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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."

## **Letter from the Editor**

Dear Reader:

This issue focuses on the theme of Service. For me, service keeps me connected to my program, but also lets me read the wonderful words of our contributors. There is real healing in these words and I am grateful to have the opportunity to put them together for this meeting in print.

Charlie D.

Managing Editor, *the Journal*

## **Other S.L.A.A. Resources**

In addition to the many S.L.A.A. meetings and *the Journal*, resources are now available through the Internet and Phone. Such email and phone communities provide S.L.A.A. members with positive options to personal meetings. 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, reading or listening as a part of their recovery experience or want to supplement their current meeting schedule with such a meeting. There are also members who are not located near any S.L.A.A. meetings or do not find the twelve-step fellowships available to them to be helpful. In the spirit of the 12th step, we are happy to share this information with our readers

## **On-Line Resources**

**SLAA Online Group:** [www.slaaonline.org](http://www.slaaonline.org)

**SLAA-ALT Group:** [stopover.ky.us.starlink-irc.org/cgi-bin/irc.cgi](http://stopover.ky.us.starlink-irc.org/cgi-bin/irc.cgi)

**International SLAA Online Group:** [www.internationalslaonline.org](http://www.internationalslaonline.org)

**SLAAsupport Group:** <http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/SLAAsupport>

**South Florida Intergroup e-Group of SLAA:** [www.e-SLAA.org](http://www.e-SLAA.org)

## **Phone Meetings**

There are numerous phone meetings. A good place to start is the

SLAA FWS website: [http://directory.slaafws.org/intl\\_phone](http://directory.slaafws.org/intl_phone)

In addition, there is a special telemeeting series, **Skills for Healthy Loving**

### **2010-11 Telemeeting Series - Skills for Healthy Loving**

Presented by: Conference Healthy Relationships Committee

Event Date: Saturday, September 18, 2010

Event Date: Saturday, October 16, 2010

Event Date: Saturday, November 20, 2010

Event Date: Saturday, December 18, 2010

Event Date: Saturday, January 15, 2011

Event Date: Saturday, February 19, 2011

Event Date: Saturday, March 19, 2011

For Inquiries: <http://www.slaafws.org/files/>

Healthy+relationships+flyer%202010-11%20series.pdf

These 7 one-hour telemeetings 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

### **Upcoming Events**

#### **Annual Spaghetti Fundraiser Speaker Dinner**

Presented by: S.L.A.A. Orange County, CA Intergroup

Where: Silverado, CA

Event Date: Saturday, August 21, 2010

For Inquiries: See Flyer

To be held at the Silverado Community Center, 27641 Silverado Canyon Road.

Six Meals and Snacks Included: Friday Dinner through Sunday Lunch  
Blankets, Sheets and Pillowcases provided. Shared Bathrooms/Showers.

#### **Annual Augustine Fellowship Canoe Trip**

Presented by: Delaware Valley Intergroup

Where: Bucks County River Country, 2 Walters Lane, Point Pleasant, PA. 18947 Phone# (215)297-5000

When : Sunday August 22, 2010 , 8:30am.

For Inquiries: CONTACT BOB C. - [civyd@hotmail.com](mailto:civyd@hotmail.com)

This event is open to all Augustine Fellowship members, their families and friends.

New this year: Tubing ,and Rafting, in addition to Kayaking and Canoeing on the Delaware River.

Prices: Rafts (2-5 people) \$ 30.00 per raft. Tubes (1 person) \$ 18.00.

Canoes (1 or 2 adults) \$ 33.00 per canoe. Kayaks (1 adult) \$ 38.00 per kayak. Tandem Kayaks (2 adults) \$ 43.00 per tandem kayak. Sit on top Kayaks (1 -2 adults) \$48.00 per sit on top kayaks There will also be a \$10.00 deposit required per person (refundable) We have had much success and fun over the years with this event. We do ask that everyone use caution and good sense while attending this event. Please be respectful of each individual's boundaries and have fun. Food is available at Bucks County River Country Outfitters for reasonable prices or you can pack a lunch and bring frozen bottles of water. You may want to bring a change of clothes as you may get wet and dressing rooms are available.

### **Men's Weekend 12-Step Retreat**

Presented by: Houston Texas

Event Date: Friday, August 27, 2010 - Sunday, August 29, 2010

Where: Holy Name Retreat Center, Houston, TX

For Inquiries: Call the Retreat Center at 713-464-0211

Our 21st annual 12-step study retreat will be at Holy Name Retreat Center, 430 Bunker Hill Road, Houston, Texas. The retreat begins at 6:00 PM Friday and concludes with lunch on Sunday. Cost which includes room, linens, all meals, and snacks is \$190. The senior rate for those 65 and older is \$175. Limited financial aid is available for those in need. This event has been described by participants as the most spiritual weekend they have experienced, a weekend worth several months of 12-step meetings.

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

Presented by: German Speaking Countries Intergroup

Where: Karlsruhe, Germany

Event Date: Friday, September 10, 2010 - Sunday, September 12, 2010

For Inquiries: [http://www.slaafws.org/files/  
herbsttreffen\\_2010\\_online\\_0.pdf](http://www.slaafws.org/files/herbsttreffen_2010_online_0.pdf)

Join us for our autumn conference "Courageously Taking New Paths" in Karlsruhe, Germany. Our conference is held twice a year and your are invited to attend speaker and topic meetings, business meetings of the German speaking fellowship, our general assembly and a fun evening of laughter, performances, fellowship, disco and much more!

The event is held in the German language.

## **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 an internet technician. 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.

### **Internet Technician**

The Internet Tech manages the Journal website, and works with the Marketing Director to update website content. As the CJC has voted to offer online subscriptions in the future, we need someone computer literate with proficient web design skills interested in developing the e-Journal. There is no sobriety requirement.

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, "How are you being of service in your life, and how does this help your recovery?" Here are some wonderful responses for your enjoyment and edification. They are not presented in any particular order.

In SLAA I am a representative for a group in Stockholm named The Maria Group. I am also vice chairperson in the Swedish board of trustees. Like everyone else I open up as many meetings as I can and if possible I always stay and help tidying up. As a representative who also is the chairperson during practical meetings, I get the opportunity to practice confronting my fears. Fear of reading out loud, fear of being loud, fear of taking too much attention, fear of not doing good enough, fear of not being accepted and so on. I want to take responsibility. I want to help the group. I want to be a part of the group recovery because I know that when I do these things I feel good about myself.

