT IS NOT TRUE!!! So I retorted “IT IS TRUE!” She began to weep incessantly. I got extremely uncomfortable, so I turned and walked through the door.

**SUDDENLY, I WAS STRUCK BLIND.** And I had to feel my way down the corridor.

After I stepped outside, my eyesight gradually returned to me. I was just beside myself with instantaneous regret. I then muttered under my breath “What Have I Done???” ”What have I done????”

It was not until many years later that I learned that there was a

psychological term for what had happened. A counselor at a rehabilitation center said that what had happened to me was called “HYSTERIA INDUCED BLINDNESS”.

It was such a traumatic experience for me that I think it propelled me into drinking and drug taking. I remember later telling a counselor at some rehabilitation program that I “embraced” drugs and alcohol. What a strange choice of words!

I pursued a self-destructive path until I found myself in a rain-storm one night cursing God because of what had happened. I prayed furiously. I prayed that she would forget me and that I would forget her.

**WELL, THE SECOND HALF OF MY PRAYERS CAME TRUE.** About a year later, after I returned to school from a short break, an incident occurred that would determine the remainder of my life. While I was returning home from class, **SHE PASSED ME ON THE SIDEWALK.** It was kind of eerie because I did not recognize her, but she stared at me with repulsion when I did not acknowledge her as I passed. It was not until about a block or two later that I recognized her. I ran

back to find her, but she had disappeared into the campus maze.

That was when I hit bottom.

Years later, I can recall telling a friend about her. He asked me “What was her name?” I could not remember. I am certain that he did not believe me.

I learned a lesson from this. Be careful what you pray for. Because your prayers might become true and you may not be able to handle the results.

As time went on—as incredible as it may seem—I somehow forgot about all of this. The denial must have helped me function, that is, until many years later, while I was deeply involved with the activities of a cult, I remembered. I was isolated in a tiny cabin and I suddenly awoke when I heard her voice call out my name. I sat up and called out her name in return.

This is why I wrote this story: Some time ago, I took an intern that worked with me to lunch and told her about this experience. After I explained all of this to her, she became upset. She told me that I had to find her.

Then she said that there was a movie about this very topic. It

was called Good Will Hunting. I have watched the movie often. At first I could not identify with the story, but when I recently checked a copy out of the library, I found that it resonated within me.

The intern insisted that I should try to contact her. I really do not know how to find her and I told the intern that. I also told the Intern that I wanted to compose an autobiography one day but I did not want to write about her. She replied, "If you do not write about her, you will never write the book."

That statement propelled me to put this story into writing.

-Anonymous

### **In response: How SLAA found me**

I just had one of those shares where I didn't really know what I was saying but I was speaking out loud so that maybe someone could save me, rescue me. Listening to myself, I was saying something about breaking up with this guy but couldn't stop obsessing about him. And the pain was awful and maybe we'd get back together. And so on and so forth. Blah, blah, blah.

The room politely listened, allowed me my space. And that was all. No one came up to me afterwards. No one was moved by my sorrowful tale, no heroics, nothing.

"Treated Al-Anons," I thought, "I wish they weren't so damned good at detaching."

I was moved to share because my Al-Anon sponsor proposed I begin a thirty day no contact with my ex. I turned pale, and then even paler. I may have even swallowed my esophagus, I can't remember. But thirty days?! I could miss that moment when we both realized we were wrong. Or how would I know if he decided to move on? Or what he's up to? Or where he's going?

"God abhors a vacuum. You're just going to give him thirty days to come in and clean house," said my sponsor. "It's a giant leap of faith."

Despite a few years of other 12 step programs, conscious contact with my higher power was barely moving up on my priority list. I knew I needed to make this leap of faith. I also was reinforced with the idea that if I do the jumping, God will do the catching, with open hands, net thing he's so good at.

So I leaped on a Sunday and on Monday I was caught. Landed right on a collision course with my ex, he was exiting as I was entering a clothing store – literally smacked right into each other. Oh the serendipity! That was my sign, which was all I needed to know that even God wanted us together.

But no one at that meeting agreed. Or so I thought because there wasn't anyone responding.

Clearly my pain coupled with my chance encounters equaled the one true love of my life, right?

Afterwards I went to breakfast at a place near by the meeting. I pretended to read my book ignoring the fellowship all around me. "If they aren't going to help me, forget them," I thought.

Just then, a young woman I knew from previous meetings cautiously saddled up to me. She looked unsure about what she was going to say or if she should say it. I looked up from my book greeted her and waited for her words. Which by the way, I'm sure we're going to be about hoping I find my destiny with this ex and so sorry about the pain. "Have you ever been to SLAA?" she says. "What?" I say. "I know this is a program of attraction and not promotion, and I never do this but I go to these

meetings and I think you might like them." She says with a breath. "Oh." I say. "I go to this incredible meeting. The next one is tomorrow, want to come?" she adds. "Oh, umm o-oo okay," I stutter out.

The next morning, somehow my body found its way to the meeting. And I heard about qualifiers, I heard about withdrawal and the tests and trials that come with it. I heard about obsession. I heard about intimacy, self-love and self-care. I heard me.

"Oh, I understand," I chuckled to myself, "this is God's net."

-Sean H, LA, CA

## **Spiritual Awakening**

Today is my 10th year anniversary of being in SLAA and I want to share some of my experience, strength and hope regarding my Spiritual Awakening through the SLAA program. To me spiritual awakening means I see things through spiritual eyes rather than the eyes of my addiction.

Seeing spiritually helps me take the focus away from blaming others when I'm upset or triggered, but rather see how I have drawn this problem to me out of my past trauma. Now I can choose healing, rather than attack



or being defensive. Healing means forgiveness of me and of others. It also means having compassion for the hurt inner child that I still carry and that others do too. Knowing that, I can return love to myself and to others. Through this, I return to a state of serenity and oneness with God and with others.

I don't do this perfectly, but the times of upset are fewer, less often, and don't last as long. That's progress, and that's something I'm extremely grateful for.

Seeing spiritually is seeing the gifts of the program. That being a sex and love addict has brought me the most precious gift of my life – having a direct and continuous relationship with God and knowing that I am never alone. I would walk through hell to have this gift and I literally did. It was all the trauma and mistakes and pain of my past that allowed me to surrender my own arrogance, my thinking that I know how to do this and how to figure it out, and Let Go and Let God instead.

Seeing spiritually allows me to see how God uses all things for good. I am able to ask for and see the blessing in EVERYTHING that happens, no matter how painful or upsetting it may be. By keeping

my focus on God, I am able to see the blessings and everyday miracles that have brought me to where I am, and I am grateful for my past. I have an amazing gratitude for my current life, for having walked this difficult path of recovery – for it has brought me so many gifts and blessings. I am not the same person I used to be and I don't have to make the same stupid mistakes over and over.

What I have now is a second chance to get it right, to do it differently. What I have now is abundant blessings in all areas of my life. One of God's promises that I held onto through recovery that came to me through the Bible is I will receive double for all my trouble. And I am more than receiving double through my continued dedication to SLAA and my other program – debtors anonymous. Working SLAA allowed me to see that I needed DA too – that my money problems and issues were a big component of my relationship issues and I needed both programs to have a healthy and successful relationship with my husband.

Seeing spiritually allows me to see the gifts of giving back. I do this by sponsoring others and encouraging them to see life