



theJournal

Issue #128

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Emerging from the Isolation  
of Addiction

# Characteristics of Sex and Love Addiction

1. Having few healthy boundaries, we become sexually involved with and/or emotionally attached to people without knowing them.
2. Fearing abandonment and loneliness, we stay in and return to painful, destructive relationships, concealing our dependency needs from ourselves and others, growing more isolated and alienated from friends and loved ones, ourselves, and God.
3. Fearing emotional and/or sexual deprivation, we compulsively pursue and involve ourselves in one relationship after another, sometimes having more than one sexual or emotional liaison at a time.
4. We confuse love with neediness, physical and sexual attraction, pity and/or the need to rescue or be rescued.
5. We feel empty and incomplete when we are alone. Even though we fear intimacy and commitment, we continually search for relationships and sexual contacts.
6. We sexualize stress, guilt, loneliness, anger, shame, fear and envy. We use sex or emotional dependence as substitutes for nurturing care, and support.
7. We use sex and emotional involvement to manipulate and control others.
8. We become immobilized or seriously distracted by romantic or sexual obsessions or fantasies.
9. We avoid responsibility for ourselves by attaching ourselves to people who are emotionally unavailable.
10. We stay enslaved to emotional dependency, romantic intrigue, or compulsive sexual activities.
11. To avoid feeling vulnerable, we may retreat from all intimate involvement, mistaking sexual and emotional anorexia for recovery.
12. We assign magical qualities to others. We idealize and pursue them, then blame them for not fulfilling our fantasies and expectations.

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## Letter from the Editor

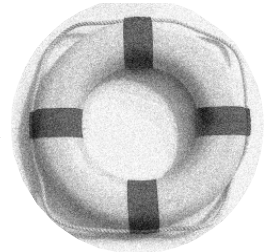
Dear Reader:

This issue is dedicated to the topic of “Recovery from Isolation.” Many of us in S.L.A.A. may be socially active and not know that we are in fact emotionally isolating. Or we may be the depressive type who hides in their home and trusts no one.



Whatever type of isolation we experience, S.L.A.A. offers a way out. Meetings, contact with a Higher Power, Fellowship and Outreach calls are resources the program can offer to anyone who is willing to reach out.

The symbol on the S.L.A.A. medallions is a life preserver that lifeguards and those on boats use to save people from drowning.



S.L.A.A. groups have saved countless people from drowning in their addiction and isolation is the water that accelerates that drowning. Hopefully some of the stories in this issue of the *Journal* will help fellow addicts reach out for that life preserver before the water gets too high.

Lisa C.  
Managing Editor, *the Journal*

# 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. is not affiliated with any other organization, 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 which renders any personal differences of sexual or gender orientation irrelevant.

We need protect with special care the anonymity of every S.L.A.A. member. Additionally we try to avoid drawing undue attention to S.L.A.A. as a whole from the public media.

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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.

## Question of the Day & Answers from Yesterday

The Question of the Day from the last issue was, “How is isolation part of your sex and love addiction, and how do you find recovery?” Here are some wonderful responses for

your enjoyment. They are not presented in any particular order.

### HOW IS ISOLATION PART OF YOUR SEX AND LOVE ADDICTION, AND HOW DO YOU FIND RECOVERY?

I find that when I am wanting to isolate, my addiction tends to be in full bloom. I will not answer calls or make calls. By doing this I tend to spiral into the depths of both my depression and my desire to act out. My recovery from isolation comes when I recognize my character defect and do “opposite action” to move away from my isolation.

— BOB G., WORCHESTER, MA

Isolation has been a core issue of my problem all throughout my life – maybe even preceding my demonstrative addiction behaviors and/or leading to them. Acting out was actually isolation instead of connection. Same with fantasy. Living that way so very long, breaking this isolation remains key to my recovery. My healthy “connections” in the fellowship have grown – slowly at times – to become so much easier and more comfortable today through repeated trials being reinforced by the warmth of positive outcomes.

— TIM F., PHILADELPHIA, PA

When I am left alone to my own thoughts, when I don’t have frequent contact and feedback from others, and when I am not an active part of the world, I leave myself open to old patterns of thinking and acting.

In recovery, I have found ways to be alone in times of meditation, prayer, self care, responsibility to my home and surroundings, but I do not isolate. I am present in my life today and in my recovery!

— DEB W., CLEVELAND, OH



Isolation is a major facet of my disease. When I isolate, a lot of unhealthy consequences result. I get lost in my own head too much. I lose practical perspective of what's happening in the world, I ruminate, I obsess and I get into self-pity. For recovery, I get in touch with my Higher Power, I think of things I can do for self-care and to be of service to others. I may do step work to get myself re-centered, and I make a conscious effort to reach out to others.

— NATALIE K., CHICAGO

I isolate myself because I believe that I'm not lovable. After one year of meetings I feel that I'm lovable and I do not isolate myself too much. Thanks to the Fellowship.

— ANONYMOUS, MONTREAL

I have to work each day to step out of my isolation, and recovery tools are the methods I use to accomplish this. I do not isolate one day at a time.

-- KEN F., CINCINNATI OH

I isolate whenever I obsess (and vice versa.) I use connecting with my HP and prayer to stop that vicious cycle.

— MARTIN F.,  
MANNHEIM, GERMANY

For me, isolation is a sign that I am not trusting my Higher Power and myself. I use isolation as a way to deny that I am feeling uncomfortable, and many times I will withdraw with television, food and obsessive work patterns to avoid healing these old traumas. When I have recovery, I show my faith and trust through expressing my discomfort with others, and I feel relief in sharing.

— ROB P., SAN FRANCISCO, CA

My isolation leads me to want to stay home, read a book or watch TV and not make contact with friends. One thing I had to practice early in recovery was talking with someone at a meeting and asking for a phone number before leaving the meeting. It was hard to put myself out there but it got easier and helped my recovery because I learned to pick up the phone instead of isolating or acting out.

— KIM B., BOSTON, MA

I unconsciously use my food allergies to separate me from the group — pouting — when my needs aren't met, feeling lonely and unimportant as an excuse to separate from the group. I sometimes bring supplements of foods that meet my needs to allow me to be “part of.”