I cannot hate myself when I'm doing great stuff. A lot of recovery

takes place with the board of trustees that inspires me in my everyday life. I am also inspired when I do service for my group. Service helps me to gain trust in other people and shows me that if I do my part they will do theirs and when they do not it is not the end of the world and it is not my thing to "fix". I can also practice the skill of being unselfish when I am sent as a representative from my group to communicate what the group wants, what the group thinks and what the group feels is important - not what I want, I think and what I think is important.  
--Carmen, Stockholm, Sweden

I ask God every morning to guide my day and to show me how I can be of service that day. I always have someone calling me asking for directions or one of my sponsees will call and need some help! This helps me to get far more out of my day and to feel great and it is an honor to be of service! Aligning my life with God is better than any "fix" than I ever got from acting out! I feel that my life finally has a purpose!

I thank him every day for this gift!  
--Lora M. Silverado, CA

I took the commitment of being secretary early on in my recovery - it forced me to show up and it

also showed me how loving and accepting people are in this program. I was not perfect but people appreciated my service. This was the first time in my life that I felt loved and accepted because I was striving to be of service.

--Nicole D., Los Angeles

Retreat and workshop committee in Los Angeles keeps me involved, helps me share my experience and grounds me in reality.

--Glenn, Los Angeles

I focus all of my efforts and give my love to animals in need. I have started an animal rescue group and am a vegan. I feel that having something positive to focus on allows me to be free from my addiction.

--Niloo K., Winnetka

Being of service really gets me out of my head and reminds me that I am not the center of the universe. It helps me develop healthy relationships with people and brings me out of isolation.

--Paul C., Long Beach

I am being of service in my job, my family, Intergroup and making coffee at church. It gets me out of myself, connects me with positive energy through action and

provides structure, direction and the feeling of being part of life.

--Cathy G., Encino

I make outreach calls on a daily basis, and I connect with my sponsor daily plus I have two sponsees.

--Lucia, Los Angeles

My service is sponsoring, watching children, showing up at meetings. I serve myself by being kind.

--Jess, Los Angeles

I am of service by sponsoring men in this program. Sponsoring helps me stay in my own recovery while being able to reach out to others. I could not be an effective sponsor if my relationship with God was not good first. Sponsoring helps me grow spiritually.

--John B., Glendale

I am of service in this program by sponsoring women as part of my 9<sup>th</sup> step amends. I am of service at my church as an usher which helps me work through my anorexia. I am of service to Survivors After Suicide which honors my mother who died of suicide when I was young.

--Lisa A., Los Angeles

Being of service helps me immediately to walk through fear and anxiety into greater serenity. I love going to Intergroup meetings because there is always so much recovery in the room. Joining the Journal staff has allowed me to experience this program from a larger perspective, and I've noticed a similar expansion in my personal recovery. When reading articles contributed by our members, I receive the wisdom I need to hear that day. It is also funny how skills developed in my addiction come into play in a healthy way now - like communicating with strangers online! For me, volunteering in SLAA helps to rewire those life-alienating habits into positive new patterns.  
--Tom B., Los Angeles

I have been talking to family members who have observed my recovery, and my sister is now talking about going to an AA meeting.  
--Anonymous

I help a friend with her art projects. I have a BFA in that medium. I enjoy helping her and sharing her enthusiasm.  
--Alyson, Los Angeles

In addition to having two service commitments in program, I try to be of service in my life by being a better friend and helping my friend in need. Being a better friend, to me, means giving instead of always receiving, listening more than talking, and giving of my time.  
--Carrie, Los Angeles

By suiting up and showing for meetings and functions as an older gay man I think it is important to show up honest and open. I tell my story, and share what my recovery is all about.  
--Mark E., Long Beach

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

"What are some positive surprises of recovery from sex and love addiction in your life?" 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 Service**

When I was new in AA and read about Bill W and how it was possible for one alcoholic to help another when no one else had been able to do so, I took it very seriously. I stayed sober for the first 5 years mainly working the first and twelfth steps. But my main problem was that I had just switched addictions. Actually, I did not switch, since I had been a bulimic and a sex and love addict before I got sober in AA. I just relied more heavily on those two addictions while I gave up drugs and alcohol. It was pretty obvious that I needed to give up bulimia but I could not get a handle on that until I got together with my second husband and that was well before I was out of my denial about sex and love addiction.

When I finally hit my bottom and my second marriage broke up, I finally admitted complete defeat.

I began to tell the truth about everything. I did not want what I had anymore. I knew how the program worked and rather quickly began to work it as written. I began to tell my story from the podium. It is a somewhat dramatic story and when I

admitted all the things that I had done, it was a form or service because people realized that if I could stay sober, then anyone could. If I could straighten out my life after having gone to the depths that I did, then it would be easy for someone who had just slightly strayed off course.

I started two meetings that are still going. Those kept me program-centered and thinking about other people instead of being selfish and self centered. I almost always have a commitment of some sort because it keeps me connected.

At one time I sponsored a lot of women but I realized I was not doing them any favors if they refused to sponsor other people, so I am careful to make sure that they also agree to do some of the helping that our program needs from every member.

There is still a lot of work to do. I have detected the anorexia that the book talks about that may be underlying most of our sex and love addiction. It's a sneaky snake that wants to take me down. A friend and I always talk about how the program works like an exorcism of anorexic self destruction. Service is a new way of life. I recommend it.

--Alice

## **Service**

When I think of service I generally first recall my home group which was my second SLAA fellowship. I had been going to another group for a while, but frankly, it was not what I needed at the time.

I owe my sobriety, and my life, to eight people who had fairly long term recovery in either AA or NA. Those eight men and women were as underwhelmed as I was with the first fellowship. So they rented a small office space and declared they would have one meeting a day for a year. They invited me, and some others to join. They let United Way know where we were and when we were meeting, got a phone and an answering machine.

They then had two very large copies made of the twelve steps, the twelve traditions, and the promises of recovery. They put them up in the front office and in the meeting room where everyone or anyone could see them. They proceeded to have a meeting every single day at seven PM. I had been there about two weeks when someone put the 'book' in front of me and told me to chair the meeting. That was the first time I did any service work.

