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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:

This issue features the message of *boundaries* through the stories of our fellow SLAA members. The importance of this message is reflected by the number of outstanding submissions to *the Journal*. There are many types of personal boundaries. As the child of physical and emotional abuse, I have struggled with even the concept of personal boundaries. For me, reading these messages of experience, strength and hope from fellow members of SLAA has been a learning experience and a pleasure.

Tom B. continues to excel as our Marketing Director. While continuing to champion the "Question of the Day" section of *the Journal*, Tom B is reaching out to intergroups around the world to circulate the availability of *the Journal*. His vision to spread the word to sex and love addicts around the world through the printed pages of *the Journal* is a powerful message to those of us who suffer with this dis-ease. Below is his next message to us who suffer.

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

## Sorry For The Delay

As some of you know, sometimes you slip. We are working conscientiously to recover the timely distribution of *the Journal*, as well as the trust of our readers. You will receive every issue to which you have subscribed. We are hoping to be caught up and back on schedule by summer's end.

It takes a lot of volunteer hours to produce *the Journal*, and we're still understaffed. With our delayed NOV/DEC issue we welcomed a new Managing Editor, and with this issue we have our first Marketing Director in two years. The Marketing Director provides customer service, and solicits submissions and subscriptions which are in decline. We hope and plan to implement new ideas to help *the Journal* flourish.

We still have open positions that really need to be filled for us to function. We are in vital need of a Fulfillments Manager and an Art Director.

More information about both of these positions is available inside this issue, and online at: [www.theslaajournal.org/opened.html](http://www.theslaajournal.org/opened.html)

Any concerns or questions may be submitted online at: [www.theslaajournal.org/contact.html](http://www.theslaajournal.org/contact.html)

Thank you for your understanding and patience during this transition. We appreciate your recovery as evidenced by your readership. With humility, we request your spiritual support for our efforts to get back on track with a prompt delivery of your “meeting in print.”

Sincerely, and in Service,

Tom B.

Marketing Director. *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**

### **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.

### **Summer 2010 Healthy Relationships Telemeeting Series**

Presented by: Conference Healthy Relationships Committee

Where: Telemeeting

Event Date: Saturday, May 8, 2010

Event Date: Saturday, June 12, 2010

Event Date: Saturday, July 10, 2010

For Inquiries: See Flyer

TOPIC: CONFLICTING RELATIONSHIP NEEDS

May 8: Accepting Our Partner As Is vs. Getting Our Needs Met

June 12: Need for Space vs. Engaging and Togetherness

July 10: Opposite Sex or Threatening Friendships: Trust vs. Boundaries

These 3 one-hour teleconferences will be on Saturdays, at 9:00am Pacific / 12:00 PM Eastern / 5:00pm London. SLAA members may attend any or all meetings without RSVP. Calls are recorded for later playback

SEE FLYER FOR US AND INTERNATIONAL CALL-IN NUMBERS

AND ACCESS CODES: <http://www.slaafws.org/files/Healthy Relationships Telemeeting Flyer Summer 2010.pdf>

## **12-Step S.L.A.A. Weekend in Chester, Vermont**

Presented by: New England Intergroup

Where: Chester, Vermont (2 1/2 - 3 hours from Boston)

Event Date: Friday, July 23, 2010 - Sunday, July 25, 2010

For Inquiries: See Flyer [http://www.slaafws.org/files/vermont\\_july\\_2010.pdf](http://www.slaafws.org/files/vermont_july_2010.pdf)

During the weekend we will review the steps from the S.L.A.A. Basic Text. There is also ample opportunity for "down" time. The weekend also provides an opportunity to get to know ourselves, as well as other S&L addicts in a safe place. The retreats are not only about sharing experience, strength, and hope, but also a chance to have lots of fun and laughs as well!

## **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.

## **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. Please see [www.SLAAJournal.org](http://www.SLAAJournal.org) for details

## **Question of the Day**

### **Answers from Yesterday**

The Question of the Day from the last issue was, “As a newcomer, what did a SLAA member do that really helped you, or what do you wish someone would have said and done?” Here are some wonderful responses for your edification. The overwhelming number suggests how important first impression of our program can be to newcomers. They are not presented in any particular order.

When I was a newcomer, I was desperate to hear the solution. I knew about the pain of the disease all too well. I felt SO relieved to hear shares around the room that included a person’s experience, strength and hope. I needed hope and needed to hear about the tools of the program. I was fortunate to attend meetings where there were fellows working the steps with their sponsors, who were in sober relationships. It kept me coming back.  
-Amy C. New York

I came in to the rooms a little over a month ago. I had so much shame. I could not look anyone in the eye. The fact that SLAA members actively walked up to

me and introduced themselves after a meeting meant the world to me. It made me feel less separate, and cared for, which made me feel like coming back. All it took was a friendly smile and a ‘hello’.  
-Kate B., Los Angeles

The simple act of someone coming up to me to talk to me after the meeting made all the difference. I felt understood and accepted and safe to come back.  
-Rory, Los Angeles

A woman called me a few days after my first share to say how my “share” was meaningful to her. Otherwise I would have wondered if my share was too shameful. Her words edified me.  
-Joanne, La Crescenta

The first meeting I attended was very small, only about 4 or 5 people including myself. What helped the most was that everyone listened while I basically just spilled the beans. I was a wreck by the time I was done, crying and feeling hopeless. Immediately after the meeting all of the guys stayed and talked to me. They let me know they had been in the same spot and that the program had worked for them. They gave me phone numbers and encouraged me to

keep coming back. Simple as that.

