

The background of the cover is a photograph of a landscape. In the center, a multi-tiered pagoda sits atop a hill. The hill is covered in trees and is reflected in a calm body of water in the foreground. The sky is a soft, hazy orange, suggesting a sunrise or sunset. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

theJournal

Issue # 133

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Spirituality in
S.L.A.A.

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:

Spirituality is a lifelong endeavor. My husband identifies in 12-Step meetings as an atheist who prays. I've heard it said in meetings that you can take a door knob as your Higher Power as long as you know there's a Higher Power and you're not it. Some have shared about their sponsor taking them to the beach and telling them to go out and attempt to stop the waves. When they fail, they know that there must be a Higher Power directing the waves because they can't control them. I once told my atheist brother this story and he said "I'm my own Higher Power."

We were on our way to a vacation in Mexico and I needed to stop by an ATM for some cash. We had this spiritual discussion on the way to the bank. I was telling him that I had a lightening bolt spiritual experience and went from being an atheist/agnostic to a believer. He thought believers were weak and you needed to be in control of your own life. I told him about the idea that we can't explain electricity yet we depend on it every day. He was still convinced that he could control his own destiny. We got to the bank and I inserted my debit card in the ATM machine. "Machine out of order" popped up on the screen and there was a grinding sound as it ate my debit card. I started pushing buttons in an attempt to retrieve the card. No luck. I turned to my brother and said "OK, Higher Power, give me my card back." He just laughed.

There are many events in life that can't be explained or controlled. Having a Higher Power in my life has made that OK for me. In the past I couldn't live with the fear that being out of control put me in. But it's exhausting to always try to control the uncontrollable. Higher Power gave me the freedom to live my life without running around like a hamster on a wheel trying to fix everything. I don't have to fix anything because it's all in God's plan. And God's plan for my life is so much better than my own.

Meditation and prayer can be difficult for nonbelievers or people who don't recognize their disease yet. I struggled for years trying to control and manage my disease, refusing to take step 1 for love addiction, sometimes not even recognizing my sickness in certain areas. Sex and love addiction is tricky because sometimes we don't even see it. And meditation is difficult for addicts whose minds race all the time -which includes most of us. Letting go and letting God takes work and practice but it's a direct line to serenity. And it's the best place to live!

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.

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Question of the Day & Answers from Yesterday

The Question of the Day from the last issue was, "How do you define the Higher Power of your understanding?" Here are some wonderful responses for your enjoyment. They are not presented in any particular order.

HOW DO YOU DEFINE THE HIGHER POWER OF YOUR UNDERSTANDING?

My highest power is an entity outside me that I turn to for advice, for encouragement and for sustenance. It can be from God or it can be from group conscience.

— BRUCE M., OMAHA, NE

I am a Christian, but as a part of my recovery I have moved from a dogmatic, denominational God to a belief in a deity of unconditional love, compassion and understanding.

— FREDRIK L., UPPSALA, SWEDEN

#1 it's not me. It's not people places or things. It is perfect love. It is this world but higher than this world. It is almighty and all-powerful. It discloses itself every time when I, or anyone, draw close to him.

— KATRINA, LOS ANGELES, CA

My higher power is like my good-natured supervisor. Some one or entity who has a better set of competencies and to whom I can turn to for support. He is also my guardian and my good inspiration — a love guiding principle.

— CHRISTINE L., MONTREAL,
CANADA

My Higher Power is something practical that's difficult to define but that speaks to me in whispers in moments of doubt and in moments of happiness. It is the living proof of the spiritual awakening I receive through Step work; it's the change in behavior — living and dealing with resentments and fears. It speaks through others and through the many coincidences I see in my life.

— OWEN, NEW YORK, NY

HOW DO YOU DEFINE THE HIGHER POWER OF YOUR UNDERSTANDING?

Life itself is my higher power. It's so much stronger than anything and the connection is my gut feeling that I'm learning to trust. My inspiration is the program and Buddhism.

— CARMEN B.L., STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN

I don't define it, it defines me.

— MARCELO, SAN DIEGO, CA

My higher power is the ideal woman I strive to be. She is calm, serene, kind, understanding, compassionate, peaceful, wise, helpful, and selfless.