— TERRI B., OKLAHOMA CITY, OK

Isolation is the tool that my egoism and ego use to act out, and have no intimacy. Isolation allowed me to approach quickly new “objects of desire,” and “accidental people” leaving me ready for new adventure. Today I see that this is like a barometer of my recovery: if I'm too alone and isolated, I break my HALT because I'm closest to danger!

— LU, WARSAW, POLAND

Isolation is a place where I can go to avoid being my genuine self. I find recovery by praying, calling another member of S.L.A.A. to share myself and get out of self, read recovery literature, go to a meeting, or meditate.

— CELIA, ORANGE COUNTY, CA

I have found that isolation is part of my addictive nature. And as an addict, there are times that I will retreat into isolation. Also as an anorectic, it is part of my core issues that I isolate out of the false belief that it will protect me from being hurt. I find recovery by practicing top line behavior... When I'm out with others I remain engaged. If given a choice, I choose to sit with others and reach out for help and share with another where I'm at.

— RICK B., TAMPA FL

Isolation (being anti-social) is a big part of my addiction. When I start to isolate, it is a warning sign that I am not taking care of myself which is a new top line behavior for me. My isolation is a part of my not addressing my feelings or admitting my feelings and starts my slide down the slippery slope. I find recovery by calling program people and being honest about how I am feeling.

— STEPHEN F., CT

I am terrified of intimacy and so I isolate. I am the class clown. I have many friends and I am an extrovert but I am terrified I am not good enough for you, for the world, and for myself. My shame keeps the real me hidden. I pretend and masquerade a self I think you want to see, that my parents told me was the right way to be, that is acceptable to society. But deep down I am ashamed of me, so I avoid real intimacy and letting the real me shine. I play second best. I defer to others and then I resent you.

I find recovery by accepting me and being me the way God has made me and with all God has given me. I learn to listen. I learn to accept myself as is, and others as they are. I learn not to run, to stay and participate, imperfect, broken and loved by God. I learn to be humble.

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— ANN C., LOS ANGELES, CA

My isolation keeps me from doing my top line behaviors, either on my own or in a group setting. It keeps me from doing many of my self-care behaviors. It usually brings on feelings of self-pity and hopelessness. I find recovery by asking my Higher Power for the willingness to take action and practice my gratitude, by taking some type of action to get out of isolation.

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— GINO P., CLEARWATER, FL

I seek to hide and be alone when events and people in my life put me into a dark/fearful place. Once in isolation from fellows in recovery, from meetings, and from my sponsor, that isolation drives and feeds itself, eating up day after day. Recovery is simple; I have to do what I don't want to do – go to meetings, make program calls, call and meet with my sponsor.

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— ISAAC H., PASADENA, CA

Isolation is a way for me to keep safe. As an anorectic, when I get overwhelmed by people/ places, I find a way to isolate by not going out, hiding out at home or even hiding out in the program. Recovery, for me, is accepting invitations to events, going to friends' celebrations, and having fellowship in the program.

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— IAN Y., LOS ANGELES CA

I equate the need for isolation with never feeling good enough / perfectionism, not being confident/ready enough, not being serene enough, not being thin enough, etc. Once I reconciled with the fact that no one is perfect, then I didn't need to isolate anymore.

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— KRISTEN, CULVER CITY, CA

# Take it Easy

Since I've been in S.L.A.A. I've been able to reach out to so many kind, sensitive, and caring people who are in the S.L.A.A. program. When I talk to my higher power through prayer and listen from meditation I am able to draw in to the true values of relationships since hearing the faithful feedback from fellowship in S.L.A.A..

Although I believe this is a life long journey for growth, I am more in control of my behavior around others. I am becoming a better listener and communicator with my family and friends. Before, I was very needy and high maintenance. I've always been very moody and flaky around others but through S.L.A.A. I can make choices to keep what's best for me around. I have been able to be stronger and to keep what's wrong for me out of my life.



I have a list of things that I have already grown to monitor. These include pornographic content and violence in movies, music or anything that draws me to the triggers of my sex and love addiction. I am grateful that I've been able to filter negative people out of my life. Relationships have become more manageable in my life as well as my own stinkin' thinkin' self sometimes.

I thank God for S.L.A.A. because it has brought me a more stable and balanced focus in my love and sex life making me a healthier individual who isn't so intimidated or scared off by others as much as I used to be

— KREYNA

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## **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 go to <http://www.slaafws.org/contact/jeditor> to submit. Event notices must be received at least one month prior to the issue date.

## Isolated From God, Myself and Others



**W**hen I walked into anonymous programs fourteen years ago, I was isolated from God, myself and others.

I was isolated from God because I spent most of my life either believing He didn't exist or thinking He must hate me if He did exist. I suffered a lot of verbal, physical and sexual abuse as a teenager from a nine year relationship with a psychopath who ended up murdering my best

friend. I thought if God did exist he abandoned me a long time ago.

Through the tools of S.L.A.A. (steps, meetings, praying to a God I didn't understand and meditation even when restless) I started to see that God did exist and He hadn't abandoned me — I had abandoned Him in favor of my boyfriend. I made my boyfriend my higher power for nine years. Most of the time it was because of fear (because he stalked me and threatened my

life). But a lot of it was staying in a bad situation because I was addicted to him.

S.L.A.A. helped me break my isolation from God and taught me to maintain conscience contact with Him daily. My sponsor had me write out what I thought God was. At that time he was an evil man who sat up in the sky on his throne and played tricks on me. He was constantly ruining everything in my life and laughing at me. He was judging me and I was always coming up short. My sponsor had me tear up the sheet of paper that contained that writing, symbolically throwing that God out. Then I had to write what I wanted God to be no matter how outrageous my demands.

I wanted my own personal Santa Claus who gave me everything I wanted and loved me unconditionally. My sponsor told me my Higher Power would love me unconditionally but that I would eventually get a more realistic God than Santa Claus. When I had a lightening bolt spiritual experience two years later I saw what she meant. I was insane, on my hands and knees crying and screaming and hyperventilating about a relationship with a married man. I called a fellow S.L.A.A. member and she said "Prayers are powerful. What

do you want me to pray for?"