-Greg B., Boise, ID

At my first meeting I just looked at all the guys and thought “I could abuse him... and him... and him”. I didn’t like those thoughts and after the meeting I told a woman in the group about it and about how ashamed I felt. She looked at me, smiled a little and said “What do you think an alcoholic thinks when he is in a bar?” I’m not sure I would have had the guts to go to a SLAA-meeting again if she had not said just that. Another person told me “You’ll never be well but you could get better.” That helped me realise that I couldn’t just go to a few meetings and then be free. This is a new way of living.

-Carmen, Sweden

One of the most important things that other SLAA members did when I was a newcomer was to pick up the phone. I was instructed by my sponsor to make three outreach calls a day (another fantastic idea) and every time I made a call my anorexic would pray for a voicemail. However, when the member would answer, it forced me to ask for help and share my

story.

-Jen M., Los Angeles

A member loaned me his SLAA book. That helped me because I wasn’t prepared to commit to a book but having a loaned version allowed me to start reading and relating to the book.

-Alex, Hollywood

Everyone shared from the heart. I isolated, so it helped when people welcomed me.

-Manny, Los Angeles

A woman approached me and told me that she totally understood how I felt — that what I shared was normal and that I was not alone. This woman ended up being my sponsor. She told me that the program changed her life and could change mine - if I worked it. And my life has changed as a result of working the steps and program.

-Julie M., Los Angeles

A SLAA member shared a statement in a meeting that had a huge impact on my recovery: “To experience sobriety and eventually recovery, I must move towards pain.” Bearing discomfort and accepting pain was an attitude I avoided most of

my life. Learning to accept pain has been a key step in helping me to reconnect with God and slowly start experiencing recovery.

-Jonathan M., Altadena

I wish that a guy who had more time than I did, as I was constantly relapsing, did not say “so how’s that working for you?” in a very condescending and sarcastic way. I shared something with him and his response fed my guilt and shame, and kept me away for a long time.

-Shawn H., Hollywood

My very first meeting was a co-ed meditation meeting. It was very powerful. To sit and breathe in a room with over forty people — that was the best thing a SLAA member did to help me. A tie for first was also how welcoming and authentic everybody was — I have never met friendlier or warmer people. I have found a family.

-Ann W., Los Angeles

Having attended my first SLAA meeting last week, I felt that everyone sharing showed me that it is possible to get through my addiction.

-Jules, Los Angeles

At the first meeting I ever attended, I was scared, lonely, suicidal, and convinced my life was over. I could hardly speak, and in fact throughout the entire meeting I could only croak out “pass” when it came my turn to share. But no one thought worse of me because of it, and I came home with one thing: hope. That made all the difference. I needed to keep coming back.

-Jim J., Fresno

### **Next Question of the Day**

#### **What is your favorite recovery slogan, and how do you use it?**

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.

### **The Theme Boundaries**

#### **Boundaries Made Simple**

Most people starting out in program do not know what their boundaries actually are or where

they ought to be. My suggestion is take the 40 Questions for self Diagnosis. (It's available as a pamphlet or you can find it at the SLAA [Home page www.slaafws.org](http://www.slaafws.org)). Write down your answers.

Now, look at your answers. The ones that take you to places you never ever want to go again, that is where you need boundaries. A nice big HALT NO TRESPASSING sign will do quite nicely.

That is a starting point. The job does not end there unfortunately. Most of us have an addictive cycle that is habitual. That's why we have an addiction. A typical cycle consists of preparation, anticipation, acting-out, remorse, depression and hangover. Since we do not enjoy our pain and we are addicts, we may wish to medicate (our habitual response) so we prepare. The answers to the 40 questions are at the door to acting out. The doorway to our addiction is a hard place for us stampeding lemmings to stop. We have troubles right there at the edge of the cliff. Like most addicts, I need some space to apply my brakes, so I need to figure out where it is that I start my preparations (to avoid my cycle). First off I need to change those

behaviors as soon as I spot them starting. It may take a while to figure out just how to get started, but it is worth the effort.

If you are just starting out, try keeping a powerlessness journal. I recommend a day runner myself, but whatever you can keep with you and write in will work. At first, all you want to do is record anything that triggers you to want to act out. Now, if you want to take that a bit further, try recording what happened just before you got triggered. If you are ready for even more, make a note every hour what your mood is, and record what you ate and when you ate it. Be on the look out here for H.A.L.T.B.S. These are things I have found to be the six major trigger groups, Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired, Bored, Sick/Sad/Silly/Sexy/Shamed. Also be on the lookout for patterns that may start to emerge. One way to help avoid being triggered is to see what we can do about those patterns.

stay sober just for today  
-Eric EE

### **About Leon and His Boundaries**

When I started my recovery in SLAA at the tender young age of 46, I did not have any boundaries. None. Nada. Zip. Zed. I did not know I had thick walls around me.

For most of my life I had been in denial, deeply hidden behind my walls of shame.

