



theJournal

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# Using the Tools of Recovery

S.L.A.A. 35th Anniversary Issue

# 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 of the *Journal* is about using the tools of recovery and is meant to celebrate S.L.A.A.'s 35th Anniversary. In the preamble to the Basic Text of S.L.A.A., it says we draw on five major resources: sobriety, sponsorship/ meetings, steps, service and spirituality. Tom B., the *Journal* marketing director, did the footwork to find writers with experience using those tools over a number of years.

The Five S's have been powerful tools that I have used often over the years. One of the simplest and most powerful tools of recovery for me is "God, help me," because that opens my world up for the First, Second and Third Steps.

Many of the stories in this issue mention the 35th Anniversary. One story mentions the International Recovery Convention. I was lucky enough to go to the 25th Anniversary Convention in Los Angeles. And it was an amazing time for me (dare I say magical?) Don't get me wrong, I was in a lot of pain at the time. I ended up crying on the floor in the hotel hallway. But my fellows picked me up and brought me to a meeting and I saw that I was safe and supported. Seeing that the fellowship had been around for 25 years gave me hope that it would always be there for me when I needed it. And it has.

Hopefully this issue of the *Journal* can convey some of that hope that I felt on the last anniversary. And I'd like to be around to celebrate 45 with my fellows!

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, “How do you use the Tools of Recovery?” Here are some wonderful responses for your enjoyment. They are not presented in any particular order.

### HOW DO YOU USE THE TOOLS OF RECOVERY?

This is S.L.A.A.’s 35th anniversary. To celebrate, I have a 25th anniversary edition of our basic text and am making a 36 inch “life-size banner” of the Basic Text cover with a lifesaver, a golden braid, and “35” on it, which I will offer to the S.L.A.A. worldwide Annual Business Meeting (ABM.) The tools of recovery for me are the 36 Principles, expressed in the weaving of the 3 strands of the golden braid [p.156, Basic Text]. Eros [steps,] Agape [traditions,] and Caritas [concepts] are 3 sides of the upside-down triangle.

We see A.A. and Al-Anon as our spiritual great grandparents; I am working on adapting the A.A. Illustrated Concepts and Traditions to S.L.A.A., because “pictures speak 1000 words” and can be “translated” or understood in any language. Translating the “Five S” Tools into illustrations is a way for me now to be involved with graphic recovery, not graphic details.

— BETH L., MONTREAL

I became a member of SL.A.A. about a month ago — thank God. I am going through something I have never experienced in my life before, a lot of pain, a lot of insight, a lot of walls of denial falling down. *Overwhelming.* Tools: *One day at a time*, handing over my sobriety to God every morning, and thanking God for keeping bottom lines every night. Learning to take the opportunity to outreach is hard but worth it. Hearing men sharing in meetings also is a special blessing. It is such a gift in recovery to learn they have feelings also. Thank you, honest men. Keep it simple, I shall finish here, as an anorexic, I have taken up enough space and time. Wishing all of you guidance in your recovery.

— MARIA, SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA



I am a singer and an actor and also work as a teacher and find that recovery is now a vital part of my work in the arts and in education. If I perform a song and don't have a clear person or even place that I'm singing to I don't reach the audience. However, when I sing and dedicate — send the song to another — then I'm part of the world and am actually communicating and can give rather than only receive. As a teacher, I have to let go of "control" in order to reach my students. I am a special education teacher and am currently working with at-risk youth as an English-as-a-second-language (ESL) teacher. As a recovering sex addict and anorectic, if I focus only on me and my needs — I'm in my addiction and not my recovery. My song needs to be one that others can hear too. It's not by accident that my auditions and my teaching sessions generally go better when I am working my program. b'shalom,

— MOSHE, JERUSALEM, ISRAEL

I am truly thankful to this fellowship. I started attending meetings in March 2010 and I am sober since Dec 16th this year. The tools of recovery that have been most helpful to me hitherto are being steady in attending meetings and the calls for help. The first because in all meetings we read all the rules, the twelve steps, the symptoms of recovery, and that is very important to keep the spirit of S.L.A.A. Moreover the sharing of different experiences, seeing that there are different patterns of using, gives me strength to keep on being sober. The calls for help in my case have proven to be extremely helpful. In my daily job I have to pass by cruising places. Calling someone to be honest with myself whenever I felt tempted to use has helped me to move on and not be tormented by these temptations. Only the gesture of dialing someone for help immediately helps me to smother the craving. I need to start reading literature outside the meetings. That will come with time. Thanks and +24h!

— TIAGO, LISBON, PORTUGAL

Prayer is my most important tool of recovery, and personally I do not use it regularly enough. I'm working on that. Meetings are another very important tool. I try to go to 2 meetings each week. Today I made it to an A.A. meeting, too.

— GINO, VERMONT

My greatest tool is my higher power. One of my bottom lines is to connect with my higher power to the best of my ability every day. Some days are easier than others to connect, but it has been tremendously helpful to say this bottom line at every S.L.A.A. meeting. I grew up thinking that I needed to be in control to be safe, so turning over my life to the care of a HP was not easy for me. My HP speaks to me through the meetings, books, meditations, and prayer. The more I make a connection, the better I feel, and the less isolated I am. When I am triggered by a childhood issue, having a peaceful place to go makes a huge difference between reaching for my drug of choice or not.

— CHRISTINE R., ENCINITAS, CA

I do a daily 15 point gratitude list and mail it to 6 others who also send theirs out. It has changed my whole way of thinking. I can't wait to sit down each a.m. to write it. I am pre-writing throughout the day, keeping me in positive thinking. I began this process at the suggestion of my S.L.A.A. H.O.W. process and I pass it on to my sponsees.

— KAREN P., RHODE ISLAND

I reach out by phone and also started an all men's meeting which after 5 years has finally grown to an average of 15 men per week. I sponsor others and share what I have received.

— LARRY W., NEW JERSEY

I'm always grateful when I look back any length of time at my sobriety in S.L.A.A. Sponsorship: I always get more out of it, than when I don't. Meetings: I stay plugged into the "God Consciousness" in the rooms. I think/feel God speaks through people if they are centered. Steps allowed me to come into a relationship with a power greater than myself that does for me what I couldn't do for myself. Prayer, meditation, and service keep me centered in spirituality.

— JULIEN M., SILVER LAKE, CA

Since I am new to S.L.A.A. and newly sober I use the tools everyday even if I don't feel like it. I use them when I am hurting and I use them when I have free time during my day. The days that I am hurting more, I plan my day around meetings, calls, step work, etc. I use the phone the most, meetings and readings second and work with my sponsor is usually once a week. I make lots of calls, even when not hurting. I make sure to share my good times and feelings with those in recovery as well as when I struggle.

The meetings are my home so I go even when I am tired and don't think I need a meeting. I always get what I need. When I can't get a hold of someone or get to a meeting, I work my steps (I work my steps anyway.) I find that when I don't want to reach out, I reach in and connect with my HP.

