



theJournal

Issue # 130

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Power in Surrender

Table of Contents

First Things First

| | |
|---|----|
| Letter from the Editor | 3 |
| Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous Preamble | 4 |
| The Twelve Steps | 5 |
| Question of the Day | 6 |
| Upcoming Events | 30 |

Theme: Power In Surrender

| | |
|---------------------------------------|----|
| A Fish Can't See Water | 11 |
| Learning To Love (And Like) Myself | 14 |
| Surrendering Love Addiction | 15 |
| The Power (And Pain) In Surrender | 17 |
| Surrendering My Need To Be Tough Girl | 20 |

Finding Humor In Sobriety

| | |
|------------------------|----|
| The Signs Of Addiction | 25 |
| Sponsor To Sponsee | 33 |

Share Space

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| Memoirs Of A Lost Girl | 26 |
| Dating In The Freedom Of Sobriety | 31 |

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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Letter from the Editor

Dear Reader:

Surrender can be frightening to the ego. In our disease we may believe that we are independent and can handle anything (I know I did). We may have tried to control our disease and failed many times. We probably didn't want to accept that we couldn't do it on our own. For many, walking into the rooms of S.L.A.A. is a last resort.

But, when we go to meetings, we find people who have surrendered to a Higher Power. They tell us that their Higher Power transformed their lives.

We get the help we need even if we didn't consciously know we needed it.

Some may hang around the rooms for a while, debating whether or not to surrender everything to a Higher Power. They may say "I can't give this up yet, because..." But if they work steps 1, 2, and 3 enough eventually they may come to believe that a Higher Power can handle it better than they can.

I found that my life had to be completely demolished (if mostly in my mind) in order for Higher Power to remold it into something great.

Higher Power has done the same for countless others if they only ask and keep asking.

I pray that I continue to do the work for the rest of my life and am grateful for the support of the S.L.A.A. program

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 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 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.

* ©1985 The Augustine Fellowship, Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous, Fellowship-Wide Services, Inc. All Rights Reserved. The Twelve Steps are reprinted and adapted with permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. Permission to reprint and adapt the Twelve Steps does not mean that A.A. is affiliated with this program. A.A. is a program of recovery from alcoholism only. Use of the Twelve Steps in connection with programs and activities, which are patterned after A.A., but which address other problems, does not imply otherwise. **THE TWELVE STEPS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS** 1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol — 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 Him. 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 Him 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 God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His 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 alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Question of the Day & Answers from Yesterday

The Question of the Day from the last issue was, “What’s something you’ve surrendered in S.L.A.A., and what happened?” Here are some wonderful responses for your enjoyment. They are not presented in any particular order.

WHAT’S SOMETHING YOU’VE SURRENDERED IN S.L.A.A., AND WHAT HAPPENED?

I surrendered my “whole life strategy of” flirting and intrigue in pursuit of “the one.” During withdrawal, and after approximately 6 months I had an experience of dancing with myself and the universe at a dance where there were attractive women. I was deeply moved realizing I am “the one” and I love myself and I strive daily to remember this gift of the program.

— MICHAEL G., NEW YORK, NY

I surrendered to the fact that I’m not always right; I don’t always know best; my first instinct is not usually accurate; and I need to let my sponsor and this program guide me until my tweaked thought process is rewired.

— CARRIE, LOS ANGELES, CA

My bottom line is not to have sex outside my marriage and no contact with my qualifier.

The darkest time will be gone, hp will help me, hp, help me, pls.

— DONG C.

What I have had to surrender recently, as a recovering love/relationship addict (i.e. advanced codependency), has been my addiction to my loved ones — spouse and our 2 adult sons, of whom I had been making a Higher Power. And what I won was an incredible relationship with my true Higher Power and my authentic self.

“Surrender, and win” is right! And the bonus is that my enabling is stopping.

— K. C., MORGANTOWN, WEST VIRGINIA

I surrendered the urgency to get a sponsor to start with the first 7 then 30 questions. I have been to 8 S.L.A.A. meetings (already having a profound affect on me as I learn qualities of the disease that help me to develop awareness, accept and choose action) so far and no sponsors for this were available. So I surrender and believe the God of my understanding will provide me with a sponsor at the right time. Until then my hope is the same. May you all be blessed with strong recovery.

— MARIA, SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

I surrender to my Higher Power, not S.L.A.A., but as a group S.L.A.A. can be the sounding board for this surrender. I have surrendered my daily activities of acting out on my bottom line addictive behavior. I have had some sober time but currently am only 3 weeks sober today. I surrender the fear that comes with this new way of life. I surrender the unknown to my Higher Power, because what I have known and acted upon has caused despair and pain, fostered dishonesty and brought me to my knees. What has happened has been increased sense of peace and strength, the joining of an amazing fellowship of people and a new hope for a future of personal and romantic relationships that is based on honesty, trust and shared humanity. This is life itself as I cannot get sober or act sober on my own.

— CLARE, TENNESSEE

I am in the constant process of surrendering my one-sided love obsession with another woman. It's a daily process, because, the moment I think I've been successful, I find myself back in the mental obsession. My surrender is an on-going, daily process where I admit I am powerless and, when a thought comes up, I give this to my Higher Power. It's been almost two months since she stopped contacting me. It's painful to let this fantastical mental image of her fade as it literally is the face of my addiction. However, as I do, I have more clarity and power in every other area of my life. I still do think of her every day, but I am getting better at recognizing when I do and surrendering that thought.

— TIM W., LOS ANGELES

When I first started working with a sponsor, I thought I knew the best way to run my program. When I was finally able to surrender my own will, I started to find recovery. My higher power was gently leading me down the path of recovery, revealing himself and truth about my life in the process.

— ANONYMOUS, LOS ANGELES

I surrendered my expectations on what service positions I thought that I should be allowed to do / given by my home group. When I accepted a humble service position (room setup), a larger commitment became available a month later -> a commitment that I have been able to fulfill and not neglect.