I said, "Pray for my obsession with (my qualifier) to be lifted." She said the prayer with me over the phone. I felt a calm and sanity come over me. That was my S.L.A.A. sobriety date. I was a completely different person from that day until now, nine years later.

Today, I am convinced that God does exist and works in my life as long as I seek Him and ask for His plan. He has given me the gift of sobriety and a life beyond my wildest dreams because I am free from the insanity of my addict mind.

I saw a movie once about a woman who ended up standing in the dark all alone because she refused to accept God because she suffered tragedy and her life didn't go the way she wanted it to. I don't ever want to go back to that place and feel that level of isolation from God again.

I was isolated from myself because I didn't even know myself. I was so busy trying to be the perfect daughter, girlfriend and worker that I didn't know what I liked.

I fit my personality to the situation. If I was going to a party, I dressed up in tight clothing and played the party girl even if I was uncomfortable or cold or tired.

I didn't even have a hobby because I was too busy running around trying to make my boyfriend's life easier.

I got good grades to impress my parents but hid that from my stoner friends. I was in honor society and cheerleading and gymnastics but was also a chain-smoker who could drink anyone under the table. I was in so many groups that I never knew which one I truly belonged to.

When I joined S.L.A.A. I had to start being honest about who I was and what I thought. A lot of this was revealed in my fourth and fifth steps. My sponsor made me get a hobby.

I chose bead work. Today I make beautiful beaded necklaces.

She also forced me to take myself out on dates. I had to start thinking about what I liked to do. In the past I always went along with what my boyfriend wanted to do, even if I was bored to tears. I took myself out to movies and restaurants and art galleries.

This came in handy when in my fourth year of S.L.A.A. meetings, I started dating a guy from London. I went to visit him and he was too busy with work to spend time with me. I took myself to all the plays and musicals I could find. I had a blast instead

of sitting in his apartment stewing over his disinterest.

My sponsor also forced me to become self-supporting through my own contributions. I couldn't rely on my parents for money anymore which was a huge step for me. My self-esteem grew by leaps and bounds when I could honestly say I supported myself. And I didn't have to rely on anyone else to come and rescue me.

Rescuing usually brings control along with it.

Another big part of isolation from myself had to do with honesty. I wasn't honest with myself or anyone else. I ran around telling so many lies so that I wouldn't hurt people's feelings or get hurt myself that I no longer knew what the truth was anymore. Knowing that you're lying to people and doing it anyway because you're desperate is not self-esteem building. And keeping a bunch of stories straight doesn't leave time or room to work on getting to know yourself. I was spending so much time remembering stories that I couldn't look inside myself and really get to know myself.

Being honest in meetings and with my sponsor cleared out all the junk in my head so I could focus on character defects and actually work on myself. I had so much more energy when I wasn't

running myself into the ground with lies.

Breaking out of my isolation from myself helped me with my isolation from others.

Once I was able to trust myself and my sobriety it was easier to trust others. In my first few years in S.L.A.A. I felt like I was in a high school class. We all went to the same meetings and out for fellowship to great restaurants. We had game nights and birthday parties and anti-Valentine's Day parties. I went to potlucks and picnics and even dances. Before S.L.A.A. these events were only opportunities to find someone to hook up with. I didn't care about being real or being there for anyone, it was all about the chase.

When it's a competition it's every man (or woman) for himself. But in S.L.A.A. it was like I was a kid again, dancing with abandon and not caring if anyone thought I was a dork because I wasn't going to be able to hook up with anyone anyway. Those were the unspoken rules for those parties. I remember one party I wore a sign around my neck that I had seen Sandra Bullock wear in the movie "28 days." It said "Confront me if I don't ask for help." My sponsee and I laughed all night about that. We

had so much fun knowing that we didn't have to impress anyone and we could ask anyone in the room for help if we needed it.

When it came to significant others, it took a lot of outside help to tackle that behemoth. But, like Ali McBeal said, "Maybe I'll share my life with somebody...maybe not. But the truth is, when I think back of my loneliest moments, there was usually somebody sitting there next to me." Being seen but not heard is very lonely.

None of the guys I was with before my recovery in S.L.A.A. ever heard me. I was never honest with them or myself so they couldn't hear the real me anyway. S.L.A.A. helped me find the real me. And God and S.L.A.A. helped me find the man who became my husband and partner.

My sponsor gave me a dating plan that helped me show my partner the real me and gave us enough time to really get to know each other. I wasn't able to isolate myself because I had to be in constant contact with my Higher Power, sponsor and meetings. I had to do this because a healthy fear of my disease made me feel like everything would be too overwhelming otherwise. I felt like dating would break me without all the



help I got from God and other S.L.A.A. members.

The difficulty with being honest and showing another human being who you really are is that they can see who you are and say “You know I really don’t like that so I’m going to go now.”

I suffered from post-traumatic stress that gave me panic attacks in my first year of sobriety. I dealt with my panic attacks with therapy, outreach calls and prayers. By the time I started dating in sobriety my panic attacks were much more manageable and with less frequency. They used to come in the form of blinding swirling lights. If I was on the freeway and a panic attack hit me I had to stop the car because I couldn’t see — It’s a good thing they only happened when I was sitting in bumper-to-bumper traffic.

With a lot of work on myself and doing the 12 steps five times, the severe panic attacks stopped. Every once in a while I would have what I began to call an episode. I wouldn’t have attacks anymore but I would get confused and not know where I was or what year it was. When I first began to date my now-husband, he didn’t know how to handle these episodes.

My character defects of jeal-

ousy and drama queen and immaturity were also pretty hard to handle. After six months of dating, my then-boyfriend decided he didn’t want to deal with it anymore. So he broke up with me.

This was confusing to me because even though I did the dating plan and followed my sponsor’s direction and felt I did everything right the S.L.A.A. way, he was still a human being with his own thoughts and feelings who could choose to walk away, which he did.

My anorexic addict voice said, “see you shouldn’t trust people because even if you do everything right they’ll abandon you in the end anyway.”