Very early in my recovery I had an argument with my then soon-to-be ex-wife and I realized that I felt very, very different afterwards. Later that day, during 'getting current' with a person wise in the ways of SLAA recovery I went over the incident and he told me that I had boundaries during the argument. Being the newbie, I responded with the question – "Okay, then what is the difference between walls and boundaries?" The answer that came back was "If you have walls ... you start bleeding and you don't even know you got hit ... with boundaries the incoming sort of get close before dropping to the floor near your feet – they don't get in." That was 20 years ago and I can still remember how I felt after hearing that – it was like my Higher Power hit me in the forehead with a 2x4. I know that over the years my boundaries have improved a lot, but I do not have a perfect recovery, and, from time-to-time, I find out I have walls instead of boundaries. That's when I go to a meeting and ask for the topic to be about "boundaries", because I'm a very slow learner.

When I was growing up in an abusive home I developed walls to keep me safe – then my fetish addiction (and the consequential shame) made those walls even thicker. In recovery, I have learned that my boundaries need to flex—there always needs to be some give and take—and that flexing has been based on being mindful of the present moment. If my boundaries do not flex, they become rigid and I am right back dealing with walls.

I know that my boundaries are my choice and in recovery I discovered that I had choices. When I remain present, aware and available, especially during what appears to be emotional stress, I can choose to keep my boundaries intact. "While vigilance was still important, the choices we had to make now seemed easier."<sup>1</sup> Boundaries keep me safe while I learn my lessons.

I have internal boundaries and external boundaries. For me internal boundaries are basically about not taking on someone else's opinion about me or my actions and then beating myself up because I do not meet their expectations. External boundaries have to be explicitly stated e.g. "If you continue using that kind of

language I will leave the conversation.” If I cannot articulate my external boundary then there is no boundary. In addition, I have learned that once I state a boundary, I have to follow through. In the case of above, the person trampled all over my boundary and I literally left the room without saying another word. If I cannot follow through then the boundary setting is incomplete and I have not taken care of my spiritual and emotional well-being.

The following quote is paraphrased and I have long forgotten the author. However, I can claim being deeply moved by it, “If I can’t say ‘no’ then how do I know when to say ‘yes’?”<sup>2</sup>

And that brings me to boundaries in my service work. In recent years I’ve been involved in service work within the Conference and Board structure. It’s been a wonder-filled time for me. For years I’d been saying, “I love our fellowship because it saved my life”. With the help of my Higher Power and my sponsor I learned that, just as in my primary relationships, I had to put feet under the words “I love you”. Otherwise I was saying empty words. And so finally, by “walking the walk” I have begun to develop a deeper feeling of gratitude for, and towards, our fellowship.

In service to our fellowship, just as in other areas of my recovery life, I have found that I need to have good internal and external boundaries. Service work at this level is about my ability to stay focused on the business of the fellowship. If I take our Twelve Traditions to heart I find my overall direction in the closing phrase of Step 12, “to practice these principles in all areas of our lives.”<sup>3</sup> Then, by coupling that guidance from our founders with Tradition 12, “Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.”<sup>4</sup> I find new depth in the boundary stated there. That brings me to viewing all our 12 Traditions as group boundaries while our 12 Steps remain as my personal boundaries.

In 2006 I began working with Conference committees and I quickly learned some difficult lessons. I learned that anyone volunteering in service to our fellowship was not my enemy. I carry many of these lessons from service back to my primary, familial relationships. So, for example, when I find myself occasionally *trying* to build resentment toward my wife, I



literally have to say to myself, “*she is not my enemy!*”

I have recently found a new boundary—I call it balance—balance between my family life and my service work. This new boundary requires me to honor long-held familial boundaries in new ways. I do that by communicating regularly with my wife and other members of my family. If I find myself starting to get a little too eager for service work, I call my sponsor and I inspect my spiritual condition. The answer that usually comes back is that I need to say “no.”

I love SLAA. I’m grateful for my recovery. I express my gratitude by performing service work. My “attitude of gratitude” is an expression of love and all my service work is an act of love. I respect and honor the boundaries expressed in our 12 Steps and 12 Traditions. By honoring those boundaries I show love for myself and everyone else. Thanks to everyone in our fellowship for all the expressions of healing love.

-Leon C. Dallas, TX

**(Footnotes)**

<sup>1</sup>The Basic Text for The Augustine Fellowship, Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous, First

edition, p.96

<sup>2</sup> Author attribution not known.

<sup>3</sup> The Basic Text for The Augustine Fellowship, Sex and Love Addicts, First edition, p. 101

<sup>4</sup> The Basic Text for The Augustine Fellowship, Sex and Love Addicts, First edition, p. 123

**Boundary Issues**

As a single anorexic my boundaries are very different from those shared by other people in SLAA meetings.

One of my boundaries is in the area of attending large long meetings. As an anorexic, attendance at large long meetings can be taxing. I am easily over stimulated and overwhelmed by listening to a large number of people share about a large number of issues. One of my anorexic recovery partners said she could attend only one meeting a week. She said that if she attended more than one meeting a week, it took so much of her available mental time and energy to process everything she heard that it made her life unmanageable. So, one of my boundaries is to attend only a small number of small meetings. Another is that the meeting needs to be primarily populated with

anorexics. Listening to partnered addicts who speak about their bottom lines that are my top lines is not healthy recovery activity for me as an anorexic.