They made sure we focused our meetings on the twelve steps and working program. We did a lot of talking about our personal issues to discover that we were not really all that terminally unique. We shared what worked for us and what did not work for us. People started putting together some serious sobriety time. We celebrated that.

I have since learned that one way to get people involved in a program and fellowship is ask them to help do some of the work. If you do not ask they may feel separate from the group and from recovery. It is important to realize that we are all in this lifeboat together and we do not get to pick and choose who climbs in to join us. We do need to give them an oar though.

Being of service, committing to unlock and lock up, chair meetings, etc. got me to come to a lot of meetings when I did not really feel like it. It helped me to learn that there are only two times I need a meeting: when I want to go and when I do not want to go. I picked up a lot of good stuff from going to meetings I would not have otherwise chosen.

Arriving early, opening up, setting up chairs, making coffee, helped me meet a lot of new people. Staying after to empty the coffee pot, count and deposit the seventh tradition, lock up, got me talking with people who had some personal issues that had not been addressed at the meeting. Service forced me to think about things, some of which I might otherwise have glossed over.

I also got trapped. Doing service work is like pouring “Miracle-Gro™” on your character defects. I became grandiose by thinking I was indispensable to the meeting. Fortunately someone put some signs up on the walls and I got my nose rubbed in my stuff a few times. I had a fairly healthy fellowship to push me back on the right track more than once.

Twelve steps are a spiritual action oriented fellowship not affiliated with any other organizations movements or causes either religious or secular. These are the rooms where God collects his mail addressed to “whom it may concern”. My spiritual beliefs tell me I am saved to serve. If you think about it, all of us make our way by being of service to someone else. No person is totally an island. We all have to do something that is of

valuable service to someone else.

We may want to grumble or complain about that or we may see it as an opportunity. One of my spiritual beliefs is that if you want something, you have to give it away. Try it with a smile and see if it does not come back to you multiplied.

It is in service that we start re-establishing our self worth and self esteem. We can take pride in what we can actually do, especially when what we do benefits others. If we go too far, we get pulled up by our fellowship. Our supportive fellowship and group conscience is our ongoing guide to doing things the right and best way. We discover again that we are powerless and how to let go and let God on a different level of our consciousness. That was one of the issues of my first SLAA fellowship. In the group, a few individuals made all the decisions and got lost in their own egos and grandiosity.

For the last ten years I have been doing a great deal of my personal sharing on the internet. I am privileged to belong to a healthy online fellowship. I am what you might call an old hand. When I started sharing online I had to make a decision. The two groups I

belonged too then were both fairly new and I had been in program for some time. I needed to decide how best I could be of service.

I could easily have become a moderator. That was certainly one way of being of service. I could share my experience strength and hope. My experience, strength and hope, however, is not totally in line with our basic text or with some things in print from FWS (Fellowship World Services). I am not FWS and I am not an SLAA spokesperson. I'm an addict in recovery.

“There are nine and twenty ways of constructing tribal lays, And every single one of them is right.”  
—Rudyard Kipling

By separating myself from a position of authority I believe I have helped keep the door open for others to experience strength and hope. There are different ways of approaching things and some work better than others, or may work for some, and not work for others at all. I am from the hard knocks school. I see SLAA as an addiction. I cannot see some codependency issues others are struggling with, and my approach could be unfortunate for them. That it

worked for me does not mean it will work for everyone. I have been blessed to learn quite a bit of good stuff from people whose approaches are different from mine.

I have also watched—and maybe helped a little—people working out just how to do their service work. When there is any kind of issue with my service work, I can fall back on the Twelve Traditions as my home fellowship drummed into me. The answer is almost always there.

I think one of the best blessings I have gotten from service work is I get to watch people go through some really tough personal issues and get better. It is a really great privilege to see or hear from someone who has put together three or five years sober time and is actually living and enjoying their life. I get to recall what they were like, what happened and compare that with what they are like now. It makes me even happier to see someone brand new who is crawling in and may be bringing me something I never knew before.

Stay sober just for today  
--Eric EE Dallas, Texas



## **How I Got Into Service**

I was never part of any other 12-step program before SLAA, so I didn't really specifically know anything about service. I did not do community service work. Yet, in all my jobs and within my family I was always the one spearheading everything. If you did not know how to find the answer, I would go find it for you, whether it was at work or within my personal life. So my tendency to service was already part of my personality. Before I got into recovery, it was self-serving. It was very selfish. I was self serving with my service so that people would like me and I would feel important. Now that I am in recovery, it is not about if people like me. I recognize that sometimes in recovery people do not like the things you say or the decisions you make. To me recovery is God's work. It's not about power and control and being popular. It is just about God's work.

I got into service because my first two sponsors were super service oriented and believed in the AA format. They believed that it was very important to do service from

the beginning. Since I did not have sobriety in the beginning, I started with meeting level service that did not have sobriety requirements such as setting up chairs, greeting people, and stuff like that. Then, because my mentors were part of intergroup, I was brought into the intergroup meetings just as a voice, and to learn the process. Within three or four months I was asked to be the treasurer. The current treasurer at that time mentored me through it for a couple of months and I became the treasurer the next year. Through this experience I got to know other people doing service on that level and I got to know their level of integrity and commitment and sobriety.

Spending time around people with sobriety, commitment and integrity catapulted me to new levels in my own sobriety and recovery. On top of that, I learned just how to be of service, and how to be of service in a democratic way: how the vote works, how we are not really married to our positions, how we just do the best we can. I learned how service commitments help sobriety. I noticed that the people who did service at any

level were really the ones dedicated to their sobriety and recovery. That was important to me. Through service I was getting more sobriety and recovery, while being around people who also felt that these things were important.

As time went on, I developed my own service personality. I began sponsoring people. Afterwards, I brought them into service positions and mentored them through service positions. Then Los Angeles won the bid for the 25<sup>th</sup> year SLAA convention. I was asked to be on the convention committee and I learned even more about being of service at a broader level. I learned more about how to work with others. That was a big thing because personalities can be very difficult. I really learned the whole idea of principles over personalities. This is truly important in order to do good service. It wasn't just about me being right or wrong, it was how do I make this work with other people's opinions and other people's thoughts and a little bit of craziness involved, a little bit of unmanageability here and there. I did not do it perfectly. I definitely had to make amends for some things I did not complete or did not follow through properly as

I grew in my service, but I really learned from that as well. Just like anything else that you do not do right. Like the regular recovery process you make amends, you move forward, you learn. I did that and I kept the respect of a lot of the people I was working with because I was able to step up and say, "ok, this is what happened, and I didn't do well and I'm sorry and I'll do better next time." And I did better.