I told him that if he wanted to get back together to give me a call otherwise to please not contact me. I knew my addict would start trying to manipulate him to come back to me if I stayed in contact with him and tried to be “friends.” I would have gone back to my dishonest codependent ways to try to change his mind. That was too much of a temptation for me.

He went away and I went to the desert to visit my family and grieve. I read the “Grief in Recovery Handbook.” I was amazed that I didn’t even feel like acting

out or retaliating or replacing the loss. I relied on God, meetings, my family and the fellowship of S.L.A.A. to get me through that tough time that used to break me (before sobriety in S.L.A.A. I always gained 40 pounds and became suicidal after a breakup and acted out with anyone who would have me).

And two months later —after he did some soul searching — he came back to me.

I needed that time away to realize that relationships are more about trusting God and myself than about trusting others. And its about communication and living in reality. Once I stopped choosing dangerous men, my partners turned out to be trustworthy human beings.

I found a really good guy in sobriety (God chose him) who is willing to do the work with me. That was part of the reason he came back. He realized he had a partner who was also willing to

do the work.

He joined S.L.A.A. a year after we started dating and he's the chair of our local intergroup and sponsors more people than I do.

I always say that God found the perfect partner for me. He's not perfect, but he's perfect for me. I'm not that scared little girl anymore hiding in her apartment with the curtains drawn doing puzzles and smoking cigarettes all day. And sleeping on the floor at night with all the lights on because she's afraid someone will break in.

I actually like going to parties and meetings and meeting with sponsees. I like going to the beach and the park and hiking and being out in the world. People know the real me and some even like me.

I wouldn't trade what I've got today for anything and that's a good place to be. I am grateful to S.L.A.A. and God for my life.

— LISA C.

*Emerging  
from*

**ISOLATION**



## Grateful

As an S.L.A.A. member, I am so grateful to have a community of people to relate to and hear hope from all over the country. I recently got out of a treatment center where I was surrounded by supportive people twenty-four seven. I was very anxious about leaving and being “on my own” again because of the ability to find someone to talk to at almost any time there, unlike before I went into treatment. After finding the S.L.A.A. phone and online meetings, however, transportation no longer becomes an issue and I have phone numbers of people in so many



different time zones that I can call anytime. I am so grateful to have recovery-oriented people to call during my times of struggle and to share joys and milestones with as well. Thank you to all who have been a part of the creation and maintenance of S.L.A.A.!

— CHRISTINE M

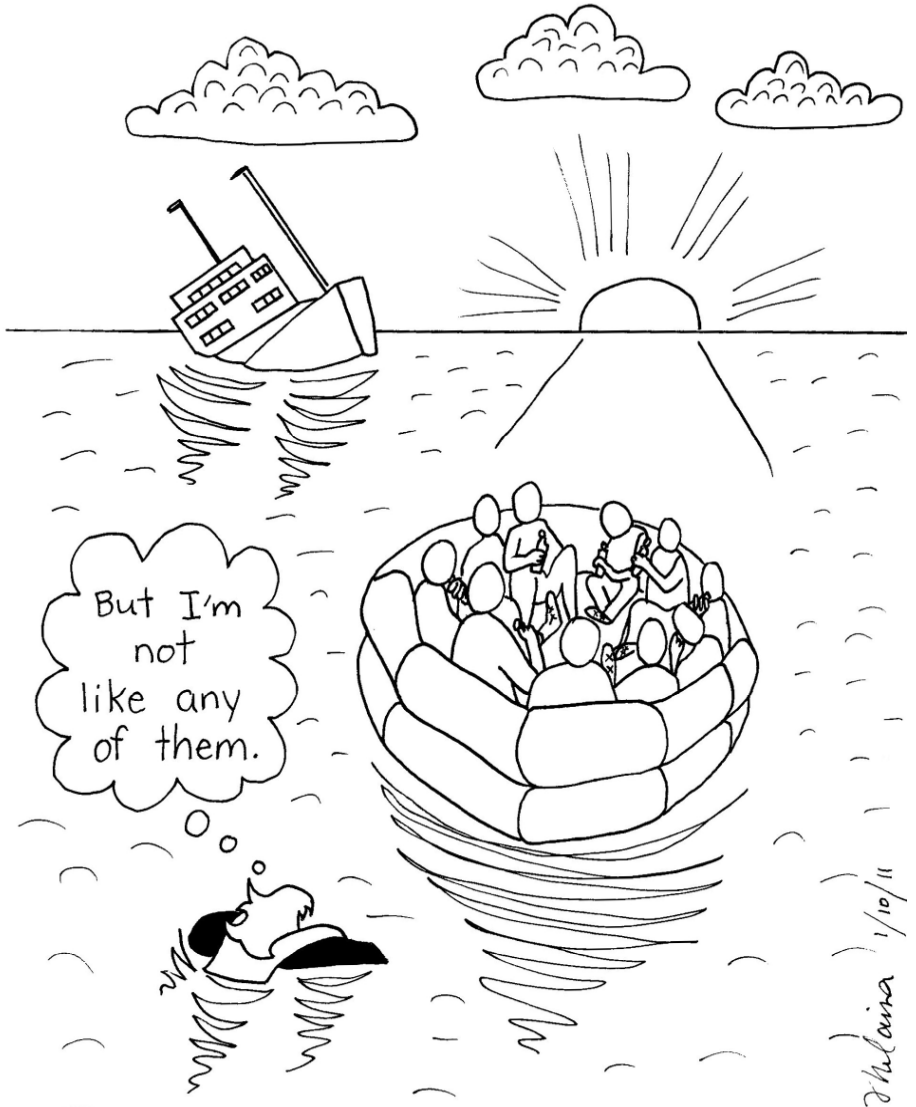
### An Invitation For You

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. Here’s what we can do:

- We can 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.

**Contact info:** <http://www.slaafws.org/contact/jeditor>

# Terminal Uniqueness



But I'm not like any of them.

Just get in the damn boat.

Juliana 1/10/11

# Share space

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## When My Sponsor Fired Me

I met my S.L.A.A. sponsor 32 years and 3 weeks ago. I was getting coffee during a break from an A.A. meeting where I admitted to abstaining from alcohol, binge eating and guns (a day at a time). I also admitted to being suicidal over a failed relationship, when I didn't even like the ex that much. It sounded insane and felt insane.