Many partnered sex addict's bottom lines are the same as many single anorexic's top lines. I have to set a boundary around the issue of listening to addicts who try to stop doing what I need to start or continue doing. As a single anorexic, I need to establish healthy relationships. I need to nurture my natural Higher Power given needs for touch. I need to share skin on skin contact. I also need to nurture my higher power given sexual needs. I need to engage in healthy sexual activity with individuals whom my higher power presents to me. I also need to have boundaries around sex in unhealthy relationships. I need to nurture myself with healthy relationships and avoid sex in unhealthy relationships. So for me as a single anorexic, my boundaries are very different and frequently the direct opposite of the boundaries that many partnered sex addicts share about in large meetings.

Another boundary is around listening to people who wish to tell me about myself and what I should

or should not do. I work and associate with people who are not in 12 Step recovery and I need special boundaries about what I will and will not listen to with these people. I do not need these same boundaries with people in my 12 Step recovery program.

Another boundary is that I have to avoid beating myself up for being different. In fact, I have to accept the reality that I am different and be at peace with it. I must like what I have, rather than wanting something I do not have. The serenity prayer tells me that I cannot change myself to be like all other members of SLAA. In SLAA we are not all alike. Although single anorexics and partnered sex addicts can be quite different, there are also many other differences. So one boundary for me is to avoid meetings largely populated with partnered sex addicts if the topic is stopping something that I need to start or continue. I must choose my meetings carefully. So I have a boundary about which SLAA meetings I can attend.

Another boundary is to not want to be like others in ways that are not available to me. Focusing on a goal to be in a monogamous relationship that includes

nurturing sex is not a realistic goal for me. If I put this on my top line I would be dishonest with myself.

At a meeting populated mostly by single anorexics, one of the regular members shared that he did not have normal filters to block out portions of what he heard. He shared that he had to process everything he heard and that hearing too much overwhelmed him because he had to process it all. He found himself to be different from many other people in this way. He found he had to have many boundaries to limit the amount of communication that he heard, because he was easily overwhelmed by too much information. Then he had to process all of this information and this made his life unmanageable because his mind was not available for more important activities.

It took me a long time to establish healthy boundaries around listening and not listening to what others wanted to say to me. This morning I listened to my roommate for too long talking about stuff that was confusing and upsetting to me. I stopped the conversation much sooner than I would have done in the past, but I still did not apply my boundary earlier when it would have been healthier for me. I was

sick for several hours processing the overwhelmingly negative things he said about me. He got past my boundaries with lots of bad communication. However, I am learning and I was able to stop the conversation earlier than I would have in the past.

Some people cross my boundaries around the issue of sharing information that is unhealthy for me. It has been very difficult for me to learn to enforce these boundaries when I am hungry or tired. It is also difficult to enforce them with new friends. I am afraid the friends will go away. And many of them have gone away. Many potential friends cannot deal with my boundaries, so these boundaries contribute to my anorexia. However, in many cases I prefer anorexia to unhealthy relationships. The only way for me to find healthy relationships is to enforce my boundaries and let those people who do not understand or appreciate my boundaries move on. I am blessed to have a few people who are willing to be friends in spite of my boundaries. However, I would like to have more friends, and more nurturing relationships.

I need to honestly present myself as I am with the boundaries that I

need for my health and recovery and let my Higher Power provide the number of friends that he wants to provide.

-RonG

### **Becoming “At One” with my Couch**

It's my biggest fear. I look down one day, and I cannot tell where my couch stops and I start. We are one. I can sense myself getting more and more set in my ways, finding solace in the familiar characters on my favorite TV shows. They have become my friends, my world. Leaving home to pick up milk from the grocery store feels like a major imposition. Yes, I recognize that when I am in this space, I am living in the shadow of anorexia.

My other fear is indefinitely dating with no end in sight. I meet yet another single prospect for the obligatory coffee date even into the years when we are both surrounded by nursing home attendants. In this future vision, my date politely reminds me not to forget my walker as I totter off to my room and assigned roommate whose name escapes me.

As a card-carrying addict, I identify these as extremes of the same continuum. I've been coercing myself to seek middle ground for

the four years since my divorce. In my attempt to find this balance I wonder if I'm being unrealistic to want a partner who is open to personal growth both as an individual and as a couple. Am I asking too much when I desire someone who accepts my view of a higher power and can share occasional spiritual moments with me, even if his beliefs are different? Is it idealistic to want another soul who can examine his part in conflicts, state his feelings and even sit in them without holding me responsible? My goal is to practice living each day in the present, staying away from future obsessions or ruminating about my less-than-idyllic past. Is it viable for me to want a companion who can live this way also?

Then there is sex. The concept of sex as a by-product of a closeness between two people who really know and care about each other exemplifies the exception rather than the rule in the dating world of my experience. The author of our Basic Text reminds us that we can no longer accept a “sexual oasis in an emotional desert.” I wonder if posting that quote on my Facebook page will convince others to consider marching to my drummer. Not likely. So it is with

some regret that I accept the dissonance between my world and that of many non-S.L.A.A. members.

This diatribe, however, is not complete unless I force myself to revisit my pre-recovery relationships. The infidelity, dishonesty, and self-hatred remind me that my life today is just short of pretty darn great. I have a life of integrity, where I can enjoy emotional as well as sexual sobriety. I have friends who point out as often as necessary that the tools of the program abound. And I have a sacred space where I can go with the God of my understanding to decide what is in my highest good, today, and again tomorrow. What more could I ask for?