Service really is a very huge part of my recovery. It is something that works with my personality. It is a really good enhancement to my recovery and my sobriety and how I live my life. It is a great place to build self-esteem. It has really helped me build my self-esteem and find a place where I could do well and help others at the same time.

It has not been easy. The more I know and the longer I have been in program, the more people come to me for answers. That gets hard sometimes because I have questions and sometimes I need support. Unfortunately, I am viewed as someone with the answers and not someone with questions. I am often only

perceived by what I can do for other people and how I can mentor them.

But it is really rewarding. I would not change it for the world. I have found it a really rewarding thing to do. It is something that keeps me sane, keeps my integrity in check, and keeps my rigorous honesty in check. Being of service also keeps my ability to work with others in constant check. Every year that I am in service, I continually learn more and more about myself, and others, and just how to be a person among people.

I work in human resources so conflict management is a big part of what I do. So the more I'm of service, the more I learn to work with people. I learn to not take things personally, that it is really for the greater good and I am able to take those skills into my professional life while I do mentorship and conflict management. Working between bosses and subordinates, my service experience has helped me be much more objective and helpful.

For me it does not matter at what level I do service, if it's national, intergroup, or even at the meeting

level. So, for me, it does not matter where the commitment lies, it just matters to be of service somewhere in this program. Being there keeps the program moving so that the newcomers have a safe place to get their own recovery and sobriety. That is our program in perpetual motion.

Sometimes in personal, dating situations, I am given the direction to just go there and be of service. "Since you don't know what you're feeling, and you don't understand what's going on, you're still learning — *go there and just be of service.*" This I am able to do.

The level of honesty and integrity you need to have to be of service, in my opinion, also has taught me how to be honest and forthright in relationships, and to look for the greater good not just what my selfish wants are. So now I can say in relationships - "I'm sorry," "I don't understand," "I'm scared," "Can you re-explain that?" Those were things I could not do before. I learned this in service. I definitely learned that through service, because through being of service you are learning to be in

relationship with people.  
--Karma K., Los Angeles

### **Being of service**

My name is Ron G and I am an anorexic and sex and love addict.

Service has been and is a very important part of my recovery.

Starting nine years ago in June of 2001 I volunteered to be the Intergroup representative from a newly started SLAA anorexia focus meeting. In November 2001 I joined the Conference Literature Committee and in 2002 I volunteered and became a delegate to the Annual Business Conference/Meeting (ABC/M or ABM).

SLAA uses the word "Conference" to represent the fellowship wide organization of volunteers that provide service at the international and worldwide level. This includes both delegates and non delegates including former and future delegates, as well as many members who just want to do a few hours of service a month by email and telephone without traveling to a face to face event.

I do volunteer work on Conference Committees and as a service sponsor. I also have my own

service sponsors who have been and still are very helpful.

I have done service work in other 12 Step fellowships prior to my current 9 year stint in SLAA.

For me, my many different types of service have helped me with my self esteem which was very low when I came into recovery. Service made me feel that I was a part of the larger SLAA community, rather than just a visitor, who may have been welcomed and treated warmly, but needed more than this to feel secure. I needed the feeling of security to feel enough support to work the difficult Steps.

Service for me, at the "Conference"/international level has been invaluable as I have health and transportation issues that make frequent attendance at face to face meetings impossible. Using the Internet and the phone have given me an opportunity to feel connected and a part of something healthy in ways that did not occur for me with face to face meetings. Also the continuity of serving on committees for long periods of time has given me stability and lasting relationships that I could not find in face to face

meetings due to my illnesses causing sporadic attendance.

Additionally, the work with service sponsors and service sponsees has provided lasting relationships while also providing retention of service to the fellowship. While I do not remain as Chair of any Committee for long periods, I do continue as a committee member, sharing my experience, strength, hope, and institutional memory.

I move my leadership activities to other committees, projects, and activities. I try to provide both rotation of service by changes in leadership, and continuity by continuing membership.

As I continue service at the "Conference" (World) level, I reduce my need to be controlling and to have everything my way. This has contributed significantly in improving my relationships in other areas of my life, and this has brought serenity and peace of mind along with relaxation and peacefulness.

Without the service part of Step 12, my recovery would definitely be lacking some of the valuable and important growth in my recovery

that I have experienced in service to SLAA at the Conference level.

My recovery from social anorexia has been greatly enhanced by the safety to explore new styles of relationships and the warm support of my experimenting with new habits, which have not easily replaced the old ones. My growth from social anorexic to social interaction and social engagement was accompanied by many stumbles and falls as I experimented with new behavior patterns, and the good patterns slowly developed into new good habits. Service has been an excellent place for me to experiment, practice, grow, develop, and change.

Thank you to SLAA.  
Thanks for listening.

--RonG

## **Share Space Hearts Entwine**

O counterfeit of wine and flesh  
Fount of Bacchanals  
Hybrid of an evil mesh  
Lucifer and Baal

A Wagner piece vibrated from the player piano sitting alone in the courtyard. The prince kept time and followed it through the gate

which stood open and inviting. Behind the player piano stood two large stone jars filled with an ancient wine. The prince filled his new skin and sat in front of the piano to drink. The music began to seduce him the wine bade him onward toward the house. Increasing his pace, he climbed the steps, passed through the door and found himself within. As he closed the door behind him, the prince stood in total darkness.

While he stood waiting in the foyer, the familiar scent of pine began to fill the air until finally he felt a soft embrace. The torches were lit and the sound of women's voices led him down to the cellar where he drank freely from their cups of celestial fantasy. Deeper and deeper he was led through chambers of image and desire tirelessly pursuing permanence amidst the ephemeral mirage. Intoxicated beyond his liking, he tried to return upstairs. The door, however, was now being guarded by a reflection of the most hideous sort. The figure stood over the prince and with wails and tears scratched and clawed at his chest. His heart was now exposed and the prince fainted at the sight.