— ANONYMOUS, LOS ANGELES

I have surrendered my partner of 24 years. I'm afraid but I know I have support in this program. I'm also proud of myself for having the courage to grow.

— SARAH, LOS ANGELES

When I came to S.L.A.A., I was carrying so much anger about why my life wasn't perfect and I wasn't still with the perfect man. Through my work in S.L.A.A., going to meetings, working with my sponsor, and so much prayer and meditation, I have truly let go and surrendered to God that anger about why things have happened this way. He has given me peace, not perfection. Surrendering ideas, thoughts and feelings has been a life altering experience.

— TAMARA, LOS ANGELES

I surrendered my relationship with a qualifier and had a whole new level of reality come into being. I was able to understand many things that had been obscure.

— ANONYMOUS

I've surrendered my constant aggressive pursuit of romantic relationships and I got peace and my dignity back.

— ANONYMOUS

I surrendered my fear of getting hurt by my parents. As a result, I have a better relationship with them.

— RAMON S., LOS ANGELES

I surrendered my rage and resentment.

— GREG, LOS ANGELES

I've surrendered my strategy of dating and I've gained freedom in my life.

— ANONYMOUS

Surrendered a relationship and it gave me back relationship with my mother and brother.

— MARC B., NEW YORK NY

Porn and masturbation. I regained dignity, self-respect. My objectification of women diminished significantly, also I began experiencing and feeling feelings that I was avoiding through acting out. And I am learning how to deal with them for perhaps the first time in adulthood. By closing off these "escape routes" I have begun training myself to face reality.

— CHRIS R., LOS ANGELES

I surrendered my powerlessness towards this (my) disease. It has helped me become honest one day at a time.

— GAVIN C., NEW YORK, NY

I turned my will and my life over to the care of God and I'm still alive.

— DAVID K., NEW YORK, NY

I surrendered my resistance to denial. About it. It allowed me to have acceptance of myself.

— ANONYMOUS

A good degree of unwillingness. I keep in touch with my sponsor daily. I share my feelings with him. His advice has given me peace when I'm struggling.

— MARK G., NYC

Sex before marriage. I found my higher power, who is Christ, after my relapse in 2007. As a Christian, I have learned that God does not want me to have sex before marriage. I am at peace today. Thank you S.L.A.A.!

— TOM P., NYC

One night I finally got tired of my low self-esteem. I realized that I'd resigned myself to having low self-esteem without ever taking action to get better. Of course, I'd always constantly tried to get better and boost my self-esteem by acting out but, as you know, this never lasts. So I got down on my knees and really surrendered this to my Higher Power, asking for guidance. The very next night at a S.L.A.A. meeting, a member shared about a workbook they were using to treat low self-esteem issues. The tone of their voice rang out like an answer from my Higher Power. This random book has changed my life, even more so the act of surrendering and receiving this response from a Higher Power.

— TOM B., LOS ANGELES, CA

Learning to drive. I don't have to let anyone take care of my addiction or yours. Learning to do like others.

— KEITH, HOLLYWOOD

I surrendered my "valuable time." I gained "in-valuable" knowledge. 1. I have let go of the past. 2. I have learned to be gentle with myself and others. 3. I have learned to be intimate with myself and others.

— ROGER, HOLLYWOOD

I've surrendered my search for a healthy long-term romantic companion. Whether or not this happens is in God's hands. I am trying to stay in neutral and wait until I feel a spiritual nudge regarding the direction of my life. In the meantime, I'm attempting to fill my days with activities that I know are rewarding and enriching — activities that allow me to laugh and enjoy life and, at the same time, improve the number of days when I am able to embrace my solitude, one of the greatest challenges I had coming into S.L.A.A.

— AVA M., AUSTIN, TX

Hi, My name is Kristin and I am a sex and love addict; more a romance/fantasy/love addict. I have been a grateful member of S.L.A.A. for 2 and 1/2 years. On October 31, 2009 I surrendered an old relationship that dated back to January 2006, which allowed me to then surrender my whole life strategy of sex and love addiction. Today marks exactly 15 months of total and utter surrender, just for today, one moment at a time, one minute at a time, one hour at a time and ONE DAY AT A TIME.

— KRISTIN, PENNINGTON, NJ

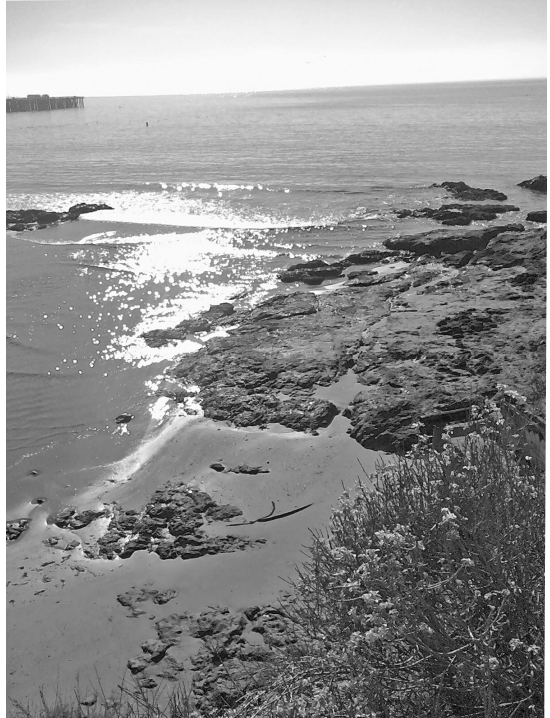
A Fish Can't See Water

There's a famous saying about how a fish is unable to describe water. It's his element. He cannot see it, because he is *part* of it.

The same was true for me as an addict during my active addiction. I could not *see* my addiction—the reasons I acted out, the justifications and rationalizations I used, the waste that I was laying to my own life and the lives of those I loved.

Living in water was also part of my issue with boundaries. As a child, I, like many of us, I suspect, never learned how to become an individual. I was immersed in the drama of my family, and expected to take care of others' needs. As I matured, the water of my addictive life continued to be made up of expectations, opinions, needs, and demands of others. I lived in them. I responded to them. I knew no other way.