-Ava M, Austin, Texas

### **Boundaries**

It's no wonder that I had a serious issue with boundaries. Growing up, I never even *heard* about boundaries. Not only did I not respect others' boundaries, I never set any of my own. While it was great that my parents never had a violent argument—at least not in front of us—they never taught us how to have a disagreement or how to resolve conflicts. In fact, a

“conflict” was to be avoided *at all costs*. At ALL costs. In fact, I had “reverse” boundaries: I kept all the “bad” things *in*, and all the “good” things *out*. Because I never got enough affection as a boy, I like hugs. My principal shortcoming is neediness. I naturally assumed that *everybody* needs a hug as much as I do—so I wasn't able to “read” the body language of those who were uncomfortable receiving my non-sexual but enthusiastic hugs. Similarly, I experienced a tremendous emotional relief after sharing about my active addiction in meetings. Often, I would share some of my struggles and some of my insights with friends and other family members with the thought of demonstrating that it was okay to admit to one another our deepest struggles. Again, my openness did not respect *their* boundaries. Today, I always try to ask, “Would you like a hug?”, before initiating one. Similarly, I'm not so quick to share intimate details of my past right away. Instead, I ask my Higher Power's guidance for the proper opening.

-Robert H  
*Believe fervently, hope expectantly, love unconditionally!*

## Boundaries Need Goals

There are a number of good books out there on the topic of setting boundaries. I have been helped a lot by *AN ADULT CHILD'S GUIDE TO WHAT IS NORMAL* by John Friel and Linda D. Friel. I found reading this book really helpful for setting good, healthy and effective boundaries. If nothing else, it might give you an idea of things that happen that are not exactly 'normal' for 'healthy' people.

I did not have a sense of boundaries when I started. May I offer some quick down and dirty suggestions on how to identify them?

1) Go get the forty questions from SLAAFWS.Org. Download and write out (long hand please) your own answers to those questions. What do I NEED to DO (this is an action oriented program after all) to avoid those things happening in my life again? Make a list. A list is good for bottom lines, and a start on identifying boundaries, particularly sex and love addict (SLA) bottom line boundaries. I think we NEED to apply these boundaries (and the program) to all areas of our lives.

In case no one has mentioned this before our addiction does affect ALL areas of our lives.

2) Start keeping a WANTS and NEEDS list. I would suggest starting with the NEEDS as that tends to be a much smaller list. Keep it simple. For example, three hot meals and a place to sleep can be a basic need. Most of us NEED a job. We NEED good health. We NEED our vitamins and regular medical care. We NEED a certain amount of sleep and exercise. We NEED to do some things just for ourselves and to have fun. I think most of us in recovery NEED some space for our own personal time.

3) Making a pie chart was another thing that was suggested to me. The pie I used had six slices: Employment, Physical Health, Spirituality/Mental Health, Family, Material Needs, Personal/Social/Political relationships. One reason I like the pie image is the some of these things/ingredients naturally blend over into different slices, like a pie filling. In any case I do want to try and keep those slices about equal size for balance. Balance in life may be a whole new idea and getting used to it make take some time. At least, it took me a long time.

4) OK, so maybe we start there. Got all those needs written down and have a Plan to take care of our NEEDS? You need to plan your work, then work your plan. Proper planning prevents poor performance. This may be where you NEED to set some goals. Any of those areas that are lacking, or possibly just like completely, totally, absent, NEED some work done to bring them up to speed. So what do you NEED to DO to get them there? Now ask yourself what are two things (no matter how simple or small they may be) you can DO today to move towards those goals and then DO them. Tomorrow DO two more (Thank you Anthony Robbins).

5) Next let us assume we have or get our NEEDS taken care of and in balance, first things first after all. Always take care of NEEDS first. I am going to steal from Stephen Covey for his matrix, *Four Boxes*. Top side labeled Urgent, Bottom side Not Urgent. Sides labeled Important, Not Important. So we end up with four boxes titled Urgent/Important, Not Urgent/Important, Not Important/Urgent, Not Important/Not Urgent. What happens with most people is we take of NEEDS in the categories of Urgent/Important and Urgent/Not

Important. What we NEED to do is spend more time (as much as possible) in Important/Not Urgent. This will reduce that amount of time we spend in both boxes marked Urgent, reduce our stress levels a great deal, make us more (sometimes a LOT more) productive, effective, and generally happier (possibly even nicer people to be around, of course that might be pushing it for some of us).

6) So, I finally get around to that WANTS list, which for most of us has all (a lot of, most of) the fun stuff in it. First rule, it is OK to WANT ANYTHING. You can want anything at all, even stuff on your bottom line. It is OK to WANT. Assuming we have our NEEDS fully covered for today and we have copious free time and money maybe we WANT to get or do something. First issue here is priorities. What do we want (can't live without, small lie there, since living stuff belongs on the NEEDS list not the WANTS list) most?