As his eyes slowly opened, the prince became aware of his

surroundings. To his left he saw a man standing before a blackboard consumed with geometric equations. Figures and shapes were scribbled haphazardly all around him. On his right, a man stood hunched over a pulpit preaching. Everywhere faces and whispers flooded the conscience of the prince with truth and exaggeration, and in every direction there were mirrors.

The prince knew this place well and in the past could spend days sometimes weeks within the House of Mirrors. The entrance in was as mysterious as the exit out and often the locks were changed. Overcome this time with the weight of his heart, the prince fell into a deep sleep.

A prison cell in mirrors  
 Drinking Dionysian blood  
 The eyes cry out for vision  
 Oh my Savior now the mud

The prince dreamed he was in prison. One day a new inmate arrived on the island. This man, whose name was his number, captivated the prince like no one he had ever met. His speech was persuasive. He promised a way to freedom. The prince believed.

In the long history of this particular institution, no prisoner

had ever escaped. The penalty for even an attempt was to be buried alive. This living cemetery was named Silent Screamatory and stories about the public services bled fear. The guards outnumbered the inmates 7 to 1 and the walls of the prison stood as high as the eye could see in the dark of night. The prisoners were not permitted outside their cell during the day and the sun began to fade completely from their memories.

The night of deliverance came and the prince followed his conspirator into the library for final instructions. Confidence filled their speech as the plan was once again agreed upon. The numbered man slipped the prince a potion mixed by his very hand. The power released within made him feel both invisible and knowing. The prince was astounded as the two walked undetected past guard after guard on their way around the great watchtower. Crossing the courtyard the prince asked the man, "Where will you take me when we are free?" the man smiled and said, "To my kingdom of course" and led him up the stairs in haste.

The final phase of their escape proved the most difficult. To ensure their shrouded exodus the two men

had to walk along the precipice of the prison walls. The pace slowed considerably as the altitude stole their breath and the great height their heart. The narrow ledge revealed to the prince the depths of his own fear, the risk a latent placebo.

Without warning, the sun exploded over the horizon and in an instant the alarms began to scream in the compound. Spotlights from every direction scaled the prison walls and exposed the prince before the court of guards adjourned below. The prince looked behind him in a final plea to his savior but was alone. As he fell from the sky the prince cried out, "ABBA AAABBAAA!!!"

The garden queen  
Mother Amen  
Mission unseen  
She mends, she mends

As the scream with no sound choked his breath, he awoke again in the House of Mirrors. Alone and afraid he opened his eyes to find the Queen Mother standing at his feet. "My prince, the Father told me you were here again. I have come to undress your wound." She laid him across her lap and opened his heart. The queen

bowed her head and prayed, “O sword of Simeon come again!”

The prince began at once to tell her about his latest attempt to hide his wound from the king and how again he found himself in the House of Mirrors. He had been inspired to finally rid himself of the wound which for so long had been a source of exile. After meticulous research and study, he was sure he had discovered the needed formula to cause his healing. Mixing them all together, he allowed them to harden and pasted the artificial shield over the wound of his heart. After a few months passed, he was quite proud of his remedy and the shield seemed almost to become part of his heart.

The Queen Mother looked with compassion on what the shield had wrought. The ingredients the prince had mixed were in chaos. The acorns were merely dust. The olive oil resembled a tarred resin which sealed the cedar chips now piercing the prince’s heart. The daisy petals were nowhere to be seen and the lily coating had split in two down the center. Before the prince could ask she was deep inside his heart. Her eyes searched for the white roses which she had planted for the King in seasons past. His garden, her garden was

overgrown with weeds and rocks filled the paths where hyacinths once blossomed. Everywhere she looked bore traces of his journey to the House of Mirrors. After toiling on her hands and knees for love of the prince she saw the major damage before her. She bent before the tree from which the garden received its life. With all her strength she removed the prince’s shield which stood as a dam between the tree and the irrigation routes to the garden. Slowly the water began to once again flow through the main arteries of the garden.

Emmaus Emmaus our journey’s  
begun  
Enkindle our hearts revealing the  
sun  
O how our veils of sinfulness  
blind  
Your vision of goodness and  
mercy entwine

The prince took the queen’s arm and they set out to find the king. On their journey, the mother recalled the story of the Great King: his life, his mission, his love and mercy. Although the prince knew the story well, so much he had forgotten in his sleep. It all sounded like a beautiful fairy tale and the prince longed to be a child once again. As they traveled



toward the king, the prince began to feel hungry. The queen carried no provisions and encouraged him to pray more fervently. As they were walking on the road, they spotted a lone figure kneeling before a great wall. The man seemed to be writing something in the dirt and the prince leaned over to see what it was. Here is what it said: THE WOUND OF THE HEART IS WHAT BINDS US TOGETHER.

The prince begged the man, "Friend, we have come a great distance, and have no food. Could you share a meal with us?" The queen removed her mantle and handed it to the man who spread it across the message in the dirt. He poured out new wine, broke the bread and gave it to the prince and mother. The man pronounced the blessing, and as the prince was eating and drinking he looked for the first time into the man's eyes. He fell prostrate before the king and cried, "Why don't you relieve me of my duties? Can you see I am unfaithful? You have given me everything and still I hide my heart." The Great King stood up and questioned the prince, "Do you want to return to and live in the House of Mirrors?" "No. Nevermore" said the prince. The King looked into his eyes and

stretched out his hands, "My friend, do you believe these wounds are real?" "Yes Lord, but the wound in my heart....." "Behold my heart" said the King as it now blazed through his robe.

The prince stood transfixed as streams of love poured out and flew into the heart of the Queen Mother. As through the purest mirror, the rays reflected out of the mother's heart and leapt into the heart of the prince. A pink hue hovered in the form of a triangle between the king, the queen and the prince. Together in one spirit-voice they called out, "ABBAA A A A B B A A A " Within that sanctuary a song was born in the heart of the Prince. In words it sounded something like this:

How sweet the taste  
O wounded heart  
United yet beguiled  
The source of living waters flow  
Still, serene and wild  
I cry for such a heritage  
The lot marked out for me  
To dwell within so great a court  
True love must surely be!  
Do what you will  
O heart of hearts  
I long for sweet repose  
When on that day our chambers

joined  
I'll be like Him who rose!