At the same time, I resented others for demanding so much of me, for stifling me, for breathing



my air, for not giving me any room for myself. My resentment provided fuel for my addiction. *This is something just for ME, I'd rationalize. I deserve this, I'd think. No one ever takes care of MY needs. I'm going to grab whatever pleasure I can get. Etc., etc., etc.*

Walking into my first twelve-step meeting was the beginning of emerging from the water and of being willing to look at myself

and my environment in new ways. Trying to change my old habits was, at first, an exercise in feeling like a fish out of water. But as I have continued to practice, I have learned the benefits and the pleasures of an oxygen-rich environment.

The first step, acknowledgment of my powerlessness over my addiction and the chaos of my life, was a step into a new awareness. The second step, coming to believe that a power greater than me could restore me to sanity, was both a cry for help, based on the *need* to believe, and a simple admission of the natural consequence of the first step (if *I* was powerless, then either there *had* to be a power greater than me or else *I* was doomed).

But it was the third step that initiated me into the importance of *action*, even in the absence of belief. I had to *make a decision to turn my will and my life over* to my Higher Power, and making a decision involved *acting* on it.

Every morning now, I recommit myself to this action. I rededicate myself to this decision.

In fact, I try to make the first three steps into action steps.

Before I meditate, I say the Serenity Prayer and talk to my HP, saying something like this: “*I am powerless over my addiction, and when I act out my addiction, my life is unmanageable. I CHOOSE to believe that*

You, a power greater than me, will restore me and help me maintain sanity. Here, right now, today, I am turning over my will and my life to You.” Recovery, for me, has been like learning to live out of water. Sometimes I still feel as if I’m suffocating, as if only jumping back into the water will make me feel better, normal,

safe. But now that I’ve learned to breathe air, doing so would mean death to my soul and spirit, if not my physical life.

And so, when I’m gasping for air, when all I want is to jump back into the water, or when someone is calling me back, even begging me to come back, into the waters of their chaos, their expectations for me, their opinion of me, their desire that I take care of them, I pick up the phone. I say the Serenity Prayer.

Trying to change my old habits was, at first, an exercise in feeling like a fish out of water. But as I have continued to practice, I have learned the benefits and the pleasures of an oxygen-rich environment.

I go to a meeting. I take a walk. I meditate, feel my desire to jump, and realize, *this, too, shall pass.*

Only with the help and love of others, the understanding and

support of my fellow addicts, have I been able to learn to breathe air. And as I've done so, I have come to realize, *there's a whole other world out there.*

— MARK H., SACRAMENTO, CA

POWER IN SURRENDER



***Whenever I let go of anything,
it has claw marks on it***

Learning to Love (and Like) Myself

When I first came to S.L.A.A., I had never been without a boyfriend, or husband for longer than 10 months. Since the age of 14 years, I had always had either a boyfriend or a husband.

I don't know what I was thinking! On a subconscious level, I believe I thought that it meant I was unlovable, unworthy, or just plain ugly if I did not have a partner in my life. After I broke up with my latest husband, who I was with for 11 years, the withdrawal was almost unbearable. As an adult woman going through withdrawal, it was debilitating.

It was debilitating partly because I had never gone through withdrawal with the knowledge of what it means to withdraw from a person, the way one would withdraw from a drug. And it was also debilitating because of the huge financial insecurity I felt at that time as a result of my divorce.

Through S.L.A.A., I learned that I was a love addict and I needed to recover and begin the journey of self-awareness and living a sober life, which included standing on my own to



see that I was capable.

I gave up on trying to be in a relationship. For about 13 months or so, I lived alone and did not even think about dating or being in a relationship, which was a huge turning point for me. I still, to this day (3½ years later) live alone. I have dated, but still do not live with anyone. What I learned that is so valuable is that I actually like myself, I like my freedom, I like alone time to reflect, meditate, and be with just myself. Wow; I actually like myself!! What a beautiful experiment and realization that I can actually live alone and not die. I can actually take care of myself. S.L.A.A. gave me the idea that it might be possible and, like a flower, I have bloomed from simply feeding myself and my spirituality in this way. Thank you S.L.A.A.! My life is unfolding in surprising and magnificent ways. There has been fear, pain, and slips, but I am moving forward, one day at a time.

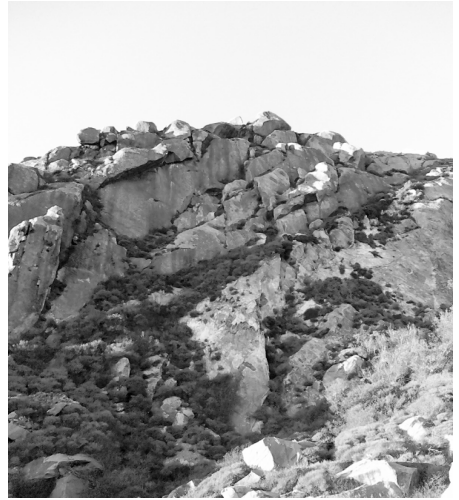
— CHRISTINE R., SAN DIEGO, CA

Surrendering Love Addiction

My name is Claire and I'm a recovering love addict. I surrendered a person and a place that was associated with my love addiction. I came into the program and used the tools to find support to leave the unhealthy relationship. At first it seemed I would be losing all the fun I used to have with him. Then I realized I could do my own thing without him. I chose to focus on my own recovery and to abstain from looking for someone else because with my disease it would have been as futile as changing seats on the Titanic!

First I sacrificed seeing him and a favorite, familiar dance club where I used to go with him. The first thing I received was a new place I could go to dance which was safe for me. People were nice to me there. Later I received even more places that were emotionally safe. My world opened up much more.

With the support of the program I eventually broke all contact with that lover who was hurting me with his (love) addictive behavior. The withdrawal was terrible but I received a feeling of self-respect that I found



the needed courage to leave a humiliating and painful situation. After a while I received more peace of mind. The obsession lessened and went away and I had room in my mind for things in my own life.