It is time again for another matrix. I make myself a chart with say ten WANTS on it. Place one list of them down one side and another exact same list across the top. Label them one through ten (you can make a shorter or a longer list



if you like). So, if I have ten items I will end up with one hundred squares. I can compare each of the items with each other items (I will end up doing this twice for each). Now when I get done, I make another list of one through ten and start counting. How many times does each number appear? Whatever number appears most is the most important to me at the moment (or right now or presently or whatever). The other nine will also end up nicely prioritized. So, now I know what I WANT most. By the way, you can DO this with the pie chart too if you want to make it more along the SA model of a bulls eye target. You end up with circular slices of intimacy. Not a bad idea where some things are concerned.

So now we have our WANTS all pretty and prioritized. Look at the first item on that list. POP QUIZ time boys and girls! Will getting this WANT, prevent or hinder us from getting something we NEED? If so, how much do we really WANT that? This simple question can sometimes redirect our thinking to just how insane we may be. Always ask this question. It can save us from all sorts of problems. So, let us assume we WANT something that does not prevent us from getting our NEEDs met. How

do we go about getting it or manifesting that in our lives? Refer back to the planning comments please.

“The difference between a day dream and a goal is a deadline” (Anthony Robbins, this guy was a self made multi millionaire in his early twenties, lost it all, and rebuilt it even more before thirty, might have something worth learning). The way I see this is we are somewhere in the life, space, time continuum which I refer to as being here now (which is part of my bottom line). We need to know where that is as specifically as possible, because we often WANT or NEED to be someplace else. We NEED to be as clear as possible about where that is and what it looks, feels, smells, and sounds like. We will not get any satisfaction if we race through downtown on our way to excess. If I do not know where I am going when I set out, I most frequently end up going nowhere. If I want or need satisfaction I have to define what it looks like so I will recognize it when I get there.

So we are clear on where we are where we WANT or NEED to go. How do we get from point A to point B? There is a simple answer. We are going to build a



bridge or a ladder. The first things we NEED in order to undertake this construction are two poles that span the total distance. Fortunately, our Higher Power (sometimes called GOD=Good Orderly Direction) has taken care of this part by providing not one, but both poles for us! The poles are named Faith and Hope and they are in your pockets someplace. You may have to dig around to find them but they are in there someplace. They may look too small at the moment. Do not worry, because they come from your higher power and are infinitely expandable and much stronger than you can ever imagine. When the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, which is scientifically or mathematically impossible but happens none the less, that is the result of your higher power working. Just lay Faith and Hope down wherever you are (point A) and link them up to where you want to go (point B). So you have the sides of your bridge or ladder in place. Put that down on your done list and congratulate yourself. May I humbly suggest saying a little old "thank you" prayer to your higher power at this point? My higher power does like having His

contributions acknowledged and He is polite when I do.

Now what next? What does the first board for the bridge or rung for the ladder look like? Don't worry about how many you are going to NEED to finish the project. We just NEED the first one at the moment. What does it look like exactly?

Where can you get it? What do you have TO DO to obtain it? DO that. If you do not know, who does? Who has built this ladder or bridge before? If you know someone, go ask them. You do not have to re-invent the wheel. Hammer that sucker in place all nice and secure like.

When this is DONE—and only when it is DONE—look at the second rung or board and repeat the previous actions. Repeat as necessary until the ladder or bridge is completed from point A to point B. The really nice thing about this approach is that most of us have some experience with repeating the same behavior with the expectation of a different result. Now that is insane BUT (my excuse is) we can use those skills and let's face it some of us are awfully good at that.

Now walk, stylishly and gracefully from point A to point B. Enjoy the stroll and take in the scenery. Smell the roses. Enjoy the taste. Savor your accomplishment. Congratulate yourself. You have pushed the edge of your envelope. You have expanded your comfort level. You have grown and learned something new. You are no longer where or what you used to be. Now it is time to set a new goal(s).

This process may take a while. It can help to practice by making some small ladders or bridges first. Practice doesn't make perfect, it makes technique. Technique will see you through situations that otherwise you could not get through at all. Technique is a way to subconsciously accomplish tasks when all the rest of the world is falling down around your ears. It can get you through endless amounts of chaos. You do not NEED to play chaos. You can build bridges and make ladders to get away from it to a better place. Our boundaries are what we NEED to feel safe and be able to do the work of living while we prepare for what is ahead. Move forward. Improvise, adapt, overcome and conquer.

Why bother? OK, here's the basic truth on that one. If I stop acting out in my sex and love addiction, I

will end up with time and maybe even some money on my hands. This is spiritual warfare here. Welcome to the FEBA (Forward Edge of the Battle Area), where the fragile better get agile. The enemy is going to find things for you to DO with your time and money as nature abhors a vacuum. I promise you even if you stop acting out in one area, this is a multifaceted addiction that will find another way for you to act out. DO not give it the opening! If you do not start living your own life something else will be directing you. If you need help (and you will) ask higher power to pitch in. If your HP is not on call 24/7/365, omnipotent, omnipresent, and ready and willing to take action on your behalf, fire that higher power right now and get a better one. Borrow mine if you like. He is always ready to help anyone out who asks Him. He is a gentleman, but you do Have to ask. He handed out free will and He will not take it back. You got to give your will to Him. You can take it back anytime, by the way. IMPOSSIBLE you say? "Impossible is a unit of measurement denoting the degree of difficulty. Whatever is possible has been done. That which is impossible remains is what remains to be done." Scipio

Africanus (The Roman general who sacked Carthage and salted the earth)

stay sober just for today

-Eric EE

## Share Space

### Life Preserver or Life Compass?

The original SLAA logo, was designed and drawn by the wife of the founder, named Rich in the Basic Text. The symbolism was nautical, a compass rose suggesting that SLAA could help us see where we were going and find a better direction toward solid sobriety. The points were not labeled, because both sobriety and a Higher Power as chief navigator were individual, not defined by the Fellowship at large. The early SLAA members trusted that the desire to stop acting out and the Power of spirituality itself would help the individual choose the right direction.