As far as Spirituality and Service: I have so much more time and energy to devote to enlarging my spiritual program now that I am not acting out all the time. That quiet place inside me is where I plant those seeds. Service is an essential part of giving back to the community and it also keeps me out of myself and into the solution. Chairing phone meetings right away when I started the program keeps me accountable to a large group of people and helps me to stay focused on what I can bring to the group rather than what I am always taking.

— CLARE M., TENNESSEE

For me, I have been doing different tools of recovery. I have been going to meetings. I have gotten involved in setting up a local meeting in my hometown. I have been sharing after meetings and recently emailing a girl going through something I've gone through. I am on my meeting phone list too. I have worked the steps in a step study. I have read literature, gone to retreats, and S.L.A.A. parties. I turn to my sponsor, email related jokes and S.L.A.A. material. I really enjoy this creative tool of the Question of the Day. Thank you for sharing it.

— KATE, PALM DESERT, CA

I am looking for a sponsor currently, just 2 months in the program and have been without contact for that time with my qualifier. I call ladies in the program. I just revitalized a woman's live meeting in Westport, CT. The phone list is a great help. I say a gratitude list every day to myself. I go to 3 live meetings a week and as many phone meetings as I can.

— DIANE, WESTPORT, CT

**Slogans:** Bite-sized pieces of recovery that even my crazed, high-on-love junk mind can remember; useful when keeping me from falling into the pit of despair or acting out.

**Prayers:** The serenity prayer can be used in times of indecision to help me define where the locus of my control really is, the third step prayer helps keep my arrogance in check and begins my day with an act of surrender.

**Meetings on tape/digital files:** When my head won't turn off, I listen to speaker meetings in a recordable format which allows me access anywhere I can bring an ipod and insures that I am never alone in my head 24/7.

**Lists:** Gratitude and self-care — I make lists because I am guilty of telling myself the story that it's all black or all white and I live in those extremes.

Keeping myself in balance requires that even while I'm in a relationship that seems to fulfill, it's still my job to be involved in my self-care and that I need to find gratitude for more in my life than just the "love." When I'm in the darkness this seems like the hardest thing to do.

— VALARIE L., ENCINITAS, CA

I use safe S.L.A.A. chat rooms every day. I have plans for other tools, but haven't gotten into the habit.

— ANDREW J., LANCASTER, OH

Attending meetings, and working the Steps are among the most powerful tools of recovery for me. In 2007, a small group of women started this early morning women's only group. Now, we frequently have fifteen women in attendance. Speaking the truth about myself within a familiar group of women who share my struggles is one way I do fourth and fifth step work. Another favorite step work activity for me is to journal, read my journal to my sponsor by phone, and apply the steps to the entries. Step work by email is an option using a 12-step format from *A Way Out*. The format has a question for each step. I send the email to recovery friends. This is particularly good for early a.m. or late night work as it does not require anyone else to be awake.

— NANCY G., ENCINITAS, CA

I am participating in an intensive step study group with 4 other women. We are working all 12 Steps together over 6 months. We are using the A.A. big book as a basis for our step work. I replace the word alcoholic with love addict. We have weekly step assignments that we share with each other and we check in regularly during the week. The following quote from the al-anon book *Survival to Recovery* gives me hope: "If we're willing to surrender ourselves to the spiritual discipline of the 12 steps, our lives will be transformed."

— ANNE, ENCINITAS, CA

Online & telephone meetings, recovery partners, gratitude lists, sponsor!

— TRINA, OKLAHOMA

## The Tools Of Recovery: The Toolbox

**T**he 35th anniversary of S.L.A.A. Who would have guessed I would “get the program,” much less last for 33 years, my original bottom line a bit bent and battered but still unbroken, a newer, stronger one forged in titanium to take its place!?!

My memory of how mind-altering pornography and intrigue were makes me cringe, and I reach out to be sure I still have God at my side, still helping me navigate through life so I won't wander too far off the recovery path.

Remembering the soul-searing, ego-stripping time when I faced love addiction withdrawal, I feel again the terrible pain. And I know I would still go to any lengths not to have to experience that pain again, or inflict it on someone else. I review my list of amends that can never be fully made, and some that could not even be made partly right, and a sense of deep humility washes over me.

I could never have imagined back at the beginning what life could be like 33 years later. I didn't need to, actually. It was enough that I wanted sobriety —



enough that I was willing to do anything to stay above my bottom lines, one day or one hour at a time. Life itself made it necessary for me to collect a lot of recovery tools, although some were more important than others.

I needed them to keep me from slipping off the spiritual ground. I try to stay comfortably above the line on the shore. The dark ocean of addiction ebbs and flows just beyond that shore.

I found the sponsor tool first, and learned to accept the help he offered. The tool of living in the present day broke up for me the piles of life's rocky problems into one at a time that I could climb over or walk around.

The surrender tool was a sharp scythe that cut the over-

grown weeds of my ego, so I could listen and learn.

The thick rubber of my need for help became a bungee cord that kept me from being smashed into the ground, bouncing me back to safety whenever I stumbled over the cliff of bad choices.

I collected the heavy blocks of the 12 Steps in several sets over the years, now arranged into a series of solid, level places, securely anchored to the side of life's mountain, so that the flowers and growing things of my spiritual life could be landscaped.

Phone calls, meetings, prayer, fellowship, meditation, slogans, journaling, reading; these were some of the building tools with which I gradually constructed a challenging, satisfying, balanced, and joyful life that only got better and better with practice.

Oh, yes, there are still some unfinished rooms and damaged walls needing repair, and I am thinking of putting a new story on top of the older ones.

It will give me a better view of the world and more space to in-

vite my friends and family to visit me.

The most important truth about the tools with which I keep my sobriety in good repair, and the windows of my spiritual condition clear, is that it is the toolbox itself that is worth the most.

The reality is that even now, temptations to "go it alone" and triggers can suddenly appear from anywhere, and I am not always sure what tool I need to use.

Sometimes I pick a tool and it does not fit the problem, and I have to look again for a different one.

I need to have the toolbox close at hand. It was molded from

honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness, and seems to hold whatever tools I put into it.

Whenever I reach in, I am comforted by the feel of all the wonderful tools in it that I can use to support my sobriety today. The ones that served me well at the very beginning of my recovery journey still serve me well, and they have become like extensions of my arms and my feet and my heart.

I take joy in using the tools,

**I need to have  
the toolbox  
close at hand.  
It was molded  
from  
honesty,  
open-mindedness,  
and  
willingness.**

and carry my toolbox of honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness with me everywhere.

I keep each one of my tools polished and ready to use. I practice with them regularly, so they will never get rusty or unfamiliar, or so that I never forget how to use each one.

I trust the quality of my tools, and the Master Builder who continues to teach me how and when to use them. God helps me carry my toolbox when I get tired and vulnerable.