Later I received the gift of self-worth and a close relationship with my Higher Power (God). I learned that God meets my needs in ways that no man did or even could.

When I gave up focusing on and trying to change the man, I began to focus on the music and I became a much better dancer. As my talent developed I got appreciation and admiration from lots of people beyond my wildest dreams! I got back much more

than what I gave up!

Whether or not I ever find another relationship depends on my HP's will for me. If I do find a relationship, it's not because I went looking for it. Because of my disease, I make poor choices. For some time now, I feel OK without a partner. I am grateful

for all that I do have and all that I have received in recovery.

I hope you find that you also receive more than you gave up. "Keep coming back, it works if you work it, so work it, you're worth it!"

— CLAIRE, AMSTERDAM, NETHERLANDS

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 volunteers of all skills and levels of availability.

Here's what you can do:

- Become a Journal Representative for your 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.
- Visit a local organization that deals with sex and love addicts in your 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>

The Power (and Pain) in Surrender



When I first entered S.L.A.A. 15 months ago, I thought the step work was simply agreeing to all 12 steps. My black-and-white thinking told me that all I had to do was 1. Admit I was powerless... 2. Believe in a power greater than myself... 3. Turn it over to God... And, so on. Even surrendering the specifics of my sex and love addiction — i.e., no contact with the qualifier, no casual sex, no intriguing, and so on — was a black-and-white case for me: my sponsor said do this, don't do this, and I obliged ready, willing,

and fully able to surrender.

That's how I work my program: I simply do what the program told me to do and didn't do what my bottom lines forbade me to do. And, as cut and dry and black-and-white as that was, it actually worked for me.

The day I kicked off this program with a 90-in-90 was the day I surrendered to the fact that I needed help to undo the years of emotional turmoil that I did to myself.

I surrendered to the fact that my way of thinking, of living, of loving, of problem-solving, of fighting, of relating, of just being

a woman in the world was not working for me and change had to come.

As with many addicts, traits like narcissism, stubbornness, and arrogance are a few of my main character defects that I have to continually turn over to God daily.

Being an addict, my ego and narcissism made me truly believe that my way of doing things was the only way. So the greatest feat of surrender for me was simply to not trust my mind at times and instead turn all my thoughts over to the program and its tools and to God.

Even though it didn't feel right, I had to succumb to the fact that to break my pattern of serial monogamy (my main love addiction symptom) I couldn't talk to men, flirt, or have contact with exes. And most important, I needed to remain single for as long as humanly possible (or at least until after I start sponsoring, which is after step 5).

The surrender did feel powerful to me. I was doing something that I never did before: I was learning to be alone for the first time in my life. And, it felt painful. It felt utterly unnatural because since age 14 I have never been alone. Being in partnership was all I knew. I felt like I was

trying to shove a size 7 foot into a size 6 shoe or that someone was telling me my hair is blond when I knew damn straight it was brown. And, then someone in a meeting reminded me of the phrase; "If it feels uncomfortable then you're doing something right." And, boy, did what I was doing feel uncomfortable. But once I got that little catchphrase in my head, I starting feeling grateful for these growing pains.

I also had to surrender to the fact that I don't communicate well, even if my intentions are good. It's not enough to "not mean to be mean," I had to learn how my tone of voice can affect someone and make changes regardless of whether I thought I was in the wrong or not. In this instance it is like I'm telling others I'm blond when they know I'm brunette, but it took truly surrendering to the idea of, 'Wait, maybe I'm wrong and they are right,' to really, truly get it.

Surrendering didn't stop there. I got the sex and love stuff pretty much under control, and even had a very healthy sober dating experience for 7 months that screamed recovery. But just when I thought I was in the clear (and, yes, I know we are never truly in the clear), I found that I had a deeper level of surrender

that needed to happen in order to continue to grow. And that surrender was how I handled and dealt with the rest of the world.

Surrendering my will and turning it over to God's will on a daily, if not hourly, basis was also a powerful step for me. When it was hard to understand what my will was vs. what God's will was, my sponsor gave me a great new tool, which was just a list of personality characteristics of self-will and a list of personality characteristics of God's will, which ran like this:

- Self-Will: Selfish and self-seeking
- God's Will: Interest in others.
- Self Will: Dishonesty
- God's Will: Honesty
- Self Will: Frightened
- God's Will: Courage
- Self Will: Inconsiderate
- God's Will: Considerate

And, the list went on. As a daily way to surrender to God's will, I would use this list and make sure that when I was feeling impatient, I would instead trust in God to help me be patient. When I felt doubt, I would trust in faith, and so on.

With dating, you have a dating plan and you follow it. But,

where are the plans for our relationships with everyone from our mailman to our parents to our coworkers to the jerk who cuts us off in traffic on the street? Stuff started creeping up with the judgments and anger I have toward coworkers who don't respond to an email in time (my timeframe, of course, not theirs) or to people making mistakes that affect me (i.e., my banker screwing up the loan paperwork). And, I came to realize that I need to surrender those egotistical thoughts of 'my way is the only way' and "well, I wouldn't do it that way," over and over again almost on a daily basis to get through my day.

The surrendering never ends. It's a never-ending process of recovery. Sure, I don't act out any more and I'm pretty much emotionally in control, but the day-to-day part of life is constantly changing and has constant challenges that force me to surrender my will over to God's will every step of the way. Today, I am grateful not just for my recovery, my newfound emotional freedom, and the fact that I can truly be happy on my own, but I'm extremely grateful that I was, and still am, willing to surrender every day.

-CARRIE, LOS ANGELES

Surrendering My Need To Be Tough Girl

Tough girl. Never surrender. Those were the rules I lived by in the days of my active addiction. How could I believe S.L.A.A. members when they told me there was power in surrender?

“Let go and let God.” I can’t be vulnerable to a God of my misunderstanding. I grew up in a military family. I had to learn to get a thick skin early on because I would have to move every year or 6 months sometimes. I couldn’t care about anyone because as soon as I did I would have to move.