Along the way, the logo used on pamphlets was transformed into a life preserver. The symbolism is apparent: SLAA can keep us afloat, above the sea of addiction and compulsion. It is not clear to me whether this new logo was selected at the annual business meeting, by the trustees, or perhaps by neither.

If the life preserver logo was chosen by Fellowship Wide Group Conscious might be discovered by researching the minutes of prior meetings.

In my opinion, the problem with a life preserver and the advantage of a compass logo are the same. The life preserver can save my life from drowning in addiction, allow me to look up to the sky and perhaps to find a Higher Power and the safety of land, where I can travel my sober life on the “road of happy destiny” (Alcoholics Anonymous, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2001. p. 164). Merely floating, however, puts me at the mercy of the currents still flowing in the sea of my addiction that still surrounds me and threatens to swamp my tiny float. Moreover, those currents may take me *away* from the solid, sober world rather than toward it.

For me, the symbol of the other logo, the compass, is that it works like the mariner’s sextant. Afloat above the sea of active addiction, held up by the Fellow-ship that has freed itself from its grip before me, the SLAA Program directs me and carries me to sober ground, using the steps, floating on faith and surrounded by the Fellow-ship, allowing the great Navigator to

direct all of us in our efforts to sail in the right direction.

Today the reach of our Fellowship has grown beyond what I ever imagined and beyond the experience of those who wrote the Basic Text, with the original logo of the compass rose, criticized and edited it, and finally approved it through group conscience. I think that perhaps some of the concerns of inclusiveness that have come forward for group conscience in recent years could be symbolized in a modified logo for our literature. Once an electronic picture is designed, it is little trouble to make the change on future printings of our literature, as well as distinguishing revised and new literature.

At the very least, a discussion of the symbolism communicated by our logo and by our Preamble, also changed in recent years and with further changes being considered, would benefit our Fellowship at the group level, as well as in the service structure.

As I look at our literature, I fear that our life-preserver logo symbolizes all-too-well the lack of direction toward solid sobriety. I find myself in too many meetings dominated by confessions of slips (not distinguishing between minor slips

and major relapses,) and self-forgiveness. I have seen too many people I care about stay stuck just barely above the problem, trying to keep a grip on that life preserver, but not able to navigate toward sobriety. My own recovery journey felt more like swimming in that sea of addiction, trying to keep my head above water with only a companion or two swimming beside me for support, but trusting in the Navigator above us who pointed us toward the solid ground of sobriety where we could find peace.

I hope that others will join me in considering a possible change in our logo that would represent inclusiveness encouraged by SLAA and welcome the true variety of individual addictive patterns and varied cultural experiences in our growing Fellowship. I am confident that thoughtful consideration and discussion at both service and group levels can bring us to a group conscience choice that truly represents God's will for the future of our Fellowship.

-Anonymous

## Where I Belong

My earliest memory of compulsive masturbation is from when I was quite young, around seven years old. My parents came into my room drawn by the noise of my bed knocking into the wall. Not long after that I saw my first pornographic magazine, found on the side of the road. Nothing explicit and clearly water damaged from recent rains. But I kept it hidden in the woods and was secretly fascinated with the female body. By the age of 12, I had found one friend's father's stash of pornographic magazines and stole from it. I was stealing magazines from the drug store up the street by stuffing it up my pants leg, and was once again secretly hiding the porn in the woods in a metal box to protect from the elements. Secret thoughts and behaviors define my disease.

In my mid teens I always had a magazine or two and would occasionally see a porn film at an older kid's house. By the late 1980s I was in the military and, in addition to near constant sex with prostitutes in far-east Asia, I always had a stash of hard core porn. We shared it and took it to the bathroom joking with each

other that it was time to "rub one out." In fact, compulsive masturbation was a normal part of any day when no women were available. Sometimes I was on a ship for long periods of time and the porn and masturbation was a ritualistic part of almost everyone's day – but it had *always* been for me, whether on or off shore.

After the military I hit a brutal bottom with cocaine and alcohol and cleaned up in rehab and a 12 step program in my mid-20s. Then, during college in the mid 90's something happened – the internet. I was a communications major and my school had an internet lab in 1996 that did not have monitors. I soon found the free hardcore and fetish sites completely irresistible. It was as addictive as, and more damaging in many ways, than my other addiction to cocaine would ever be.

When I moved in with my fiancé in the late 90s we bought a computer for my graduate school studies. They say grad school is where sex and particularly internet porn addiction really takes off for many people. No exception here. I never had a chance. We looked at internet porn together a few times for laughs. But I secretly

said to myself “if she only knew the half of it.” I was constantly, *constantly* clearing the search history, site history, image caches, key words and internet viruses – the evidence of my secret life. And it was a secret life: hours and hours spent “researching” for school. Late nights turned into early mornings masturbating compulsively. The fetishes went from weird to insane – I followed links that descended into a hell of depravity, always seeking to find a bigger “hit.”