It seems very light when I feel strong, but at other times it seems too heavy to lift at all. At those times I have learned to sit still and rest until my strength comes back, and I am ready to open the toolbox again.

I don't want to take the risk of going out anywhere without my tools, so I try to keep my practice

with all my tools current.

It is simple really. I need all my tools, and something to carry them in. I am filled with gratitude for each tool and for the toolbox itself.

The gifts of what the tools can do have helped me build through 33 years of a life I would not trade with anyone, repairing the damage done by my mistakes, so I can dwell in safe sobriety again.

33 years of recovery in S.L.A.A. have given me the time to build a pretty wonderful toolbox, and that has built my home of sobriety and recovery.

I will carry my toolbox the rest of my life, and care for the tools with gratitude. If I do that every day, there is nothing I need to fear. Thank God!

—BARBARA L.,

SOBRIETY DATE: 3/26/1978

### **Publish Your Event**

Let us know about your group or intergroup sponsored events. We will help you get the word out to our readership.

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

Event notices must be received at least one month prior to the issue date.



## Using The Tools Of Recovery And Service



**T**his year is the 35th Anniversary of Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous. It is a year to celebrate and the Fellowship along with the Board of Trustees (BOT) was all set to do just that with the approval of the bid from the Los Angeles Intergroup to host the International Recovery Convention (IRC) in July 2011.

Unfortunately, events took a turn whereby the board could not guarantee the financial back-

ing for the IRC and the bid was withdrawn. These events were the termination of the past General Manager and going to essential services using part-time staff. This has required all volunteers to step up to service in ways that were not part of the job initially.

Without the tools of recovery I personally could not have continued my service on the board let alone stepped up or moved from GM supervisor to office su-

pervisor.

To qualify for board service I must be 3 years sober from my self-defined bottom-line behaviours. At each BOT call board members qualify to be a member of the BOT by stating his/her sobriety date. This is an important tool of recovery, sobriety. Without sobriety I cannot do service at this level for the Fellowship.

Along with sobriety from my bottom-line behaviors I also needed emotional sobriety. In early sobriety my emotions ran high and low. When I was angry with someone or some situation I could wake the next morning with an emotional hangover. What I learned by using the Steps and staying sober was emotional sobriety. This included my professional life, service responsibilities as well as my intimate relationships.

The Twelve Traditions taught me the most about emotional sobriety. As I volunteered to do service at my home group, as an Intergroup Rep, as chair of Intergroup and then as delegate to my first ABC/M 2003 I needed not just a recovery sponsor to work the Steps but a service sponsor to guide me in the Traditions and service.

Tradition 2 told me to listen to HP who speaks through the group conscience and get myself out of the way for the good of the whole/unity (Tradition 1). Tradition 4 showed me there is only one purpose of any service entity and that is to carry the message to the suffering sex and love addict.

Another benefit of practicing the Traditions was learning to remove personalities and using the principles of the program (Tradition 12); and, stop taking everything so personally. We are fortunate in S.L.A.A. to have 48 principles: Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and Twelve Recommended Guidelines for Dealing with the Media as well as a draft of the Twelve Concepts.

One of my favorite tools of recovery is gratitude. When I am grateful for my sobriety and the principles of the program, I am able to give back and reach out to other suffering sex and love addicts.

S.L.A.A. may not celebrate its 35th year with an IRC but we can celebrate it by taking responsibility that S.L.A.A. is there for the sex and love addict who still suffers in and out of the rooms.

In service,

— RITA H, MONTREAL, QC

# Laughter As A Tool

**W**ow I have been in program so long that I thought for sure they would have found a cure by now <smile>.

It is important to be able to laugh at myself and years ago this was impossible because I took everything so seriously and personally. Laughter is one of my tools that I use because when I get too serious about it all I become so caught up in the old patterns and start spinning in circles.

The laughter allows endorphins to swirl around and create sacred space to allow my goodness to flow out and make me feel good about myself and my world.

S.L.A.A. is one of the most amazing programs and I have learned so much by being in the program. Each time I surrender to my higher power, I am sure to get a test to make sure I am really letting it *all go*.

I have learned so much about myself and my issues and I have a gratitude journal that I endeavor to write in daily so I can look at my progress and find things to be grateful for in my life.

In recovery it seems I get caught up in old patterns of discounting myself so it is so important to acknowledge my growth of all kinds (even the seemingly small things) because that empowers me to keep growing and learning and caring about myself. As I care about myself, I can more healthfully care about other people.



As I become aware of what I am doing and see my pattern of addiction for what it is it becomes

easier to know what I can let go of in my life that saps my energy.

I also strive to be around those who are positive and care about me as a person which is why S.L.A.A. meetings are so important for me, especially the woman's meeting. It is good to be able to share with other women things that concern me as a woman.

It is also important to go to mixed meetings to get the male perspective on things as well and use the skills I learn to better communicate with men and women.

It provides a safe place to share those "dirty" secrets that have haunted me and made me

feel badly about myself. I can get them into the open without having anyone tell me I am wrong, bad, or crazy. That is a godsend for me.

I also write poetry for others that is channeled through me from God. That helps me to feel good about what I can do in my life rather than what I can't do. It allows me to embrace my higher power that thrives within my being.

Choosing to be peaceful is important as well because when I feel that inner peace I can thrive and allow my divine presence to shine through much easier. That helps me feel lighter and freer which lets me feel more serene in the world.

Exercise is also important, especially if I feel anxious or upset. It moves the stagnant energy through my body and allows me to feel more empowered.

I also love talking to friends who are able to understand and relate to recovery and allow me to be me. That's better than wanting to change myself to meet the expectations of others.

I also find that if I am with a man, or anyone who can trigger my love addiction, and I really listen to what they tell me rather than fantasizing about who they are. This helps me to stay centered and honest with myself. I find that when I really listen to

people they will tell me who they are and what they are about but really hearing it is *key*.

It also helps me to pay attention to those red flags that come my way telling me to stay away from a person because they are not for my highest good. (although I must admit that sometimes I need that person in my life so I can really get that I want to be treated well by others. And if someone is in my life who is not treating me so well I get to really feel the pain and decide whether it is worth ignoring the signs to be with that person.)

I used to let those flags hit me so hard in the face that my face was blood red and now I walk the other way as soon as I realize that the flags are painful.

I deserve to be happy and peaceful at all times and in the brilliant flow of life. I use the tools to remind myself of my own goodness in the world. And as I continue to use the steps and listen to my own inner guidance, I work through the process of my own recovery and discovery of life. I do get into fear and sometimes I even still get paralyzed. But I also learn along the way so I can avoid the minefields a little faster each time. Progress not perfection :)

— HOLLEY, ENCINITAS, CA

## Gratitude On SLAA's 35th Birthday

I wanted to acknowledge my gratitude for Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous in a special way on the occasion of its thirty-fifth birthday. S.L.A.A. changed my life.