But the one place I did stay for 9 years turned out to be the murder capital of the country at the time.

I needed to become tough girl in order to survive. I became the girlfriend of the most popular guy in town even though I didn’t like him very much. He was the leader of a gang and got in fist fights every night. I remember drunken brawls and destruction of property — people being thrown off of balconies and being dragged by cars as friends tried to make quick getaways. There were a lot of riots where guys fought with two-by-fours or guns.

My boyfriend would get in fights with guys twice his size and beat them. He was always putting his life in danger as opponents tried to push him into bonfires or into the path of moving cars. I would always get dramatic and act like I was going to jump in and help my boyfriend fight. There would always be some large guy there to hold me back (luckily for me).

I felt like I needed the tough girl persona to be loved. And to be disliked in that crowd was to put your life at risk. In that way, I felt like my sex and love addiction saved my life. But in reality it just put me in dangerous situations over and over again.

And when my boyfriend started abusing me, I spent a lot of time trying to become impervious to feelings. I drank a lot and smoked cigarettes. I arm wrestled the guys and threatened the girls.

I spent a lot of years becoming that hard-as-stone person. So when I walked into the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous, I had a hard time giving that person over to God so he could remold me into the person I was supposed to be (turns out she’s a

real nerd and loves it).

But I was willing to be vulnerable enough to hand over the reigns with my alcoholism. That was easy — I had cigarettes, sex and food to numb me out still.

In A.A. everyone was scared of the fourth step. I sat on the front step of my apartment writing my fourth step and chain-smoking, flirting with the guy who lived in the apartment upstairs and thinking “this is a breeze what is everyone so scared of?”

I was not willing to be vulnerable to the feelings so I had to numb out with my other addictive substances.

When I joined Nicotine Anonymous the next year I joined S.L.A.A. at the same time. Quitting the nicotine brought up a lot of rage for the first year. I felt like I would end up either killing my boyfriend at the time (who ended up being a qualifier) or crashing my car into a telephone pole (homicidal and suicidal). I remember sitting in my car and having screaming fits, pounding the car seats with my fists for ten minutes at a time.

I was willing to surrender my alcoholism and nicotine addiction but when my S.L.A.A. sponsor suggested I give up the porn I couldn't be that vulnerable. Porn

didn't have the hangover that alcohol did or the pain in the lungs that cigarettes gave me. I could see that there were benefits from giving up these substances.

But my sex and love addiction was much more insidious. It was in every area of my life and sometimes I didn't even know it was a problem until I was in a situation where my life was at risk.

But after 3 years of S.L.A.A. meetings, working the steps, praying to a Higher Power and service work, I was finally able to surrender the porn and sex with strangers or dangerous men. Sex addiction was another aspect of my tough girl image. I would think “see, I'm just like the guys, I'm a tough sex addict — love addiction is for sissies.”

But it was love addiction that kicked my ass and almost killed me. I always say that God had to hit me over the head with a hammer before I could let go of my sex *and* love addiction.

I met a guy in the rooms of S.L.A.A. He was married and trying to work a program so I thought he was safe (nothing is safe from love addiction when you're in it.) We went to fellowship after meetings and sometimes sat in the car talking about

God and program until 2 a.m. We were dating for six months and didn't even know it. He would even order my food for me at fellowship. Shockingly, none of our fellows pointed out the train wreck that was coming.

He started coming over to my apartment so that I could cook him dinner. He was allergic to my cat so I would vacuum and clean everything in the living room and lock my cat in the bedroom. When we started having sex we were both so freaked out about slipping in S.L.A.A. that we told our sponsors and made a no contact rule. We split up our meetings and vowed to stay away from each other's meetings.

Inevitably, one or the other of us would e-mail or go to the other's meeting. I was collecting chips like crazy for 6 months. I would get one week and slip, then one day and slip etc. At one point I simply handed over my chips to my qualifier.

I couldn't surrender the relationship. I thought God had sent someone just like me — in A.A. Nic.A and S.L.A.A. to help me. He was my program partner and helped me through a panic attack with an acting exercise. And he spoke to me about meditation and Higher Power. I was delusional. My love addiction spoke

to me telling me that after years of pain and suffering I was entitled to this relationship; that it was a match made in heaven (we saw a rainbow once when we were together and thought it was a sign from God); that the relationship was the only thing that could save me from my panic attacks. Forget about the fact that he had a wife. Forget that we both wanted sobriety in S.L.A.A. and were trying to hold on to our sobriety in A.A. and Nicotine Anonymous. Forget about the fact that both of our sponsors were horrified by the situation.

But finally I got a little bit of time away from him. He could tell that I was slipping away. He had to try something drastic. He asked me to move in with him. We put two thousand dollars down on an apartment lease. I gave notice at my rent controlled apartment and made arrangements to give my allergy-inducing cat away.

He was going to tell his wife he was leaving her.

Right before I started moving furniture, I got a call from him. "I can't be the kind of man who just runs out the back door. I can't move in with you right now. But I need to see you. I'm coming over."

I hung up the phone feeling like my world had crashed down around me.

I got an idea in my head like the light at the end of a tunnel. "He's leaving me because he's allergic to my cat. If there was some way to make my cat go away he would come back to me and we would be able to be together forever. If I shave the cat that will get rid of the dander and everything will be OK. I won't go crazy."

I grabbed an electric shaver. I held the cat down and turned on the device. It made a loud buzzing sound. The cat freaked out and clawed at me. I saw blood and released my grip. The cat bolted for safety underneath my bed. I caught her and dragged her out. I remembered the vet saying that if you cover them with a pillow case it will calm them down. I stuffed the cat in a pillow case. She clawed her way out and I have scars on my arms from the attempt.

The entire time I just kept thinking "Must get this done. He'll be coming over soon and I have to show him that everything's going to be OK. He can stay with me."

I was delusional, just like my sponsor had claimed. I was an insane love addict.