— CARRIE, LOS ANGELES, CA

My higher power is the creator of humanity that resides inside each one of us. He exists with me and inside of me, experiencing my life with me.

— MATT, LOS ANGELES, CA

I view my HP today as a very loving, accessible, warm and ever abiding source of comfort, love, and guidance. Through practicing Step 11 daily, it sustains me through my life and keeps me peaceful and serene, from the inside. Today it is about trusting and receiving this acceptance and relinquishing control TODAY. It is the POWER, which is Love and Grace that trumps all appearances. Practicing progress not perfection and being in the presence, this spiritual nourishment flows when I'm in nature, alone, and increasingly with others. It is collaborative teamwork. I love some of the language of Step 11 in our Basic Text. From p. 100: "Our growing relationship with God was like a stabilizing keel beneath us. Prayer and meditation, stabilizing keel, guaranteed we would not capsize; We would retain our buoyancy on the ocean of life. We could survive whatever life might throw us."

— SALLIE, GAINESVILLE, FL

QUESTION OF THE DAY

When I was newly sober, it was like Congress! I thought everyone had their own personal HP, then all “area HPs” met periodically and elected an “area HP Rep” and so on. Now, it’s a more global sense of energy that makes things happen and takes care of me. When times are tough though, I still fall back to what worked for me in the beginning.

— MARCELLA M., LOS ANGELES, CA

The creator of me and that it gives me hope to grow in S.L.A.A.

— BRADLEY Q., NORTH HOLLYWOOD, CA

The Higher Power of my understanding is loving, understanding, and has my best interest in mind. My H.P. has supported my recovery by offering guidance, emotional security and blunt honesty. I have received many miracles and a few rebukes. Ultimately, my H.P. wants to give me an abundant life and walk with me during this journey. I feel safe with a Power greater than myself loving me.

— ELIZABETH, LOS ANGELES, CA

God is loving and powerful, but he wants us to give over our needs to him/her.

— ANONYMOUS, LOS ANGELES, CA

My higher power came to me gently and with the understanding that it was the highest and best part of me and everyone else; whether I knew or liked it or not.

— RITA H., MONTREAL, CANADA

The power that keeps me coming back to meetings when I just want to give up.

— DAWN E., NORTH HOLLYWOOD, CA

My Higher Power is exactly what I did not experience or understand until I got here. My Higher Power loves me beyond anything I could ever imagine. My Higher Power is always with me, cheering me on, encouraging me to be an even better me. Thank you, God and S.L.A.A.!!

— JUDI D., LOS ANGELES, CA

HOW DO YOU DEFINE THE HIGHER POWER OF YOUR UNDERSTANDING?

Sort of like the invisible man-you never see him (or her), but when you ask the question, “What good things happened in your life yesterday without any effort on your part?” You see the evidence of its presence.

— ARTHUR, LOS ANGELES, CA

My higher power is what keeps me floating and okay when my addict would believe all is lost. I experience it listening to shares, calling and receiving calls from program brothers, and having opportunities to be of service... so that I can look back on my days with pride and “less” shame.

— MICHAEL, LOS ANGELES, CA

The transmitter of reality based mental, physical, emotional and spiritual information received through my senses.

— JOHN L., GAINESVILLE, FL

Without God as the center of my life, recovery from sex and love addiction would not be possible for me. It is through God's grace, mercy and forgiveness that has allowed me to pick myself back up from a life that was spinning out of control. It was when I “let go and let God” take the wheel that my life got back on track.

— ELLIOTT G., LODI, CA

I do not understand my higher power completely and prefer to keep it that way.

— DAVID, LOS ANGELES, CA

I used to say I define my higher power as “Higher Power knows itself to be.” But then things fell apart in my life, and I realized that my H.P. was all smoke and mirrors. Today I choose to call my H.P. God. My God is my salvation and my source of power and life.

— SUSAN G., SUNSET BEACH, CA

QUESTION OF THE DAY

My Higher Power is the Supreme Being of the universe, who communicates with people in many ways. God may speak through scripture, the quotes of the wise, or the simple wisdom of an ordinary person like my sponsor. I rely on God for healing.