--Paul S

Editor's note: Art is allegory, simile, metaphor or other abstraction, left for us to find meaning. I have included this story in *the Journal* to display the great creativity that can sometimes accompany the struggles of our addiction.

### **Economic Insecurity Will Leave Us...**

My journey into SLAA sobriety began when AA helped me clear the cloud of confusions that alcohol had given me. With just six months of sobriety in AA behind me, my security in a good teaching job disappeared when my new sobriety proved that I had no idea how to live life without alcohol. Sobriety with alcohol did help me notice that my sexual behavior had moved from the bars to AA meetings without change. I had worked through to the 10<sup>th</sup> Step in AA in my own mind, but in reality, I had a broken nose and fuzzy thinking from stumbling on the sixth and seventh steps, and then falling flat on my face. I was not yet able to admit to the character defects of self-dishonesty, self-centeredness, envy, and sense of entitlement, nor to my addictive

use of sexuality. Instead, I was reflecting on the promises from pages 83 and 84 in the AA Big Book: Freedom from financial insecurity? I certainly had acquired a large measure of *that* rotten stuff since I had gotten sober. That wasn't the way they said it would be!

I had refused to go into a rehab program for fear I would lose my job, in spite of a difficult withdrawal from alcohol that left me sleepless and shaky with the craving for numbness the bottle promised me. Instead, I took a drug intended to keep me from drinking impulsively that made me hallucinate, a rare side effect troubling only a small percentage of the people who use it. Hearing voices that urged me to do some really crazy things, I piled everything that was loose in the living room of my mobile home, where I lived with my two young teenage daughters. Towels, books, clothes, dishes, waste baskets, old newspapers; all of this and more made a satisfying pyramid of possessions more than five feet high. It was tangible, visible evidence and proof positive that I was getting my s\_\_\_ together!

My frightened children got help from a neighbor, and soon I was

on my way to a psychiatric hospital in restraints, necessary because I refused to cooperate with the medics and police who responded. Two months later I was home, but facing unemployment at the end of the school year, as a nervous administration decided I was too high risk to deserve a new contract.

I was angry and frightened, looking for my third “marriage cure” for my sex addiction. I was already involved with another alcoholic, also newly sober but who was working steadily, inviting him to move in as he was paroled from a 3 year sentence for passing bad checks. His steady work in a skilled trade prevented complete financial collapse for the next several months when the only work I could find when the school year ended was a part-time job typing. I complained a lot to God that the promise that “financial insecurity would leave us” was simply not happening! I really thought that this was probably a cruel test from a Higher Power I was only beginning to believe in, as I sat in a meeting, envying a good looking man with silk suits, his own airplane, and an adorable family.

Six months after that, but soon after my first sober AA

anniversary, I was offered another school job where the administrator hiring me knew all about my alcohol problem, recent mental breakdown, and new experience with sobriety. At that point I sincerely believed that the ninth step promise of freedom from fear of economic insecurity had come true in my life!

Ten alcohol-free years later, with five years of recovery from compulsive sexual encounters, pornography and masturbation, and controlling the consequences of sex addiction with marriages that lacked emotional honesty and intimacy almost completely, I was thrust back into the world of unemployment and economic insecurity once again. The emotional shock and stigma from having to admit to an ethically forbidden involvement with a client, had taken away both present and future employment with the surrender of my license to practice the profession I had learned and loved since getting sober in SLAA.

Before long I had another job back in a school system for which I did not need that professional license. But the consequences of my serious ethical violation followed me. The victim pursued me with

vengeance. I lost that job and got a temporary job at a non-professional level. Calls from my ex-client soon ended that job. Next I landed a low-level professional job using completely different skills, but that also was lost when the client I had violated talked to my supervisor. I found myself once again faced with living only on a very small unemployment check, and when that ended, working as a maintenance man for a small campground.

By that time I was darn certain that no sober person would want what I had! Although my sobriety from alcohol and sex and love addiction was unbroken, my life was in shambles, the only blessing that both my children were now grown up, independent, and unaffected by my roller-coaster existence.

With my few possessions in storage, and the use of a long-time friend's address to get mail and my unemployment checks, I began my tenth year of SLAA sobriety and fifteenth year of alcohol-free life. The harsh reality of true financial insecurity had arrived and taken over my life!

I spent the next eighteen months as one of the 'privileged' homeless,

living in a rusty old retired utility van, with enough money for food, gas, and necessary medications, vital for keeping my deep depression under control. I drove around the country going to job interviews (no job offers for a middle aged woman with a troubled professional history and too much professional experience to be hired cheaply). Along the way I had the opportunity to visit with my children, who had lived at such a distance that we had not seen each other for several years. I also had short visits with old friends, and mapped a route that took me to several places where I made amends to the last people alive who were still on my SLAA ninth Step list.

Sometimes I spent a few days or a couple of weeks with a friend who needed handyman work done, earning my board and room for a time. The rest of the time I slept in the van with my traveling feline fur-friend Pounce and cooked on a camp stove. Many times I slept at rest stops on the highway, behind hotels and motels or on women's land projects where there was safety, showers, and the support of other women on hard times. Two precious possessions were the meeting directories for both AA and SLAA. My travel

route wandered to be sure that I got to meetings – at least five a week. When feeling relatively ‘wealthy’, I would stop at MacDonald’s, ordering two fish sandwiches, one for Pounce, who would be perched on my shoulder making sure they got the order right.

That period of my life ended when I arrived in Florida to help my parents at a time of serious medical challenges. There I found a job as handyman and manager of a small apartment complex that put a roof over my head and abandoned furniture to scavenge. A second job at a University started me at the bottom rung of professional jobs from which I eventually climbed back into the kind of work I was trained for and loved, but with limited financial rewards.

There were two important discoveries I made in that period of my life. The first one was that it was freedom from the **fear** of financial insecurity that was promised in sobriety, not the **fact** of it. One great gift of that time was that I no longer feared being homeless, with or without a car, or penniless. I knew how to survive and even thrive, as long as I stayed sober and above the ocean of

compulsion that was my sex and love addiction. I stopped envying my brothers, with their nice houses, investments and savings accounts, furniture and sailing boats. I could now see that I had been owned by those things rather than owning them. I could now see the ancient Native American wisdom of regarding “stuff”, not as owned, but loaned by the Great Spirit for a time to enjoy and appreciate, and then to be passed on to others.