They would have to lock me up in a mental institution so I wouldn't hurt myself or my cat, I thought. I knew I was powerless over my addiction and I felt my mind snap. I knew I would see him again even though he had just destroyed my universe.

The blinders were off. I saw the relationship for what it was but I was powerless over allowing him to come over. I got on the phone to program people. One person said "let your feet do the thinking. Leave your apartment and come to my house." I couldn't move. I knelt on the floor and sobbed. I started screaming and hyperventilating. I called another person and she said "Prayers are powerful. What do you want me to pray for?" I said "pray for my obsession with him to be lifted."

She said the prayer to me over the phone and I felt a calm come over me. I call that my lightning bolt spiritual experience. I've been a changed person from that day until now. I borrowed her God and started praying to it.

I found that I could do the steps over again with my sponsor, sponsor eight women, do service work, and stay sober. I was no longer suicidal. God took care of my panic attacks. I went on a dating plan and was able to

handle dating, a break-up, a reconciliation, moving in with my partner, an engagement and a marriage.

I went through surgery with a lot of prayer, and help from my husband and family.

Two years after my S.L.A.A. sobriety date, I realized I had a problem with food. I remember thinking that if I didn't take care of my insanity around food, I would lose my healthy relationship. I went to a meeting of compulsive eaters anonymous.

I said "OK God, I'll try this for thirty days please let me know if I'm supposed to stay. Thy will not mine be done." I had to sit on my hands and just cry through the whole meeting. But I stayed. I've been abstinent from flour and sugar, weighing and measuring my three meals a day for seven years now.

The power in surrender for me has been that God is in charge in every area of my life. And God has a much better plan for my life than I have for myself. I saw a small life for myself in waiting for the married guy who I never would have been able to trust anyway. I would have been miserable and scared and I probably would have slipped in A.A. if I had stayed with him.

I saw him in an A.A. meeting

years later and he stood up for having less than thirty days of sobriety. I know myself well enough to know that if I had stayed with him, I would have been right there beside him drinking and using.

Instead, I have a husband who I respect, who is wise and full of humor. He is my equal in almost every way. I remember in our first few months of dating how shocked I was to find that he thought some of the same things that I did. Men used to be just good looking objects to me.

I have been sober from four addictions for many years and I do program work every day. I keep up my spiritual practices and step work and I always ask for God's will. I feel like I went through the trenches with my disease and got pretty banged up. But God has healed my life and allowed me to live in the sunlight. I wouldn't trade it for anything.

— LISA C.

Power
in



SURRENDER

Finding Humor In Sobriety

The Signs Of Addiction

- ◆ We seek to develop a daily minute-to-minute relationship with any human being who will rescue us, knowing that we are not alone in our efforts to have a savior.
- ◆ No way are we willing to be vulnerable because we can't trust anyone.
- ◆ We do not surrender our pursuit of romantic and sexual intrigue and emotional dependency.
- ◆ We don't avoid situations that may put us at risk, going for the adrenaline rush.
- ◆ We hate ourselves, run from responsibility and run ourselves into the ground taking care of other people's needs before our own.
- ◆ We never ask for help trying to stay strong and judging others harshly with a distrustful eye.
- ◆ We numb the pain of our low self-esteem and abandon others before they can abandon us or ask us to take responsibility for ourselves. We feel comfortable hiding out in a crowd.
- ◆ We begin to accept that we are superhuman and can never make mistakes. We ignore our shame, perfectionism and all character defects.
- ◆ We substitute lying for constructive ways of expressing emotions and feelings.
- ◆ We lie about who we are and run from intimacy.
- ◆ We think sex as a by-product of sharing, commitment, trust and cooperation in a partnership is boring.
- ◆ We are insane, on a daily basis, by participating in the process of addiction.

Share space

Memoirs of a Lost Girl: The 12-Step Recovery and Healing of a Love Addict

I have been married twice before. I am now in my third marriage to a man whom I sadly do not love. We are separated. I love two other men. The first man invokes passionate, lustful feelings and I long to be with him. The other invokes this feeling of “I will do anything for him,” melting, unconditional acceptance and friendship.

My husband verbally and spiritually mistreated me. Many called it an abusive relationship. He tried to control me and was fault-finding. The first man was also fault-finding and I could never live up to his expectations of how a wife was supposed to behave.

He said he loved me but that he was looking for a wife. He once told me that he bought a ring with the intention of proposing—but he had to complete some sort of matrix to determine if I was marriage material. I con-



stantly felt misunderstood, judged, rejected and scrutinized by him. The second, but first in my heart, man often let me know how physically and emotionally “less than perfect” I was. I would be perfect —if only—if only I got a tummy tuck, or had my wrinkles erased away, or had my nose tweaked.

He actually stuck a pencil up my nose to lift the tip ever so slightly—to the state of perfection! He told me he was an expert on beauty. He also told me

he had a problem with lust. He often would look longingly at other women while in my presence. By the way, he too said he loved me....very much.

He said I was one of the most important people in his life, but that he would never marry me. I was a divorcee—twice at that—with a child and that did not fit his ideal image of a wife. These three represent only a snapshot of the men I have been with... and the same rejection I have experienced multiple times over. Honestly, I've lost count of the men. How can I love such men? Is it love? Or, is it something else? Maybe I'm just a hopeless romantic...

No, I'm beginning to think I might be an addict. My first clue is that I married my current husband after knowing him only two months! I felt numb while we said our vows. Then, when we walked to our wedding suite I felt an overwhelming dread come over me. I told myself that I should have been happy and excited to be with my husband. Unfortunately, I felt like I was walking the green mile. I could hear the music in my head and I was in the scene—you know the one...when John Coffey is walking to his execution. Not a good start—wouldn't you agree?

I'm not the sharpest tool in the shed, so I couldn't really identify this first clue until after this following clue was before me—I'm now in love with the two other men...again! I guess my first go round with these two guys didn't cause enough pain.