Or better, it gave me a way to stop destroying myself and start living up to my potential. I started attending S.L.A.A. meetings over twenty years ago. I don't think about it very often, but when I do, I realize that my life would have taken a completely different course if I hadn't stumbled onto S.L.A.A.

I had a long history of out-of-control sexual behavior starting around ten years old and only ending at age forty when I got into recovery. Alcohol and drugs play a big part of my story. I had no idea, until I got into recovery, how much sex I was having.

I never thought about it for a minute, never discussed it with even my closest friends or the therapists I went to.

It was just what I did — I left the house to get a carton of milk and I could easily end up behind a building, or in a public bathroom, or in some lost person's home having wild, mindless sex.

But it was after I became sexually sober that I realized my



relationship style was dangerous, self-centered and emotionally masochistic. I had been in one dramatic, hopeless relationship after another — all of them brief — all of them with handsome, aloof men — all of them ending in what felt like tragedy.

I was always pursuing, as if my life depended on it, one 'unavailable' man after another. And it was only after getting active in S.L.A.A. that I came to realize that I was the 'unavailable' one.

And I started seeing the pattern: pursuit of a hopeless relationship with some fantasy object, the inevitable crash and burn, and then binging out on sex for the next few weeks. Romantic obsession always was followed by long periods of dangerous, emotionally disruptive, sexual acting out.

Ironically, in my circle of

friends I was “Mr. Love.” I “loved” so deeply.

When I got into a relationship, I lost weight, counted the minutes before they returned my phone calls, did anything I could to make myself invaluable to them, and talked about them incessantly.

Now I realize I was living in psychological arrogance. I knew them, the targets of my attention, better than they knew themselves. I knew what they needed. I knew what they were up to. I could outfox them every step of the way.

In S.L.A.A., I began to learn that there was some possibility that I didn’t know what love was. I later realized this idea was a great gift.

I learned that I wasn’t an open, vulnerable good person who fell in love with emotionally shut off, cold, bad people. I was hurt and immature and didn’t know how to be honest with myself or anyone else.

Another irony is that I had always considered myself a very spiritual person.

But in recovery I found that escapist spirituality, spirituality that made me reject life, was part of my problem. I needed to move away from exalted spiritual thoughts and feelings that trans-

ported me out of reality and move into the real. I came to believe that there was a God, that God had faith in me, wanted me to enjoy this world, live up to my potential, and see the value of each person I meet. No more smoke and mirrors.

Also, my life used to be driven by feelings, moods, impulses and drama. Now I have principles that I can live by and that guide me: honesty, openness, willingness and compassion.

I no longer have to plead with someone to make me feel loved. I don’t use people as sources of toxic sex and emotional validation — I don’t ask anyone to make me look and feel good at all costs.

When I get obsessed I know where to turn. When I need to escape into self-centered sexual acting out, I know who to talk to. I feel connected to the people I’m close to and rarely feel exploited or used. Most importantly, love is now synonymous with respect and appreciation not adoration or uncontrollable sexual desire and heartbreak.

And lastly, I used to pride myself on being disconnected from the human race, alienated and alone and depressed. I thought these were signs of intelligence and my deep spirituality. I also

had far too many self-serving opinions about men, women, gay culture, American society and the stupidity of most people I had contact with.

These attitudes and beliefs are now tell-tale signs that I'm shutting down and that I need to be reconnected through meetings and members of the fellowship.

The ability to identify with members of the fellowship — rather than the chronic, monotonous competition, judgment and comparison — is a great gift and a sign that God is restoring me to sanity.

And all of this — meetings, service, literature, etc. — has helped open me up to a life that I never anticipated.

I now realize life can be very difficult. There is no easy access to a permanent sense of security, or permanently high self-esteem, or an endlessly fulfilling romantic relationship. Shame and self-hatred still go on the attack in my head.

But there is love everywhere if I stay open to it, and keep my heart in the right place. So I thank all of the women and men I've traveled with and may God continue to bless S.L.A.A.!

— GLENN L., LOS ANGELES

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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



## Tools of Recovery For A Love Addict

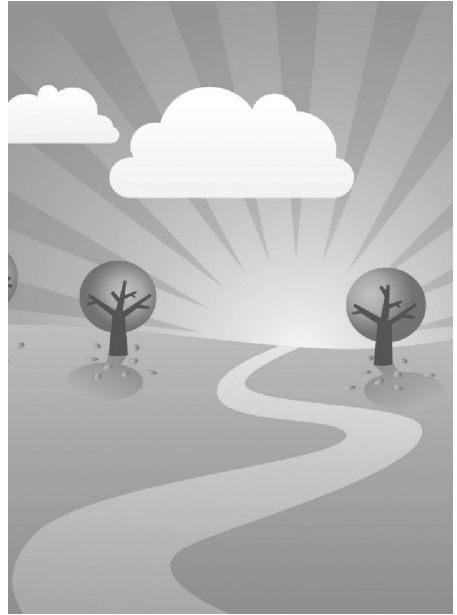
**H**ow do I personally use the tools of recovery? Staying on the path of recovery is a day-to-day thing for me. I have been in S.L.A.A for over a decade.

I consider myself a recovering love addict, and yet, I have discovered that at any moment of doubt, fear, or loneliness, I can create a situation where I can fall back into fantasy, into the high of allowing my addiction to run me.

The tools of recovery that keep me on the path include remembering and following Step 3: Turning my will and my life over to my Higher Power. I also admit I am powerless over my addiction and its lure. Only Higher Power can restore me to sanity. Then I consciously let my Higher Power take over.

This always works if I really mean it and commit. I have been through enough pain to know that the path of recovery is infinitely more satisfying than a few minutes rush that always leads to pain and disillusionment. Each time is more painful than the last.

Attending meetings and shar-



ing with program members are tools of recovery that work. In the past, I felt so alone and alienated. Now I have a place to go where I can share safely with those who understand.

I also read spiritual books, listen to spiritual tapes, and attend workshops for healing, growth, and fellowship. S.L.A.A. has changed my life.

I am grateful for the tools, the awareness, and the growth I have experienced through this program. I don't know if I could have survived without it. Thankfully, S.L.A.A. provided me with the life ring that restored me to peace and sanity.

— NANCY P., ENCINITAS, CA



## Gratitude For The Tools Of Recovery



PHOTO BY FIONA

I am so grateful for the S.L.A.A. program of recovery. There are a lot of tools in the S.L.A.A. program of recovery. The big ones for me are the 12 Steps, the 12 Traditions, the Basic Text, my sponsor and sponsees, meetings, the 12 Characteristics, the 12 Signs of Recovery, *the Journal*, the many pamphlets, and on and on.

When I got to my first S.L.A.A. meeting a long time ago I was desperate to find out what was wrong with me (Leon). All I knew was that something horrible was wrong with me. It was like my hair was on fire. My first meeting started with a brief new

persons' meeting. I heard the meeting chair say that it was a group conscience boundary that all new people had to attend a brief introduction to S.L.A.A. Then and there I had already heard a reference to one of the "big" tools in my recovery tool kit – boundaries!