The second discovery was that materialism and pursuit of financial security had gotten in the way of what proved to be a wonderful deepening of my spiritual life. On a daily basis I was free of television and other distractions keeping me from conscious contact with God, and my sense of spiritual security during my homeless months grew to levels I had never imagined during my “economically advantaged” life.

The uncertainty of my future was a burden that at times brought tears and regrets about the bad choices that had cost me nearly everything except sobriety. But that would be replaced quickly by gratitude for my brave, rusty van that carried me safely 40,000

miles for just gas, oil, and one \$100 muffler repair, and for the many people I met across the country at 12 Step meetings who were strangers for only a few minutes. I learned from my fur-friend Pounce that home is where your family and friends are, even if that is in a van parked at a rest area, or sitting outside a church where a 12 Step meeting is going on. I now look back on that time of homelessness as a gift, and one of the happiest times of my life.

Fear of economic insecurity? Economic insecurity is an ever-present possibility, even if I feel financially secure today. Fear of it can seriously challenge my ability to live comfortably in this day. Sobriety does not promise me a new car, a nice home in the suburbs, and a full bank account. Sobriety does promise me the spiritual resources and strength I need to survive and even thrive in all circumstances of life. As Abraham Lincoln said, "most of us are about as happy as we make up our minds to be". I lost my job, my new car, my profession, and my home to my own bad choices. But I gained tremendous spiritual gifts, freedom from being possessed by possessions, and unending gratitude for the tools of the Twelve Steps and the gift of

program Fellowship. I got to experience intimately the beauty of this great country, and the goodness of ordinary people everywhere. Paradoxically, my personal failure and economic disaster, lived through sober, led me to a path with amazing blessings.

Who knew!?! One day at a time, my odyssey through homelessness was just as happy and rewarding as the nice cruise through the Caribbean I just enjoyed with my 13 year loving partner, as I celebrated 32 years of unbroken SLAA sobriety. I don't know about you and your Higher Power, but my Higher Power seems to be a practical joker as well as a reliable, loving and forgiving Guide!

--Barbara L.  
Tampa Bay, Florida

### **What is the difference between a DOC and a Q?**

I hardly ever use the term 'qualifier'(Q) but to the best of my understanding it differs from a Drug of Choice (DOC) in that it is an individual who causes us to wake up to our hangover or be blinded by the light of recognition as to how far we had managed to swim from shore, finding

ourselves in deepwaters surrounded by sharks.

My basic understanding of a 'qualifier' is someone who causes us to ask ourselves "What am I doing here?" I am not terribly fond of this expression. I try to avoid using it myself, although I suppose it can be useful for helping new people get a grasp on their addiction. My problem is that using it makes for a bad hand hold on this boulder, an awfully slippery one when we are trying to climb. It is sort of starting off on the wrong foot in my humble opinion.

What makes someone earn the title 'doc'? Is it something inherent in the person with whom we are trying to have a relationship, or in ourselves? One of the problems with a nice label is that it is both handy to use and to abuse. Take DOC for instance. Most of us prefer the two-legged self-propelled variety of DOC in this program, but not all of us. A while back a rather infamous SLA member (let us call him Jeffery) who was not in program to the best of my knowledge. Jeffery was an alcoholic, drug addict, social and sexual anorexic. Unfortunately he wasn't seeking treatment, he was just acting out. His acting out with

his DOC did not require his DOC to do anything, because Jeffery was a necrophiliac. This is a rather extreme example, but the point remains valid, I think.

DOC is a label. It's a tool we addicts use to help us understand and manage our addiction. It is part of my control issues to want to make more of it than this. Part of my addiction is to want to make someone else responsible for whatever happens so I don't have to own my own part. This is called blame. If I am not responsible for my actions, then I may be able to avoid some or all the consequences. Whoops, buzzzzz, error, thanks for playing, the consolation prize today is the SLAA at home game, brought to you by Addiction, America's favorite home and family game manufacturers, where the only way to win is not to play at all! In other words even with the tools I use to work my program there are traps and slippery slopes to avoid.

Many of us grew up in a household where blame was tossed hither, thither, and yon. The one thing I have to be sure of in recovery is to recognize that no one else in the world ever made me feel anything. I own all my own feelings. They are exclusively my own property. I

may very well have felt them in response to something someone else said or did, but I am responsible for all my own responses. People may wish to manipulate me into having a particular set of responses, but they are still, always have been and always will be, my responses. No human on this planet has a control panel on them where you can program in what they will feel in response to any given stimulation. Most of us have trained and conditioned responses to various stimulations. What we have trained and conditioned, we can change. We can re-train ourselves. As long as I allow the idea that someone else can make me feel something I am not, I will not be responsible for what I feel and how I act.

If I am not responsible, then my situation is pretty hopeless. I am at the whim and will of someone else's fancy. I'm a kite or a puppet on a string and there is nothing a twelve-step program can do to help me out of that situation. In my twelve step program I admit I am powerless over my addiction. That it is a dis-ease that I have and own. It is not a third party with some sort of remote control unit acting on my life.

There is a flip side to this, that I do like quite a lot by the way, just in case you were starting to think this was all negative. I do not and cannot make anyone else feel anything either. I am not responsible for anyone else's feelings. Once I get a good handle on that little piece of factual information, I can quit having to feel shame ever again in my life. I can feel guilt but guilt is a great feeling! I can do something about guilt. I've got a twelve-step program to help me deal with my guilt. Shame is something I am totally powerless over until I recognize that it is not my feeling! Shame is a gift someone else is trying to hand me. I can choose not to accept it. If someone offers you a gift and you refuse to accept it to whom does the gift belong? I don't know about you but I really like this little bit of reasoning a whole lot! This looks a whole lot like Good Orderly Direction (GOD) to me. I have plenty of stuff I really am responsible for and I have a whole bunch of guilt to deal with, but I can take action on that and make amends. I don't need any shame added to my guilt like icing on a cake, and I have no intention of accepting any. Who knows it's probably fattening; I know it's bad for my heart.



When we blame our qualifier we are suggesting in our own minds that IF (magic thinking) it wasn't for "THEM" then I would not have to be here suffering and working program. I mean REALLY! Why aren't THEY here suffering and working program instead of me or at the very least working the program with me?