Oh, I know—Hollywood glamorously depicts love triangles as something normal, thrilling, and quite sexy. They aren't. They are painful, confusing, selfishly motivated, and most often not love at all.

Quite honestly, it could have been a love quadrangle! Is there such a thing? Fortunate for him, ex-husband #2 was finally in a committed love relationship. If that weren't the case, I'm certain I would have loved him again too! I drove to his work once and waited outside just to see him and say "hi." My motives were innocent—so I told myself. Thank God I didn't see him—and that he didn't see me—and accuse me of stalking him!

With the clues before me, I decided to Google "love addiction." I found a list of indicators that someone may be a love addict. I placed a check mark next to those I immediately identified with. Although I must admit, I could very well be in denial about the others. When I first

read the list, I thought, as if questioning, “I think I am addicted to relationships.”

I continued my research—looking for clues that would confirm this growing conviction that was rising within me. I read somewhere else that love addicts create drama in their lives and relationships, such as marrying someone they hardly know.

Bingo! The light went on and I could no longer deny the truth. Nor, did I want to. I want this to stop. I want to stop! I want to be whole and healed. I want to recover. The caustic part of my love addiction is that I really have no clue what love is, or how to love. So, I cause pain and my pain grows deeper.

From Darkness to Light

All the while I’m reading these lists, and feeling convinced that I have a problem—I feel this overwhelming compulsion to contact one of my previous lovers again. I had recently committed to myself, some friends, and my counselor that I would have no contact with these guys—any guys.

Yet, I had this intense need to speak to one of them. I remember thinking, “this must be what a drug addict feels like.” I could literally feel the addiction. It was intense, scary, and exhilarating

all at the same time.

I was experiencing that old adrenaline rush I’d experienced so many times before. So, I called lover number one.

He immediately offered to fly out and see me—just for a night, one last time, then we’d say good-bye. Right!

The sick thing was that while I was speaking to him and reminiscing, I felt love for him. He booked a flight. I came to my senses. He cancelled the flight. Twice this happened. Then, I became irritated with him because I believed that he only wanted sex and a romantic rendezvous.

More troubling was that I knew I was already having an affair, even if it was “just” an emotional affair. Although I was separated from my husband, I did not want to commit adultery. So, I resolved to not call lover number one again.

Feeling good about my decision and thinking I could beat this thing I have with men, I was self-satisfied—until the night I called my other lover—the one I truly loved—I think. After speaking with him for 5 minutes, we made preparations for me to fly out to spend the weekend with him. His voice melted my heart. He called me “baby” and I loved him all over again. Or, I believe

maybe I never stopped. We also planned on my leaving the country to spend time with him. In the back of my mind, I was frantically telling myself to stop this madness—but I couldn't. He was my drug and I was getting my fix.

When I was younger and “clubbing”—the term used for going to bars, dancing and getting totally inebriated, with the hopes of meeting that someone special—I would often say how much I loved men. That love was not love at all. It was an insatiable hunger. It was a deep, black, bottomless pit of pain at the core of my being that resulted from rejection I experienced as a child. I can now admit that it was, and is, an addiction and that I am powerless to control or overcome it. I'm in a good place. I'd like to take you on my journey toward healing and wholeness...

Admitting Powerlessness

Step 1—We admitted we were powerless over love, romance, fantasies and relationships—that our lives had become unmanageable.

“Hello, my name is B and I think I'm a love addict” is what I said when I went to my first S.L.A.A. meeting. Then I walked away with my 1-day chip. I have

not returned—and, it has been two months. I'd like to say I don't really need the meetings — but, the contrary has become painfully evident.

You see, I've now committed adultery with one of my exes. And, my heart is breaking because I foolishly went to see my other ex because I heard he was sick in bed — and when I arrived, another woman was with him — sitting in bed as I used to do with him. She was in my place. I had been replaced. I felt like my heart had just been crushed.

But what did I expect? I went off and got married! I played it cool because my son had joined me on this visit.

I didn't want him to see me weak. My son stepped out to have a cigarette. Then this gal decided she had to step out to do some work. When they walked out he grabbed my hand and asked me to stay with him. I said no. He asked again — and again. He wanted me with him is what he said.

I hate myself!

His voice, the tenderness in his voice, the look in his eyes—his gentle touch! I hate myself for loving him! She walked back in and I felt his grip loosen—as if he wanted to let go of my hand, as to not upset her—but he was afraid to anger me by letting go. I

let go for him—and my heart sank. I had been replaced.

I drove home, trying to behave as if unscathed. The truth is I wanted to cry—and scream! I wanted to text him and tell him that I hated him! I almost did—but, I did not want to reveal to him, yet again, his absolute power over me. So, here I am, hours later, sitting on the bathroom floor crying.

My name is B, and I need help. I can't seem to bring utterance to the words, "I am a love addict" and yet everything about my behavior indicates to me that I am.

Dear 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.

In Jesus' Name, I pray. Amen.

I want so badly to stay away. Yet, I can't wait for the next moment I spend with him! I'm engaging in conversations with others—yet in the back of mind I'm frantically trying to figure out how I can get to him! What is wrong with me? He was just with another woman—in front of me! Why can't I just change? Why can't I be strong? Why can't Jesus be enough for me?

Now, months after my first S.L.A.A. meeting, after yet another affair — a one-night stand, I can say I can't change myself. I am powerless to this addiction. My name is B, and I am a sex and love addict. Today, 11 days into my sobriety, I know I need this program. Today, I know that I have a long haul ahead of me; but, I also know that I have a future and hope.

— B

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.

Dating In The Freedom Of Sobriety

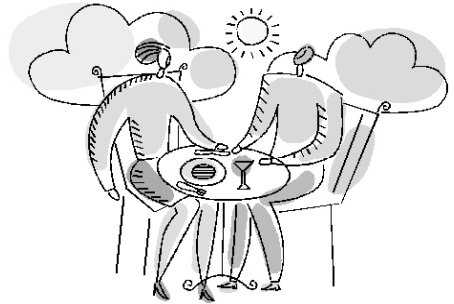
I am very grateful for the S.L.A.A. program. In the last two months, I have had 5 sober dates with a guy I met through someone I know.