Before S.L.A.A. I didn't have a clue about boundaries. I thought they were just lines on a map or something like that. I had always talked about somebody else's stuff because I had so much shame about my own stuff – and, besides, their stuff was a lot more interesting to talk about. In S.L.A.A. I learned the differences

between walls and boundaries. Walls are rigid, solid and unmovable. Boundaries are flexible, hopefully transparent and move around based on my personal circumstances.

Now, after years of S.L.A.A. recovery, I find that boundaries come to me easily in many aspects of my life – personal, social and familial, and sitting in my tool kit right next to my “boundary” tool is my “progress not perfection” tool.

Since I don't have perfect boundaries, I need to focus on progress – otherwise I start beating myself up emotionally. And when that happens I can easily get into toxic shame. And I don't need to do that because toxic shame is like rocket fuel for my addict to jet off into sexual fantasy and oblivion of love addiction.

Unconditional love is another essential tool for me. I know that the unconditional love of the program heals. I grew up in a home full of conditional love where love was based on my behavior or was purchased. Growing up I heard statements like, “If you do your chores I'll love you.” or “If I didn't love you I wouldn't have given you that new toy.” So I learned that love was an object. I grew up thinking

that people were like objects and that objects were like people. In going to S.L.A.A. meetings I found that healing love of my higher power expressed through my friends in recovery in S.L.A.A.. That's how I found a loving caring God who forgives me again and again and again and again.

Spirituality is both a tool and a gift of my recovery in S.L.A.A. I had tons of religiosity on board when I got into the program. Thanks to my higher power and all the people in all the meetings I've attended, I was able to let the God of my understanding into my heart. Continuing my spiritual practice is a critical tool for my sobriety in S.L.A.A..

These days S.L.A.A. service is another tool of my recovery. If I say that I love S.L.A.A. then I need to put feet under those words. I can not just talk-the-talk – by giving back to S.L.A.A. what I have so freely received, I am walking the walk. I work in service to make my words and actions match. In service, God gives me lots of opportunities to practice my boundaries and to grow further in my emotional sobriety.

Lots of unconditional love and support (LOULAS)

– LEON C.

## An Inspirational Story



**I**t was 5 degrees outside as the wind was starting to kick up. It was also beginning to snow as I was about to chair a Friday night speaker meeting.

It was my first time chairing a large meeting, so I was very nervous. My speaker was nowhere to be found – the meeting was to begin in 20 minutes. We had no cell phones or GPS's, they did not exist 25 years ago.

As I was setting up the meeting room a very frail, frightened young man entered the room and asked – “Is this the S.L.A.A. meeting?”

I said “Yes. Can you set up some chairs while I run around

and find my speaker?” The young man nodded his head and began to set up the folding chairs. I could tell by his nervousness that this was his very first meeting. I left the room.

I found my speaker outside in the cold trying to find the building we were in. It was normally a large meeting, usually 20 to 30 people on Fridays.

As I entered the room with my speaker I was overwhelmed by the number of attendees, maybe 40 or 50 people ! It was such a terribly cold night, yet everyone showed up including the young man who set up all the chairs.

My speaker told his story. It was quite powerful. There was an incredible sense of hope in the room for all of us when he finished speaking. I opened up the meeting for sharing and the young man raised his hand first to share. I called upon him immediately because I knew it was his first time ever, and I felt he was so brave.

He shared that he had spent \$3,000 in one month on phone sex. He said he was addicted to the (900) numbers and would do anything to make sure the phone company wouldn't shut off his home phone (remember, we had no cell phones then, no internet, no streaming videos etc.) He went on to say that he stopped paying rent, stopped buying diapers for his child, bought only minimal food and was now without heat because the oil company did not make his delivery.

His share devastated me! I had never heard that one before. A \$3,000 phone bill — 25 years ago !!! I thought to myself, “what a tragedy.”

While driving home I was very upset for this young man. I agonized about his pain.

I went to bed and woke up in the middle of the night and had what I call a “spiritual nudge” — a feeling like ***I had to do***

### ***something.***

I had no idea what to do at that moment, but I knew there had to be thousands of people like this young man who was hopelessly addicted to dialing (900) numbers.

I looked in the newspaper in the morning and found 4 pages of (900) phone numbers. I felt sick to my stomach.

Feeling depressed, I lay back down on my bed. Suddenly out of nowhere, a feeling of hope came over me when the idea of an inspirational phone line just popped into my head.

I began to think of things like, “What if there was a phone line, say 1-900-S.L.A.A.-Hope” or “What if there was a free phone line where people could call in and hear a message and not have to dial a (900) number?”

“What if there was a number available 24 hours a day-7 days a week where a person could feel safe to share their innermost secrets and not be judged or criticized?” The thoughts kept coming, the possibilities seemed endless.

At the Intergroup meeting that month I proposed my idea to the group. I asked for \$60 to buy an answering machine and \$60 to set up the phone line.

Back then there were no digi-

tal voice mails, just the old fashioned tape machines. I contacted AT&T and for an extra 5 bucks a month I got the phone number SLA-1234. This was the birth of the Delaware Valley Intergroup's 24 Hour Inspiration Line.

In the beginning, it was a little difficult coming up with inspirational thoughts to put on the line every night. However, after a few months others in the fellowship offered to do service on the line and share their experience, strength and hope. It was wonderful.

Today, 25 years later, the Inspirational Line is alive and well. Every day volunteers leave wonderful messages for the fellowship to hear. People call in from all over the country. Approximately 18 to 25 calls per day, every day, long holiday weekends, even more.

At last count there were 6,552 calls over a 12-month period to

the new Inspiration Line number 215-574-2120. The volunteers (message makers) come from all walks of life, and from multiple cities. One is from New York, three from California, one from New Mexico, two from Pennsylvania. The group is dedicated and is always open to more volunteers.

The inspiration line has helped many people in their time of need. Some of us have referred to the line as "Your 3 a.m. sponsor."

The line is a gift that I can not take credit for. The credit goes to that young man who I encountered 25 years ago at his first meeting.

I wish him well, as I have never seen or heard from him again.

In service,

— MICHAEL S.,

DELAWARE VALLEY INTERGROUP

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## **Sponsor to Sponsee**

**Sponsee:** My addict wants to revisit an old flame

**Sponsor:** You'll get burned!

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## Getting Out Of My Comfort Zone

**S**.L.A.A. was the catalyst that made me get out of my comfort zone (not really that comfortable! :) and break up my patterns of thought and behavior. I was excited to continue on a spiritual journey, now that I knew that suffering was optional!

By participating in “alternative” programs (not just traditional “talk” therapy), lectures, and multi-day intensives, I’ve been better able to free myself from the constructs of my mind and connect with spirit.