— RAMON S., LOS ANGELES, CA

My HP is a loving friend who knows me better than I. My HP loves, guides and forgives.

— GARRY K., MEDINA, OH

Because my Higher Power is beyond my understanding, the best I can do is surrender to the unknown with a faith that the same power, which created the entire universe, including me, will continue to provide and protect me always and in all ways.

— CLIFF, LOS ANGELES, CA

My higher power is my own self. I don't believe in following the rules or laws of others if I do not personally understand them.

— REBECCA N., LOS ANGELES, CA

God is my best friend. He is the One who keeps me sober, when my addict wants to throw the program away, wants to act out and hate myself again. Every day, I have to take Step One. God reminds me that I am worth it. I deserve to be sober today.

— MARSHA Z., BOSTON, MA

A loving, compassionate source of wisdom.

— KELLI H., AUSTIN, TX

At this point, I don't have a definitive understanding. But when I lost faith, or just doubted, the meetings dramatically helped — especially hearing other women's miracles and then having my own. I say the 3rd Step Prayer a lot and that helps.

— RUTH S., LOS ANGELES, CA

HOW DO YOU DEFINE THE HIGHER POWER OF YOUR UNDERSTANDING?

As a human with limited capacity to conceptualize the infinite, I define “the Higher Power of my understanding” as whatever feels closest to me at the time – Goddess, Shaman, the Spirit of my dead son, Jesus, Buddha, Lao Tzu – whatever it is, it will fall short, but I will be able to relate.

— RICK K., SANTA CRUZ, CA

The legacy of S.L.A.A. through the support of the S.L.A.A. peers is what keeps me sane and in that sense, S.L.A.A. is my higher power.

— AURORA F., LOS ANGELES, CA

True love, sharing, Power taking care of me no matter how hard I try to deny it... Energetic Presence that answers my prayers, gives me what I need no matter what, connection with my fellows, and true intimacy.

— MICHELLE L., LOS ANGELES CA

My Higher Power is a loving light of guidance and wholeness.

— ROSE B., SANTA MONICA, CA

My Higher Power is an older, wiser, more beautiful version of me. Like a friend that I can talk to and turn to anytime, and who is always there for me. When I turn my will and my life over to Her, I immediately relax and know I’m taken care of.

— BREE N., CULVER CITY, CA

My higher power is a powerful, gracious, non-judgmental force that allows me to be human.

— ANONYMOUS, LOS ANGELES, CA

My starter’s definition of God is pragmatic: The sum of my recovery group’s conscience and power is more than the sum of its parts. My God is part of that difference. My own power is also greater if I see myself as a part of God’s plan. I can pray in second person without actually knowing whom I’m praying to - faking it, so to speak, until I make it. That’s okay with my God.

— WILLIAM M., MARIESTAD, SWEDEN

Approaching Step 3



Step 3: “We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understand God.”

When I first came along to a S.L.A.A. meeting, I didn’t know what to expect. I had never been in the habit of talking to strangers about my sexual problems or admitting to others that I was out of control.

We live in a world where we are bombarded with humanistic teaching. We are taught to be independent, to solve our own problems.

We are told that if we try hard enough we can find in our inner strength the capability to overcome whatever obstacles we may face in our lives. So I was intrigued to find that one of the key solutions to solving sexual addiction was to turn our will and indeed our “lives” over to someone else.

It’s the complete opposite of

the humanistic thinking that surrounds us. When I take step 3, I am effectively saying:

- I cannot solve my own problems
- I do not have what it takes
- I am weak
- I need help
- I am a bad decision maker
- I need someone else to make my decisions for me.

To get to this point in your life where you make these sorts of statements, means you probably really have hit rock bottom.

In the eyes of our western society I have failed.

And what’s more, the condition of needing someone else to run my life isn’t likely to change. The condition of having God run my life is ongoing.

Step 3 is a massive step of Trust.

- We can’t see God
- We can’t touch him
- Even if we think we hear his

voice, it's not the same as having a conversation with another human (like talking to your father at the dinner table).

God is a bit of a mystery. So handing your life over to him has got to be a very risky thing to do. You never know what he might ask you to do.

It all comes down to trust really. Do I trust God to look after me? Do I trust him to make decisions that are good for me?