Six years of meetings and service and sponsorship in another 12 step fellowship was no match for my sexual addiction. The shame and remorse, the lies and secrets – I could not sleep and started abusing sleeping medications. Narcotic sleep meds from a doctor, first to sleep, then to “get high”, taking them on my way to school because I liked the way it helped me dissociate from the emotional hangover of the previous night’s activities. Soon it was painkillers and tranquilizers, too.

In short, my internet porn addiction led me back to my drug addiction. I didn’t talk about the new drug habit in my meetings though – I still “claimed my seat” and now had more lies than I knew

what to do with. But I had to keep my grades up. This went on for three years. Then marriage came along and I promised myself the insanity would recede in the lights of my successful career and relationship. Instead, a bottom I never could have imagined was only two years away.

By now the prescription drugs were almost daily, the internet porn *was* daily, and it led me to throw away two \$2,000 laptops because I couldn’t stop the pop-ups and couldn’t have explained to my wife what was wrong. I was too ashamed to use an IT professional. I just had to make it go away. I needed sleeping pills to sleep, my sex life was nonexistent, porn was compulsive, now massage parlors and clandestine sex were back in the picture, too. My identity was completely consumed by my addiction. My work suffered tremendously. Guilt ate at me hourly. Vodka seemed like something I could get away with though it had been 12 years since my early trips to rehab following the military. After that, I began using cocaine again. I was still not talking about any of these secrets with anyone. They say you’re as sick as your secrets. Well, I was pretty sick. I had a meltdown.

Rehab for drugs and alcohol was successful again, but I refused to take the sex and porn addiction seriously. I left my wife rather than tell her the truth. I started having compulsive sex with any available or unavailable woman I could find, civilian or “pro”. Internet sex was almost nonstop, sometimes using a cell phone and masturbating in the car. I ruined relationships with my friends because of my paranoia, thinking my sex partners were sleeping with them. I took hostages. I became socially anorexic in an almost absolute sense. I was at the jumping off point. I went to treatment for sex addiction.

I entered a sexual recovery program, but slept with one of the women there. Then I went home to my community, now divorced and humiliated having learned the language of sex addiction but having done nothing with it. I begged my doctor to prescribe something for the mania that filled my head, for the endless nights. He was loathe to do so, knowing I was a SERIOUS addict, prone to use anything to manage my badly mangled conscience. We settled for an antipsychotic but I soon found that a handful would put you to sleep just as surely as a sleeping pill. My sexual behavior

continued and I hurt a lot of people, not just myself. I brought out the very worst in people in their anger and very predictable retaliation. I wish I could tell you I hit my bottom there and then. I wish I could have found the courage to face the music, instead I left town.

I landed in a new community, no job, picked up the cocaine and prostitution and internet porn like I had never left. Unbelievably risky illegal behavior was a part of my daily existence, so much for a geographic cure. I was now nearly destitute, divorced, unemployed and unemployable. Unable to sleep – filled with financial insecurity and fear of continuing consequences. Welcome to my bottom, now for the good news.

I have found recovery. SLAA has given me relief from a life of insanity. I am clean from all substances, but I devote myself to 12 step recovery from sex/porn addiction as my *primary* addiction. My sex/porn addiction is THE main path to crazy town and I pray to God that I never forget that fact. I will use drugs and die if I don't deal with my sex/porn addiction. I will go to prison if I don't deal with it. My luck will run out and I'll suffer health



consequences that I've somehow avoided.

What do I love the most about SLAA recovery? I love the certainty that I am not alone, that my story is not unique. Nothing compares to sitting at a meeting, defining my bottom line behaviors in explicit terms and discussing my freedom from them. I do not have internet at home – that makes sense at a meeting. I don't watch art films with nudity – that makes sense, too. I talk to my fellow men in my network about temptations that I've survived, sometimes just barely, with compassion and *humor*. Who else could understand the complexity of an innocent complement from a happily married female acquaintance? In this phase of my recovery I am out of and plan to stay out of romantic relationships. I am abstinent from sex and porn. I neither masturbate compulsively nor daily.

It seems hard to believe as I write this that I'm free of the insanity. I know it is my relationship with God and with other recovering addicts that has saved me. Help is only a phone call away. There are meetings six nights a week only 20 minutes from my home, where I can play a role in the recovery of

other addicts and share experience strength and hope. I feel useful, and my past is actually not *just* a source of pain. In leaving it behind my past now is useful to others, another story of heartbreak averted, death postponed for another day. My path from here is clear – I will clear up the wreckage of my past with the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> steps. I will share my story of spiritual recovery with others and support meetings in my community wherever that may be.

One of my favorite concepts in recovery is "social anorexia." It fits me so well – at times in the past I withdrew from virtually all relationships in the service of my disease. But I no longer accept as normal the shame, paranoia, guilt and manipulation that the withdrawal represented. I talk to my family now and I have friends again. I am in the process of repairing relationships that are important to me. Within the safety of the SLAA fellowship I can now shine a spotlight on the darkest parts of my past, my deepest fears. I have found my tribe at last. Some members of my SLAA network have other addictions in common with me. I have never felt so at home. I have never felt such hope.

-Jay F, CT