I continue to connect with recovering people from 12 step programs from S.L.A.A. as well as A.A. I regularly (at least mostly!) attend my temple (Self Realization Fellowship) where I’m able to commune with seekers, quiet the mind, and let spirit in. I need a place and regular

moments where I am *not talking* (which for me can be a way of intellectualizing and avoiding) and where I can be still and allowing. I make sure that every so often I challenge myself to read a book or listen to a speaker that is out of my comfort zone, so I don’t get stuck in my same-old-same-old. Each time it opens me up, and the old constructs that made me tick before seem to fall further and further away.

Every so often when addictive thoughts/desires come to the surface, I remember the 12 steps and imagine myself making amends to those I hurt, and I remember the pain and fear it has caused. I immediately connect with gratitude and spirit, and look at the two side by side. I am so grateful to be on this path of recovery!

— HEATHER, ENCINITAS, CA

Using the tools of  

**RECOVERY**

# Share space

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## Boundaries As Limits

**B**oundaries make me think of limits — one of the key tools and most painful realizations of my S.L.A.A. program. I need them to be sober, period.

Some will change over time, others have not. Turns out... as an unrecovered sex and love addict, I didn't want to admit I had limits and so, of course, boundaries just "weren't for me."

Trouble was, I had internal boundaries — walls built from many, many years ago that were operating rigidly everywhere I went though I thought I was seeming like a "carefree, easy going person."

Today boundaries with myself and others are the key component to my sobriety. I don't do things that cause me actual harm emotionally, psychologically, physically or spiritually. That

being said, because I strive not to have walls I am willing to stretch myself in new areas and relationships, within moderation, to keep boundaries.

My dating plan taught me boundaries with time, sharing, and physical limits.

My boundaries once kept everyone out, now I'm learning they are what keep me and everyone around me safe. It is clear, however, that as a sex and love addict, I can't identify healthy boundaries without the help of my sponsor, Higher Power, and program.

I ask for guidance from fellowship and am willing to practice boundaries one day at a time. As a result, I feel safer and am more loving to myself and others.

— LOREN O.

## The 12 Steps of Recovery: Step Four

Four of the scariest words in the English language are “we need to talk”—especially when arranged in that order and spoken by our spouse. Similarly, the prospect of taking “a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves,” evokes feelings of fear (more like terror), anxiety, dread, alarm, horror, and vulnerability, among others.

Because of Bill W’s writing style, the Fourth Step is much maligned. A “moral” inventory! The very idea! Actually, most people contemplating this step misunderstand and misinterpret Bill’s words, believing that the Fourth Step should be, at best, an amoral inventory, and at worst, an immoral inventory. Nothing can be further from the truth!

Bill often taught new concepts or ideas by comparing them with commonplace, well-understood concepts and ideas. Thus, Bill compares our personal inventory with a businessman who takes a commercial inventory of his merchandise. He further describes this physical inventory as “a fact-finding and a fact-facing process” in an effort to “discover the truth” about the “stock-in-trade.”

Bill eschewed using the same descriptive word twice. Knowing this quirk about his writing style allows us to compare this physical inventory with our self-inventory. Our Fourth Step should be a:

searching – or “fact-finding”  
fearless – or “fact-facing” and  
moral – or truthful  
“inventory” or accounting of our  
nature or character, which is our  
“stock-in-trade.”

“Moral” as used by Bill W in the Fourth Step simply means that our inventory must be honest—“truthful.” It includes both our oft-neglected good points as well as those pesky character defects (“damaged or unsalable goods”) that we will uncover in the Sixth Step and ask our Higher Power to remove in the Seventh Step.

By accepting Bill W’s invitation to be rigorously honest with ourselves in the Fourth Step, we can come out of denial and admit “the exact nature of our wrongs” first to the God of our understanding, then to ourselves, and finally to another human being in our Fifth Step. By honestly facing ourselves—both our positive traits and our shortcomings—we can be free from



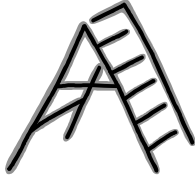
the chains of our past and have a true connection with our Higher Power. As promised in Step Eleven of the S.L.A.A. text, "Thus we came to find intimacy with

ourselves, intimacy with God, and then intimacy with others." What a gift!

— ROBERT H. SANTA CLARA, CA



**Meetings**



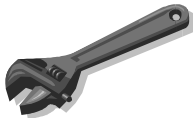
**Fellowship**



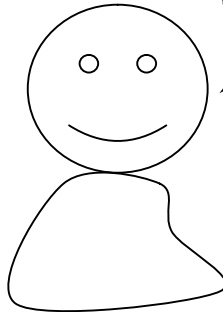
**Reading and writing**



**Withdrawal**



**Sponsorship**



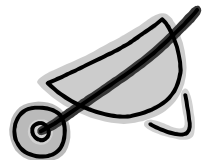
**Spirituality**



**Steps**



**Sobriety**



**Outreach calls**



**Service**

# Using the Tools of Recovery

# REMEMBERING RICH

## THE FOUNDER OF JAA

### 2011

BY BARBARA L

**R**ich approached me at a 12-Step meeting in 1978 where he recognized that I might be a sex and love addict. He was right. He became the sponsor who would inspire me, coach me, and support me as I put my first few years of S.L.A.A. sobriety together. I owe him my life, and in this 35th year of S.L.A.A. fellowship existence, I wanted to share with you the Rich that I remember.

When I first met Rich, I was impressed but puzzled that there was no physical contact of any kind, not even a handshake or pat on the arm, because hugging others was very standard in 12-Step meetings at that time. In the Basic Text, it records that in the early years as the meetings ended, we said the serenity prayer along with the statement, "We are not a hand holding fellowship."

Rich had recognized that physical contact could be risky

when we were all so newly sober. In all the years I knew and worked with Rich, there was no physical touch at all except for a brief handshake as I left, and later still, a brief, upper body hug, again, always in public when I was leaving to go home. I never saw him hug anyone else, either, except his children.

Over the next few years, and through the "Book Project," I got to know Rich as a man, a husband, a father, a friend, a sponsor, and a dedicated trusted servant to our Fellowship.

Rich was tall and good looking, but his awareness of how that had served his addiction while having no relevance to recovery was evident in his comfortable humility and the amusement with which he talked about himself.

Although most men at that time still smoked, Rich did not. He kept fit by running and followed a mostly vegetarian diet. In the beginning it was herbal teas that were provided at S.L.A.A. meetings, not the coffee pot inevitably present at A.A. gatherings.

When Rich and I talked he would look directly into my eyes, a sign of openness it took me many months to offer in return. He talked about the events in his life, his own behavior, and current temptations with direct and deep honesty.

This contrasted sharply with my ability to share my own experiences, which were so filled with shame I didn't even want to remember them, much less tell another human being. He described the obsession as "fiendishly mind-altering" focusing my attention sharply on how difficult it was not only to get clear, but to stay aware of how the addiction was affecting my life.