At that meeting, my first awareness of anything besides my own misery was an attractive younger man suggesting we go for coffee after the meeting so he could tell me some of his story. He claimed he understood what I was feeling. Of course I believed he was coming on to me, and agreed to the plan. What sex and love addict in withdrawal turns down a hit? The basics are in my story – Release Into Hope (I hate when someone edits my titles!)

The story my sponsor-to-be, Rich, told me opened the door to the truth of my addiction and the

hopelessness of my condition, nearly five years of A.A. sobriety or not. The second time we met, less than a week later, I was struggling against that truth with rage at God and the possibility that I had a whole new addiction. Rich told me the second truth; If there was no Power Greater than Ourselves, it would be impossible.

A few days later I surrendered – not gracefully – still full of rage at God, but my recovery from sex and love addiction had begun. I jogged up and down a muddy road, trying to find the grace of rest, trying to sleep without masturbating for the first time in many years.

The next few years were challenging, amazing, painful, rewarding. Rich shared his experience with me generously, and brought me into contact with the handful of others forming this new fellowship. One night during a visit to Rich and his wife, I was exhilarated but unaccounta-

bly depressed. Rich and I went to the first meeting of the first Board of Trustees for the Augustine Fellowship, Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous. There were six of us qualified by more than a year of continuous sobriety and willingness to put our full names on the incorporation papers. On the way there, I felt a powerful premonition that I would not be present to see the flowering of the plant whose seed we were sowing that night, and I recited the verses of a wistful song about a tree shattered by a storm, but scattering thousands of seeds. My premonition proved to be true.

My journey in recovery took me into a new career, new levels of spiritual development, and to find the gift of commitment to recovery that can be found in living out a day at a time, with genuine dedication to service that benefits others instead of myself.

For the next seven years I lived out that journey mostly joyfully, with the companionship and Rich's inspiration, who was even tougher on himself than he was on me in the standards of sobriety and 12 Tradition, principled living. The strength of his sense of self was enormous, his own journey in recovery from sex and love addiction two years

and many miles more mature than mine. I got the benefit of seeing the strength of Rich's humility and integrity, and his belief in the destiny of this new Fellowship so strong it could not be touched.

I did not believe my sponsor Rich was perfect, and I certainly was not. But I valued beyond measure the generosity with which he shared his experience working the Steps in S.L.A.A. when he had already done so in A.A. He shared openly the growing pains of living his way to partnership with his wife, who had lived through his addiction and its consequences to them both. He shared his insights into self acceptance and self forgiveness that came with spiritual depth, after a strong dose of being rigorously honest with God, himself, and others about his failings, shortcomings, and character defects. This fine man and his wife accepted me into their home, which I could not afford otherwise. I slept in a sleeping bag under Rich's piano, one beautiful remainder of his career as a performer, largely sacrificed for the sake of sobriety.

Rich and I worked together with others in the slowly growing fellowship to write down the experience we had with recovery

from sex and love addiction.

That work immeasurably strengthened my own sobriety, preserving it through the several years of relationship wars I went through until I truly hit the emotional bottom I needed to understand the pattern of my love addiction, once hidden under my more dangerous sex addiction. Unfortunately I began that vital step in my own recovery fully 3 years too late, after I had answered a call from Rich while I was basking in the high of a new relationship. This was only the second telephone call he ever made to me, apparently in response to some kind of psychic inspiration that I was abandoning sobriety.

I can't remember ever being angry with Rich until then — the day he fired me. I was honest with Rich; I always was. I honestly and joyfully told him about my new love, a woman who had been my therapy client, and my amazement that it felt so wonderfully sober. My anger and outrage began as Rich declared me to be totally mind altered, in a relationship that had no hope of ever being sober. He demanded that I end the relationship, turn myself in to my employers and clinical supervisor, and resign from the S.L.A.A.

Board of Trustees. I argued. And lost. I argued for my right to “define my own sobriety.” He fired me.

It took three more years for me to understand that all of my long term romantic relationships had been fatally flawed by my choice of partners for whom I could play white knight, above all criticism and fault, who owed me gratitude and loyalty because I allowed them to be with me and gave to them so generously.

There was no need for me to offer genuine intimacy in those relationships, but I felt entitled to have my own, unexpressed needs met, wallowing in self-pity and resentment when they did not do so to my satisfaction. I discovered that the shiny armor of that White Knight had hidden the ragged reality of my pitifully low self-worth and deep self-hatred. The relationship my chosen partners were in, was far, far different from the one I was in, with its secret contract specifying my lover's obligations to me, and nothing of my obligations to him or her.

Ten years into sobriety in S.L.A.A., but humbled to the core by my new awareness of the enormous chasm that had existed in my original bottom lines, I approached Rich hoping to re-

gain our former relationship. It was not to be. I had broken trust with Rich, with God and my own sobriety, and with the fellowship. There was no repairing the bond Rich and I had shared. I had abandoned my sponsor and friend in sobriety when the work of bringing the finished manuscript of the Basic Text to print was barely begun. I really did not grasp, even then, the degree of harm my betrayal of emotional and spiritual sobriety had inflicted on Rich. Rich found others to bring our Basic Text into print, completely owned by our young Fellowship.

Rich did agree to hear my Fifth Step, and gave me the understanding I needed for that rite of passage into renewed recovery. My original bottom line was unbroken, but my recovery needed to start again from awareness of my utter powerlessness over the cunning, baffling addiction that had kept me anorexic from commitment to true honesty and intimacy with myself and others. It was a whole new recovery for me, as the jigsaw pieces of my former, shattered recovery that were authentic slipped one by one into place in the new way of life I was learning to live.

On March 26th, 2010, I cele-

brated 32 years of sobriety on my original S.L.A.A. bottom line, and on February 2, 22 years on my current bottom line. One day at a time, I practice rigorous honesty, tenth-stepping about my underlying motives in all my relationships by keeping current with the only sponsor I now have – my friends in the Fellowship in my regular meetings, and a couple of those I have sponsored in the past, who have mostly outgrown me. I have found that people who have allowed me to sponsor them are remarkably good at catching me in faulty thinking and slippery spirituality, and are unfailingly tolerant but honest in their disbelief of my excuses for small rebellions against my bottom line.