The first week, I was feeling soooooo in love, sure we would get married, etc. Then, some days later I was expecting his call and I fell into my “I am not loved, not lovable” hole and lived a big lot of drama, a lot of suffering and emotional crisis.

I talked about it for hours with my sponsor and my S.L.A.A. friends, wrote in my journal a lot. After a little while, I started to “detach” and went to the “I don’t care about him (damn him)” end.

My sponsor helped me see I was not angry about him, but about my past wounds and patterns, that this guy was just living his life. And that it was a good sign that he wouldn’t stop his life to jump into mine... He finally called and we had some other dates, slowly getting to know each other.

What I want to share is the miracle now happening. In the last week, I have strengthened my spiritual practices and received the grace of feeling that I



am enough, I am loved. You know, what they say, “the love of God flowing through oneself”? I felt it.

I saw that of course I will have a boyfriend at some point, because that happens in people’s lives, it’s normal, it’s legitimate. I don’t have to take whatever is passing by, as if I didn’t deserve anything good, that I can relax and see if a guy is a good fit for me, not try to make things work because it would be my last chance.

I don’t need to have a boyfriend. It will certainly be fun and an enrichment in my life (and also a lot of spiritual and emotional work to stay centered!) but I don’t need a boyfriend.

Because the source of love is in my connection with my Higher Power, not in a boy-

friend. Actually, I usually feel worse with a boyfriend, since I project on them my self-hatred and attack them for “making me feel so bad.”

The grace I received in the last few months was to see to what extent the pain and suffering is INSIDE ME, not caused by the other person. So loving myself and turning my will and my life over to a Higher Power of infinite love, I don’t have to look for love outside.

So, I may or may not become intimate with that guy, I don’t know. I don’t have to know. I don’t have to control nor do I have to make things happen. I don’t have to analyze it all and worry. I can just live my wonderful life, take great care of myself, work my one day at a time program and enjoy the blessings in my life. More will be revealed in the right time. And the miracle is that I FEEL IT very deeply, I LIVE it today! Wow!

All this is pretty new, and I know my path won’t be perfect forever after. But I am so grateful for what I’ve heard in program since my first meetings almost eight years ago.

That gives me hope of a true sobriety, an emotional sobriety. I have to admit that I don’t quite know what having a boyfriend is for if it is not to make me feel good. How do I relate if I don’t

spend my time expecting, then blaming, making crisis and drama, demanding attention, creating deep talks about emotions because I crave connection... ?

After I found sobriety in my behavior, I am discovering the sobriety of mind and emotions. I am grateful because thanks to S.L.A.A., I can write about my sick behavior and lovingly laugh at myself. It is okay that I don’t know how to act in a different way.

The only thing I have to do is be open and willing to learn a new way, listening to members that have what I want and most of all nourishing my connection with this almighty higher power that IS the source of love.

— ANONYMOUS



To Do List:



#1. Subscribe to the *Journal*



#2. Go to www.slaafws.org and subscribe to the *Journal*



#3. Enjoy reading the *Journal*



Sponsor to Sponsee

Sponsee: When I look back over my life and realize everything I have ever done was behind this disease, how can I be sure I won't do it again?

Sponsor: It's one day at a time. Don't look back or forward.

Sponsee: Sounds like Switzerland.

Sponsor: Yes, be Switzerlandy.

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





Quotation Corner

"IF I THINK I'VE GOT IT, LOOK OUT."

"CAREFUL WHAT YOU PRAY FOR. YOU JUST MIGHT GET IT."

"YOU CAN GET OFF THE ELEVATOR AT ANY TIME."

"WANT WHAT YOU HAVE."

"I USED TO HAVE SUPER POWERS BUT MY THERAPIST TOOK THEM AWAY"

"LACK OF SLEEP WON'T KILL ME."

"UNDERNEATH ALL OUR PAIN AND SCREWED-UP-NESS IS THE PERSON OUR HIGHER POWER WANTS US TO BE."

"YOU DO NOT NEED TO EXPLAIN TO A BURGLAR WHY YOU CHANGED THE LOCKS."

"MERCY IS WHEN GOD DOESN'T GIVE US WHAT WE REALLY DESERVE!"

"IF YOU TAKE ONE STEP TOWARDS GOD, HE TAKES 10 STEPS TOWARDS YOU."

— 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://directory.slaafws.org/intl_phone

Upcoming Events

3 events in Los Angeles: go to www.slaalosangeles.org for more info:

Saturday, May 28

“The 5 S’s, Foundation of Recovery in SLAA”

IHM Retreat House, Los Angeles, California

When: 9:30am to 4:00pm. Fee: \$15.00 at the door

Sunday, July 3

2011 L.A.’s Got Talent Show - Fundraiser to celebrate S.L.A.A. 35th Anniversary
Los Angeles, CA

Friday, November 25 — Sunday, November 27,

15th Annual Spiritual Renewal & Recovery Retreat

Serra Retreat Center, Malibu, California

\$200 each shared/double room occupancy or \$260 single room

occupancy before November 1st

July 29-31, Sept. 30-Oct. 2, December 16-18

S.L.A.A. 12 Step Weekend Retreats in Chester, Vermont
<http://www.slaanei.org/vtweekend.html>

Saturday August 6

Augustine Alchemy 2011
The 2011 Connecticut Inter-group of S.L.A.A. and Connecticut COSLAA group joint conference will be at Yale University. This is a day of recovery and growth for addicts and those affected by the addicted family member. <http://www.slaact.com>

August 19 - 21

Healing Heart Retreat (co-ed) at Camp Indianola
Saturday Night Keynote
Speaker: Hilarie Cash, PhD, LMHC. Topic: Internet, Video Game, Sex and Love Addiction
<http://www.slaa-seattle.org/events.html>

**S.L.A.A. is here to help!
Go to www.slaafws.org**



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





theJournal