Although Rich would talk in general about his parents and others in his life experience, I never heard Rich speak of anyone with disrespect. He held himself to a very high standard, and others as well, but he was for the most part kind in his judgments of others.

He was most affected when

others betrayed the trust he put in them. I don't remember ever feeling as though Rich was trying to impress others, or to seem to be one whit better – or worse – than he really was. Above all, he

was deeply committed to honesty with himself and others. He inspired in me as much honesty as I could summon.

Rich and his wife, a long time member of Al-anon, were authoritative role models for sober living, not hiding their conflicts and sometimes daunting struggles as a couple, but living

strongly in harmony with the principles of the 12 Steps of recovery. Rich told me there were times that he slept under his piano for 2 or 3 nights when they were having conflicts, and that often the feelings he had would be like withdrawal.

But they were always able to work things out and be best friends, lovers, and married partners again. He never told me one negative thing about his wife, or even one embarrassing detail of their conflicts. Rich was

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**Rich was not a saint. But he held himself to the highest standard of all, and never withheld forgiveness when a wrong was truly made right.**

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always in his own inventory, respecting his own privacy and that of his wife and family.

Rich always spoke of his children with love and joy clearly evident. He confessed to occasional doubts about how good a parent he was, but I could see nothing but healthy normalcy in the way he interacted with his children.

When he spoke of his marriage and family, it was with gratitude, pride, and even wonder. Sometimes he referred to the challenges of his marital reconciliation, and of how marital counseling could help.

By 1982 the Book Project was starting, and everyone was encouraged to write for the book. Rich, however, was the only one to offer more than a few pages on a special topic.

He wrote the Steps as a single chapter to emphasize that flow as a spiritual awakening that developed gradually and inevitably as we begin to take responsibility first for our own patterns of addiction, and then for our lives.

In this program the Steps had emerged in order, a continuous process, as though any bargaining at all with the necessity of commitment to the process as a whole would stall any recovery.

Rich would write a draft of some part of the book. He would

read it at a meeting, get feedback, rewrite it again, and put it through another round. He would then send the third draft to me, for my comments, edits, and additions (which were few). A fourth draft was then written. In all, the writing became a half-time job for Rich, while his wife was the primary support for the family.

Early in the project I wrote a contract that was accepted through group conscience sometime in 1982. The contract put in writing the openness of the writing and editing process, specified that no one but the fellowship would ever own the Book and that no royalties would be paid.

The contents of that contract had all the things in it I needed to control my own (and others) less-than-worthy underlying motives to try to get profit and selfish recognition through the Book project.

It is remarkable to look back and realize that no such contract was needed for Rich. His integrity about the book was untouched and solid throughout the time we worked on it together and with the rest of the Fellowship.

Rich did not write the Basic Text for himself, or for financial gain. His motive was entirely, as far as I could tell, to preserve the

message of recovery so that individual human failings could not distort it overly much.

Rich had no false humility about the significance of the work he was doing to create the Basic Text. But he always saw the writing as the result of recovery, his own and that of others, and a gift from his own gratitude.

He believed completely that he owed that recovery to a Higher Power, to his own soul or higher self, and to the S.L.A.A. members who were validating his recovery by replicating it in their own individually unique ways.

Rich consulted with anyone and everyone in S.L.A.A. who was interested, and consistently encouraged others to write competing versions if they were willing to put in the effort.

Rich's relationship with the S.L.A.A. Fellowship was also a demonstration of the depth of his humility. Never once did I see Rich oppose the workings of group conscience, which he faithfully carried out, whether he agreed as an individual with the choices or not.

This did not stop him from trying to get the "best" result from that group conscience, but he supported with his actions even those decisions with which

he disagreed.

In the Basic Text there is a passage about "external enemy seekers." Rich understood well what it was like to be labeled "the enemy." Several times he was targeted for extreme and generally unjustified criticism and attack by those more interested in discrediting his account of working the Steps rather than actually do them.

I have had those failings myself, looking for subtle ways to reduce Rich's stature in my own eyes and that of others, by relating things in a way that suggested more negativity than was really there.

Rich was not a saint. He was strong minded, sometimes opinionated, and could at times be judgmental of others. But he held himself to the highest standard of all, and never withheld forgiveness when a wrong was truly made right.

Unfortunately, soon after the Book manuscript was accepted by the Fellowship, I took a side road away from the recovery path I had been following, abandoning my friend and sponsor Rich, and my responsibilities to the Fellowship of S.L.A.A. to continue a relationship it took me 3 years to fully admit was addictive.

For that abandonment, Rich

could never forgive me, and I have never forgiven myself for the hurt I caused others for my love addiction.

I have a letter from Rich written in 1984 in which he wrote about the challenges of bringing the Basic Text to publication, and of his growing need to withdraw from the center of S.L.A.A. service.

When the book was published and the support of FWS secure, Rich withdrew from active service to the fellowship. He never took a single penny from the fellowship as payment for his writing or his years of selfless service.

Rich was asked if he would write something for this coming edition of *The Journal*, but he declined. Rich often said that when he began recovery for sex and love addiction that he had “made a bargain with his own

soul.”

It was a bargain he has never betrayed. He told me today that he paid his debt to S.L.A.A. in full long ago, and that S.L.A.A. is

better off without a visible founder. Knowing me too well, he said I must not try to interpret or represent any part of what I thought his message would be.

But he did give me permission to report that he has all the elements in his life today to live with fulfillment and joy.

Rich is still sober after almost 35 years, and at-

tends meetings where he finds nurture for his own recovery, changing meetings often so that his anonymity can be absolute.

Rich said to congratulate the Fellowship on its 35 years, and said to give this message: “Tell them I am still sober, and have become a phantom.”

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**FREE ISSUE of the Journal ~  
[www.slaafws.org/journal/freeissue](http://www.slaafws.org/journal/freeissue)**

## What Is S.L.A.A.?

The beginning of 2008 marked the beginning of my life in recovery. I had been in rehab for 2 weeks when my counselor suggested S.L.A.A. to me. I was horrified.

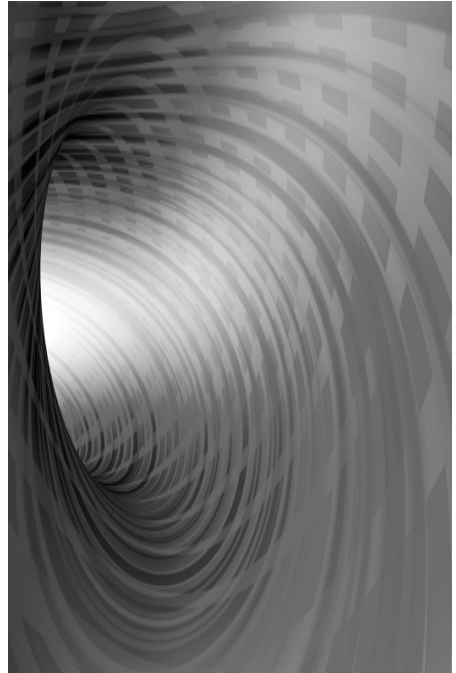
After all, I was in rehab because of severe depression. I wasn't an addict like so many of my friends.