Our attitude to Step 3 is likely to be coloured by our concept of God, who he is and what he is like. If we see God as a father figure, then our image of him will be coloured by our experience or our physical father's. If our own father beat us up, was

absent or unreliable, had a gambling problem or some other addiction, we may find it hard to see God differently. So for many of us Step 3 is going to be a difficult thing.

When I was growing up, there was always the sense that one day I would leave home and become independent. I was expected to learn to make my own decisions.

So Step 3 is really like regressing backward to become like a child.

But this is only the beginning. To go forwards and to really grow up, we must first take this step back to become a child again.

—EB, WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND

Spirituality in S.L.A.A.

To live a spiritual life is at the heart of my current recovery process in S.L.A.A. I have been in the program 10 months and after nearly 6 months sober, I had a slip on an issue that I had not looked at squarely.

I feel this slip helped me to take a more full perspective on what needed work in my program. I needed to learn to see

the spirit of the person, not just the physical.

The opposite of spiritual is the physical or material. I cannot trust what I see in the world as being the last word. I cannot always trust my first feeling.

To cultivate that spiritual connection to what animates life (my concept of a Higher Power), I must look beyond what the material world may offer me. I must

understand that bigger goal that life asks of me, not the short term pleasure of what I can get. Spirituality is about “getting” by “giving.” By putting true service to others ahead of my own desires.

This service can extend to everyone I see. This beginning of recovery from sex and love addiction requires me to see the truth behind my motives, which requires me to get honest with my sponsor and if I can’t get honest, I pray for the willingness and this cultivates the reality of spirituality in my life.

I am also starting to realize that the spiritual world requires first my awareness. This means I must let go of my current concept of reality and begin to let go of fantasy. Reality always wins, I just need to get on board!

The way my Higher Power tells me I am not living in reality is I begin to feel pain. I feel anger and a disconnection from others. I begin to resent other people for being who they are. I begin to resent myself.

My Higher Power’s protection

and care is the love I am seeking from others. It just doesn’t look like what I think it might. I am beginning to see this love from my Higher Power in a more broad way, as protection from situations that will continue to keep me in pain and confusion. This is a long way from the “spirituality” of my addiction that worshiped attention, affection, adoration and pleasure from those who didn’t have my best interest at heart — and why would they?

I didn’t even have that for myself. I can trust that my Higher Power does. And this comes in the form of this power supporting me in my effort to get to know myself so that I have something to offer when the time may be right for me to seek a relationship.

Putting this relationship with self, Higher Power first seems like the only way to truly learn how to properly relate to another. I am grateful for this program and the process it is taking me through.

—CLARE, CHATTANOOGA, TN

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A Beautiful Relationship With God

My relationship with the God of my understanding is a beautiful one. God is one of my closest and best friends. His love and friendship are more than I could have ever dreamed possible. He is always with me and has never left me....EVER. I trust Him with handling my entire life as He knows what is best for me always. My own ideas are usually pretty disastrous.

In Step 2, I began to develop a personal relationship with the God of “My” understanding. The key word here is “MY.” It was a personal journey to come to know the God of my understanding. Nobody told me what he looked like or anything about Him. I was given the opportunity to explore this all on my own.

My Sponsor had me start writing about the evidence of God in my daily life. Sure enough, there he was all over the place. I had just not noticed him before. It was comforting to know that I had a great friend that would be my lifelong companion — someone I could always count on. This brought me a huge sense of peace and serenity.



During this time my sponsor also suggested that I explore some meditation centers. I went to a place that gave free instruction on how to meditate. I was afraid of meditation as I did not think I could sit that quietly with myself and be still. This experience has been life changing. The meditation practice has helped me to get out of my own crazy head and to focus on my breathing which allows me to be in the present moment. I believe that it is God’s will for me to live in the moment so that I can be present for the life he is putting in front of me and to see the lessons and gifts that are there right in front of me.

In Step 3, I learned to take the next right action with God’s

guidance. When I am able to do that and truly surrender to the care of my higher power there is a sense of peace that I never thought possible.