I understand today that there are some wrongs that can never be made right or amended.

I accept that now with great sadness, because my own wrongs cost me the sponsor who literally saved my life. For seven years he shared with complete generosity of spirit the model of his own deep honesty and loving guidance, and the wonderful richness of the gift his friendship was for me. I owe Rich for those seven years and the integrity that made him fire me, as well as the quality of the sober life I live today,



which is full of joy and new challenges.

What are the most important lessons I have learned? I believe that a sponsor should be honest, direct, and tough. A sponsee who tries to hide, rationalize, or justify behavior that is obviously not sober, should be “fired,” with love and clarity. I have learned that my disease is so mind-altering that I will give up almost anything for it. I have learned that long sobriety does not guarantee today’s sobriety. I have learned that many others, with many fewer sober days than I

have, can catch me in creeping self-dishonesty, and can show me how to live sober today. I have learned to listen.

I have learned that yesterday’s sobriety is never good enough for today. The temptations of addiction are always looking for new ways to sneak into some hole in my soul. The spiritual journey still stretches to the horizon in front of me. I will never forget the gift of life I still owe today to my sponsor, Rich. I only hope that, like him, I can show my gratitude by passing it on.

— ANONYMOUS

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## **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.

We’re looking for people with writing, drawing, 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.

Please go to <http://www.slaa.fws.org/contact/jeditor> to submit your writing.

UNITY IN SERVICE



## A Tale of Addiction

I am a fifty-year-old woman. I feel like I have had three lives rolled into one. I've had nine pregnancies resulting in two children, now grown; four miscarriages; one ectopic and two terminations with four different men. I had a hysterectomy to put a stop to the pain of unwanted pregnancy.

I've had three long term committed relationships but countless lovers; my kids and I all have different surnames and religions — not that any of us are religious — although now my spirituality is my life's blood. I've been married twice, once to an Italian, currently to an Asian guy — I always wanted to see the world so I did it man by man. I've been beaten, betrayed and had my heart broken.

I've been mistress, wronged wife and militant feminist, career woman and mousy housewife. I have survived. Just.

Before I found recovery I didn't know what was wrong with me — now I know — I am a sex and love addict.

I believe that my love addiction started in childhood. I was the eldest child of three and we all lived in a cute little mill house



in the heart of the country with ponies, and ballet classes and absolutely no boundaries whatsoever.

My mother indulged herself at my expense — in other words she spoiled me — to the extent that as soon as I wanted something I got it. Marrying my father was a step up for my mother, needless to say it was not a match made in heaven for either of them. Father drank and mother ate. Both indulged freely in extra-marital affairs, but I cared not. My immediate needs were met and so began the pattern of denial that became second nature to me. Happy chaos punctuated by terrible rows between my parents is how I remember my early childhood years.

If my childhood seemed like a fairy story, then my adolescence was something of a horror story. My father died when I was 14. My mother, by now a rich beautiful young widow, became the hapless victim of a man on the make.

The only problem was his wife and kids. So he did the only thing he felt he could in the circumstances — he murdered them — and promptly moved in with my mother and us. The police tried to convict ‘A’, but there was no evidence so he got away with his crimes — for 30+ years.... In the meantime I felt orphaned. I grieved for my lost family.

My grief (which stayed with me for years and years into adulthood) was as much, if not more, about losing my mother’s love and affection as it was about being brought up by a mass murderer — it just doesn’t sound as dramatic.

It was certainly too much to cope with for a naive and spoiled 14-year-old and inevitably I went off the rails big time. I dropped out of school, left home at 16 and fell into a pattern of drug taking, one night stands and general underachievement. I got my act together over the years, with limited success which was always

sabotaged by my unhealed inner child.

Fast forward 30+ years. New evidence meant a murder trial. Justice finally caught up with A; he is now serving multiple life sentences for the murder of his own family. The trial was a turning point for me too. I reassessed my life.

I had known for a long time that I seemed to be unable to handle relationships like other people. No matter how hard I tried, I just couldn’t do them. I was baffled by my inability to manage my love life like other people and just assumed that I was too weak/soft/damaged to make my marriages last. When problems came, as they always did, I had absolutely no resources to deal with them. My best plan was to run away usually into the arms of the next available man. I had no understanding of boundaries or communication. I reacted to everything like the damaged 14-year-old girl that I still was inside.

That became my pattern - long term relationships, shored up with extramarital affairs or intrigues, always justified by my unhappy home life — until I met someone I liked more. That’s how I dragged my two children through life, from one unstable

long term relationship to another through two very acrimonious and expensive divorces. I always had my eye on a better opportunity around the corner, always looking for the perfect love, the one, true soul mate who would make me complete and when I found what I thought I wanted, nothing would stop me in my quest to get them. Even when I tried to stop, when I tried to be 'good' it was no use. I was powerless to stop myself and inevitably the addiction would take me on another journey down the dark road to who knows where?

I'd been in recovery from drugs and alcohol for about two years and was doing pretty well. In fact I was doing so well, I thought I could help another suffering alcoholic by giving him lifts to meetings and generally helping him get sober. He was the town drunk, he was skeletal, had several teeth missing, a wet brain (and pants) and a body odor problem that necessitated driving to meetings through the freezing British winter with all the car windows down.

All that spring and summer, me and my little drunken friend (by now sober for about three months) had fun, going to meetings, walking my dogs on the beach and generally having innocent fun. There had been one moment when he tried to

take things further, but I had not found it too difficult to resist, I knew the guy was in early recovery and that it wasn't appropriate. I did fantasize about him sexually though. We were both frustrated. My husband's slow-to-burn jealousy was quickly quashed when I introduced my new friend to him, he took one look at my latest A.A. friend and decided (as anyone who saw him would), that he was no threat.