I could stomach the label of codependent, but I was not an addict of any sort. I worked Step 1 three different times because my counselor did not believe I got the "powerless" part.

During week 5 of rehab I had to devise a recovery plan. Part of my recovery program was to attend at least one S.L.A.A. meeting a week.

I went to the meetings embarrassed and ashamed to walk in the room. I cried and refused to share. I didn't have much to say until I got my 9-month chip and was the "speaker" on the same night.

Somewhere during that nine month time period I came to realize how much I needed to be in those rooms. I was amazed each time someone said "Hi, my name is.... and I'm a sex and love addict." I could barely say I was a



love addict. And then women would talk about their problems regarding sex and relationships.

I started to see my unhealthy patterns. I finally admitted to being a sex addict after I got a sponsor and started working the steps. I started to feel empowered. I had my own addiction to work on now. I stopped focusing on my husband's addiction.

S.L.A.A. as a program is a perfect fit for me. I started opening up by talking to my sponsor and soon after I started talking at meetings. I've been attending the same meeting for 3 years.

I've watched members triumph, struggle, lose their sobriety and keep coming back. My friends in S.L.A.A. are a God-given support group.

Through S.L.A.A. I've learned so much about my addiction. As I stated earlier, I was in rehab for severe depression. Step work, fellowship and my S.L.A.A. sponsor have even helped me cope with my depression symptoms too. 12-step programs help people in remarkable ways. Just keep coming back.

—PAM

**To Do List:**

- #1. Subscribe to the *Journal*
- #2. Go to [www.slaafws.org](http://www.slaafws.org) and subscribe to the *Journal*
- #3. Enjoy reading the *Journal*

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*this meeting in print.*

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## Quotation Corner

- It's easy to find S.L.A.A. — go to hell and make a u-turn.
- God help me obtain the virtues I think I already have.
- When we cease to perceive value in suffering, healing is instantaneous.
- I never once called the beer-making corporation and apologized to them for not drinking their beer.
- Pain is the touchstone of spiritual growth.
- People who say that time doesn't mean anything either don't have any or haven't done any.
- All I ever wanted was an unfair advantage.
- The hardest of all is learning to be a well of affection, and not a fountain, to show them that we love them, not when we feel like it, but when they do.
- You don't have to be sick to want to get well. But if you don't want to get well, you are sick.
- I wish he would bring me back. He took everything but my body with him when he left.
- **Newcomer:** "How do I know how many meeting I should attend each week?"  
**Old-timer:** "Gradually cut back until you act out, then you'll know."

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](http://directory.slaafws.org/intl_phone)

**Upcoming Events**

**3 events in Los Angeles: go to [www.slaalosangeles.org](http://www.slaalosangeles.org) for more info:**

**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>

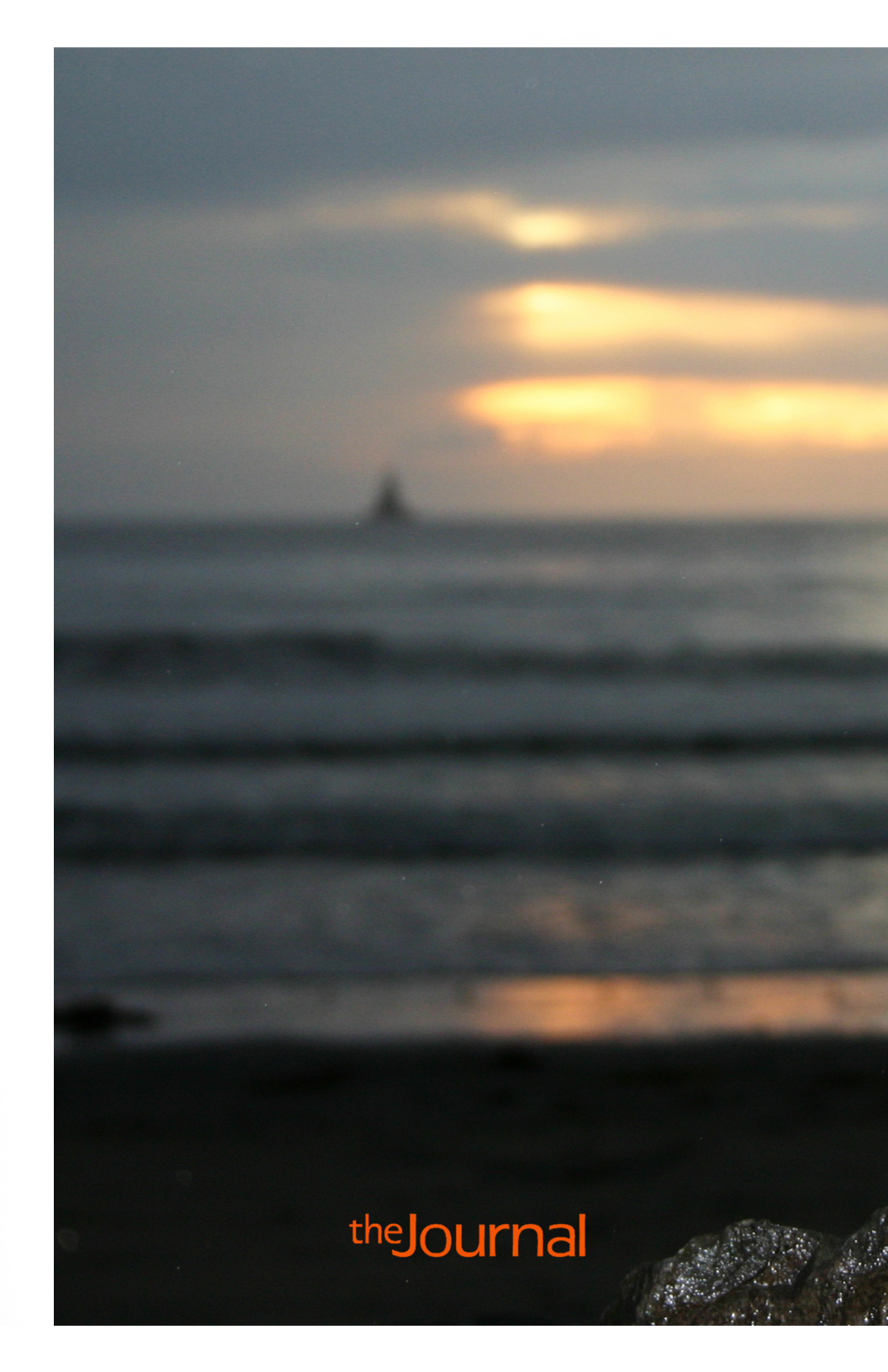
**August 19 - 21**

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](http://www.slaafws.org)**

# *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.



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