The simple answer to that is my qualifier does not have the problem, I do. My qualifier may not be in enough pain, or suffering bad enough, to open their car door and make the long walk to a SLAA meeting. We may 'think' THEY have a problem. We might even be right about that. So what? Not my issue! Unfortunately, since most of us KNOW how to fix all the world's problems and would be glad to help out IF they would just ask us. They have not asked us.

Today is not that day they will ask us and tomorrow does not look good either. Maybe they are waiting to see if we can work on our problems? Maybe they are waiting to see if we work out our own issues successfully before asking us to 'help' with something else.

When we say, use or think about our qualifier, we are giving away our power to help ourselves

recover. We are avoiding personal responsibility. If we are not responsible we do not have to work on that issue. We gave it away to that Q to work on. Good old reliable Q! As we all know, such a trustworthy chap, individual, fRiend (R is optional) and so capable too!

I am going to suggest that if you give it away to anyone, give it to your higher power. I think it is a really bad idea to give anything important (especially our chances of recovery) to a Q. Know why? A Q does not necessarily care if we recover. That is right folks, Q does not care! Q won't do anything with our issues. Even if a Q says they care, neither can they help us out nor can we fix them. They cannot fix us either. We need to get humble and look down. That way we might be able to see the section of sidewalk in front of OUR house, the section we are responsible for cleaning. So get a rake or a broom, maybe even a mop. Be humble, look down and get to work. Do not waste your time staring down the street for Q to show up with a blower. Who knows if we do the raking sweeping thing by the time Q shows up to save the day we may have a clean sidewalk in front of our house already.

Won't Q be AMAZED!?! No, Q won't be. Remember? Q doesn't care.  
Stay sober just for today.  
--Eric EE

### **Boundaries as Limits**

Boundaries make me think of limits—one of the key tools and most painful realizations of my SLAA program. I need them to be sober, period. Some will change over time, others will not. It turns out, that as an unrecovered sex and love addict, I did not want to admit I had limits and so, of course, boundaries just “weren't for me.” The trouble was that I had internal boundaries — walls built many, many years ago that were operating rigidly everywhere I went, even though I viewed myself as a “carefree, easy going person.” Today boundaries within myself and others are the key component to my sobriety. I do not do things that cause me actual harm emotionally, psychologically, physically or spiritually. That being said, because I strive not to have walls I am willing to stretch myself in new areas and relationships with moderations to keep boundaries. My dating plan taught me boundaries with time, sharing, and physical limits. My

boundaries once kept everyone out, now I'm learning they are what keep me and everyone around me safe. It is clear, however, that as a sex and love addict I cannot identify healthy boundaries without the help of my sponsor, Higher Power, and the program. I ask for guidance from fellowship and am willing to practice boundaries one day at a time. As a result, I feel safer and am more loving to myself and others.

--Loren O.

### **THE POWER OF REACHING OUT**

Throughout my years in S.L.A.A., I have learned many valuable lessons from many people, but none as powerful as the lesson that I learned during the past week.

I am usually one who keeps his personal life and my recovery life separate as much as possible. The reason for this is that one can interfere with the other. Yes, there are times when they do blend, but as a general rule I don't share family issues with others. However, during the past week I was facing a serious, unexpected illness and finally a death within

my family and it was a very stressful experience. I know that stress is one of the triggers which can cause me to lose my recovery and sobriety. When stressed I can easily convince myself that it would be alright to indulge in some bottom-line addictive behavior, even just once, to try to dull the pain and sorrow which I was feeling.

I thought to myself, "What can I do? I need to do something." Initially, I made a couple of phone calls and sent out mass emails locally to friends within the Program. Then, I began to fear that no one would respond to my cries for help, so I sent out emails to the Conference Committees on which I serve. I knew that I had a strong support network available at the click of a mouse. I requested prayers from my brothers and sisters in S.L.A.A. The next morning I was overwhelmed with the number who had already responded to my cry for help. And, the emails have continued. Since giving a final update on the situation there have been even more people reach out to me offering their sympathy, care and love.

But, isn't this a part of what S.L.A.A. Recovery is all about?

Sure, I was not acting out, but still I was in a vulnerable state. I am a strong believer in the power of prayer because of the positive energy which it can bring to even the worst of situations. Although the prayers did not change the final outcome of the illness due to the severity of its nature, the prayers kept one sex and love addict sober during that week and in the few days following. I surrendered my will to the trust of my Higher Power and with the prayers and encouragement which I received from others, I am still sober.

Although I have had to put my service work on hold for a few days, I had important work to do in being there and supporting other members of my family. While I know that I still have some stressful days and weeks ahead, I know that I can always reach out to a friend in recovery for support in making it through those days.

I am forever grateful that I made that decision to reach out for the supportive fellowship of others in S.L.A.A. in order to help me through these difficult days. I have said all of this to remind everyone that if we reach out for the supportive fellowship of others in S.L.A.A. we will be able to continue

in our recovery. Please, reach out to others; don't give it a second thought. We all care for one another.

—Garry K

### **Nice and Easy**

I took my youngest son to our neighborhood swimming pool today and I watched father with his 5 year old daughter. He was teaching her how to swim. I listened as he repeatedly told her "Nice and Easy", as she kicked through the water. I began to wonder, if my Father would have been around to teach me to swim when I was a little girl, would he have used the same expression "Nice and Easy"?

I have 6 months sobriety from my bottom-line behaviors and I am just now beginning to realize that ALL of my dysfunctional relationship issues have resolved around the fact that my father was absent from my life and there was not any father-daughter bond between my step-father and me. In fact, the trauma at an early age from two teen-agers in my life and the neglect of my Mother has left me with the belief that men could not be trusted and that I would have to fend for myself. I am now retracing my childhood and beginning to feel the emotions that

I should have felt in those early years. I'm letting my inner-child feel sadness, hurt, loneliness, anger, and grief for the events that took place. A fellow SLAA member shared with us that we should analyze and examine our fantasies through our inner-child. I am beginning to do that and learning that if I am stressed about a life event my inner-child will fantasize about someone coming to rescue me. This goes back to my father. I wanted him to rescue me when I was a little girl, but he did not and I felt abandoned. Today, I am letting myself forgive my parents and I am also learning to forgive myself for all those years of acting out. I love me and I could be with just me alone and be happy.

In my recovery, I would say that I'm taking it "Nice and Easy".

—Sandra W

Tampa, Florida