All this time I was kidding myself that I was in control. I didn't know it but I was getting my emotional needs met through this relationship. I was lonely, needy and hungry for male attention. And the truth was I was enjoying his company. He made me laugh and he came to me for help, he relied upon me. Heady stuff for a love addict like me, but I didn't know I was a love addict then. I even prided myself on how strong my recovery was because I had been able to resist his immature romantic overtures towards me.

Then it happened. I came home one day and this poor guy was waiting for me in the car park. He was in a state. He told me that he had done it again, had gotten too attached and that he loved me. The minute he said that, it was as if something had turned inside me. I told him that it could never be

and that I couldn't help him any more. I was that cruel and heartless. Needless to say that poor man checked himself into a rehab over Christmas, phoned me on Christmas eve — his heart-breaking sobs told me that he was in a right mess — he relapsed shortly afterwards.

I felt partially responsible which wasn't strictly true but there was no doubt that we had let things get out of hand. I was completely unprepared though for what happened next to me. Talk about progressive disease.

I was by now completely hooked on him. I found myself obsessing about him. I struggled not to call him even though I knew that I was hurting him and by doing that I was hurting my own recovery. I couldn't stop myself.

I knew that I was on an unstoppable train and I could see where I would end up this time — living with a street drinker in abject squalor. I was in deep trouble. But no matter how much I shared it at meetings, I couldn't stop myself from trying to see him. I would scan the streets trying to get a glimpse of him and I just couldn't get him out of my head. My sponsor kept telling me to just stop seeing him. She tore into me and told me that I had two years under

my belt and that this poor guy was struggling for his life. And even though I knew that she was right, I still couldn't help myself. My sponsor didn't understand.

Then my HP stepped in — I was sobbing my way through another A.A. meeting in front of a room full of people who probably clearly thought I needed to get a grip — this was after all only a relationship and not a life threatening addiction like drugs or alcohol — when a woman heard me and rushed over at the end of the meeting to tell me about S.L.A.A.

From then on I never looked back. I travel over 100 miles a week for my S.L.A.A. recovery. In the meetings I found the identification that I so desperately needed with other S.L.A.A. members and I worked the S.L.A.A.H.O.W. program because I knew that I was in serious danger of running off with this guy. I honestly believed that he was the one. I had to tell my husband that I couldn't help my feelings for this guy, but he understood what it is like to be powerless over one's own behavior.

My new sponsor took me through the 30 S.L.A.A.H.O.W. questions. Working a super strict daily program, writing and writing and really getting to the bottom of my behavior to find out

why I do the things that I do, my pay offs, has really helped me get a grip on myself. I really managed to put some distance between me and my disease.

I had a slip and broke my bottom line and so had to go right back to the beginning again. I set my bottom lines, my middle lines and my top lines which has helped me see when I am getting into slippery behavior — which for me can be really subtle stuff, like listening to certain types of music (for a while there all I listened to was the news.)

I went through a withdrawal which was hideous. If that doesn't deter me from ever getting into trouble again then I don't know what will. Finally after six months of serious effort, I came out the other side. I prayed harder than I ever prayed in my life. I realized that I couldn't do it on my own, I needed other S.L.A.A. members and most of all I had to have the help of my HP to save me from myself.

Finally, the best part of it all is that I started to really love myself, to stop putting so much pressure on myself, to be gentle with myself, to try and forgive myself. And today nothing gives me greater serenity or happiness

than helping other S.L.A.A. members.

Like all happy endings, my little drunken friend got recovery again. I still see him in the rooms from time to time and the attraction is still there sometimes (crazy). But I now ignore the voice in my head that tells me that this guy could be the one and play the tape through.

They are just feelings and I don't have to act on them. I am beginning to see that I give out available signals to men, I am finally beginning to 'see' myself. As the true picture of my life unravels, it can get pretty painful at times. And I have no doubt that there will be lots more pain on the way. But it's never as bad as it was back in the day before I found recovery.

Then, I was lost, completely and utterly. I didn't have a clue that what was wrong with me was me. I was the problem. Today I love my new life, even though nothing outwardly has changed.

I have changed. I have peace and serenity in my life most of the time and I will do anything to keep it. I thank God every day for my recovery.

—CATHY K



## Quotation Corner

“We all came in different ships but we’re all in the same boat.”

“Pain is inevitable, suffering is optional.”

“The truth will set you free, but first it will piss you off.”

“I’ll compare myself right out the door.”

“We get the same lesson over and over again until we learn it.”

“The elevator to recovery is broken. You’ll have to use the steps.”

“When we change, we don’t just trim the branches off the tree, we pull it up by the roots.”

“You can’t call it old behavior if you are still doing it.”

“God doesn’t close one door before at least opening a window but it’s hell in the hallway.”

“My mind is like a bad neighborhood at night, I shouldn’t go there alone.”

— CONTRIBUTED BY ERIC EE.

## Calendar of Events

### Phone Meetings

There are numerous phone meetings. A good place to start is the S.L.A.A. FWS website: [http://](http://directory.S.L.A.A.fws.org/intl_phone)

[directory.S.L.A.A.fws.org/intl\\_phone](http://directory.S.L.A.A.fws.org/intl_phone)

In addition, there is a special telemeeting series, **Skills for Healthy Loving** 2010-11

Telemeeting Series

Presented by: Conference Healthy Relationships Committee

Event Date: Saturday, March 19, 2011

For Inquiries: [http://](http://www.slaafws.org/files/Healthy+relationships+flyer%202010-11%20series.pdf)

[www.slaafws.org/files/Healthy+relationships+flyer%202010-11%20series.pdf](http://www.slaafws.org/files/Healthy+relationships+flyer%202010-11%20series.pdf)

This one-hour telemeeting will be at 9:00 a.m. Pacific / 12:00 p.m. Eastern / 5:00 p.m. London. S.L.A.A. members may attend without RSVP

### Upcoming Events

#### **Northeast Ohio Winter Day of Sharing - Marching to the Steps**

Presented by: Northeast Ohio Intergroup. Where: Strongsville, Ohio. Event Date: March 05, 2011 For Inquiries:

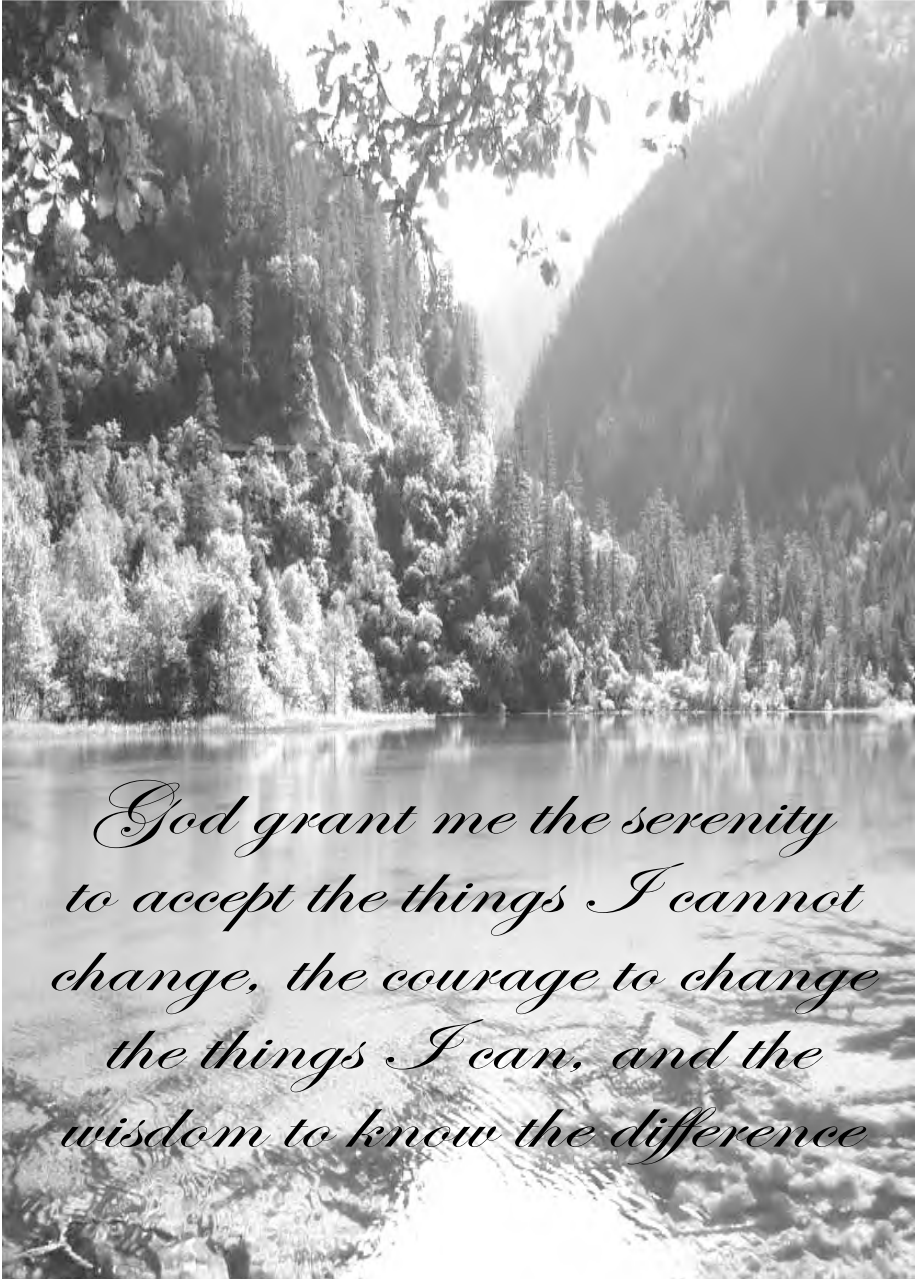
<http://www.slaafws.org>

#### **S.L.A.A.-Fruehjahrstreffen 2011**

Presented by: German Speaking Intergroup. Where: Ilbenstadt, Germany. Event Date: April 08, 2011 to April 10, 2011. More Info on [www.slaa.de](http://www.slaa.de).

**S.L.A.A. is here to help!**  
**Go to [www.slaafws.org](http://www.slaafws.org)**





*God grant me the serenity  
to accept the things I cannot  
change, the courage to change  
the things I can, and the  
wisdom to know the difference*

Submitted by James E.



# The Augustine Fellowship S.L.A.A. Fellowship-Wide Services



July 12-15, 2011

Tuesday through Friday

## Theme: Tradition 9

*S.L.A.A. as such ought never  
be organized; but we may create  
service boards or committees  
directly responsible to those  
they serve.*

Crowne Plaza Hotel  
2270 Hotel Circle Nth  
San Diego, CA 92108



# 2011 S.L.A.A. Annual Business/Conference Meeting

Host: San Diego County Intergroup



# *S.L.A.A. Signs of Recovery*

1. We seek to develop a daily relationship with a Higher Power, knowing that we are not alone in our efforts to heal ourselves from our addiction.
2. We are willing to be vulnerable because the capacity to trust has been restored to us by our faith in a Higher Power.
3. We surrender, one day at a time, our whole life strategy of, and our obsession with the pursuit of romantic and sexual intrigue and emotional dependency.
4. We learn to avoid situations that may put us at risk physically, morally, psychologically or spiritually.
5. We learn to accept and love ourselves, to take responsibility for our own lives, and to take care of our own needs before involving ourselves with others.
6. We become willing to ask for help, allowing ourselves to be vulnerable and learning to trust and accept others.
7. We allow ourselves to work through the pain of our low self-esteem and our fears of abandonment and responsibility. We learn to feel comfortable in solitude.
8. We begin to accept our imperfections and mistakes as part of being human, healing our shame and perfectionism while working on our character defects.
9. We begin to substitute honesty for self-destructive ways of expressing emotions and feelings.
10. We become honest in expressing who we are, developing true intimacy in our relationships with ourselves and others.
11. We learn to value sex as a by-product of sharing, commitment, trust and cooperation in a partnership.
12. We are restored to sanity, on a daily basis, by participating in the process of recovery.

*"Came to believe that a Power Greater  
than ourselves could restore us to sanity."*



theJournal