My loving, caring compassionate, abundant and generous God does not want me to sabotage the beautiful gifts that he has given to me, so I try to be mindful of that. My beautiful God has shown me that I am loveable by simply being me. God wants me to love myself and to take good care of myself. He wants me to love him with all my heart and he wants me to love others through patience and kindness.

God wants me to feel my feelings as He gave them to me for a

reason. Being uncomfortable is a necessary part of life and along with that comes feelings that are not so comfortable, including

feelings of grief and sadness. I need God's comfort and guidance during difficult feelings that are uncomfortable to help me know that they will pass and that I am strong enough to be present for them. God also celebrates with me during times

of joy, and also wants me to experience them fully.

For those of you who are new, experiencing great pain and fear, and have no idea where to begin — simply work the steps with a sponsor and you will begin to see your Higher Power more clearly.

— NICK A., GLENDALE CA

**My loving, caring
compassionate,
abundant and
generous God does
not want me to
sabotage the beautiful
gifts that he has given
to me, so I try to be
mindful of that.**

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.

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.

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

Congratulations to the winner of the Journal summer contest -- Christopher W. of Surrey, United Kingdom! (The winner was randomly drawn from summer subscribers at Los Angeles Intergroup.) Thanks to all of you who participated, and happy reading!

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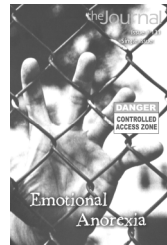
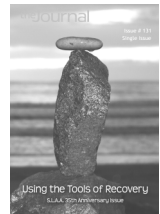
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Acting As If There Is A Higher Power



Is there a higher power? I don't know for sure. Lots of very smart people have compelling arguments why there isn't. However, I've learned my life is a lot easier if I live and act as if there is one, so I focus on the supportive evidence of my experience.

First, I'm not acting out in my sex and relationship addiction or abusing substances. Having continuous sobriety is beyond my wildest dreams. In addition to

not being active in my addictions, something greater than I has also provided me with a daily reprieve from the insanity of sexual and relationship obsession. I never thought I'd have a moment's break from that craziness. It's a miracle.

I spent every second of my pre-recovery life crippled by loneliness, partly because I knew no one to whom I could relate. As a result of recovery, there are times I can sit in a meeting and

feel completely understood. Recovery has also taught me the difference between being alone and being lonely. I can do something to change the former if I want but I often need help from a higher power to change the latter.

It also took a higher power to help me to start meditating. When I hit bottom with my S.L.A.A. issues, someone suggested I try meditating. The idea that sitting with myself would help ease my pain was counter-intuitive, but at that point I was in withdrawal so I was willing to try anything. Meditation has taught me that it wasn't life I was running from with my addictions, it was me and my feelings. Looking within has provided me with a level of self-acceptance that frees me, one day at a time, from needing to act out.

After several years of celibacy in S.L.A.A., I found someone who I felt safe enough with to begin a relationship. With a history like mine, it seemed impossible that I could be in a partnership that had any aspect of health. So it had to be a higher power that put an attractive man in my life to whom I am not addicted. In past relationships, I would focus far into the future and on the commitment lasting

forever. But our fellowship has taught me to focus on the present moment. I know that mindset has contributed to our 11 years together.

Finally, there are the "coincidences" in life that make it easier for me to believe there is a higher power – one with a sense of humor. I don't like cold weather – so I was stationed to Alaska. I felt very good about myself when I signed up to donate my body to science when I die – my application was rejected. My photo was on the national television news last year because I was on a cruise ship that had an engine fire. What was the caption? "Big Mess!" In front of hundreds of people at a recovery event raffle I won a huge basket of hair care products – of course I'm bald.

Whenever I try to explain my concept of a higher power, I remember a phrase that I heard in a meeting that has been a great help. The speaker said "I don't need a higher power that I understand. I need a higher power that understands me." That makes great sense to me.

If I learn when my life ends that there is no higher power, I will not regret living as if there is one.

— CHRIS D., SAN DIEGO

Fully Surrendering Addictions To A Higher Power

Hello. My Name is Kristin. I live in New Jersey. A few years ago I discovered, after being in recovery for a compulsive eating addiction, that I qualified as a sex and love addict as well — and equally as important — a fantasy and romance addict.

It wasn't until October 31, 2009, that I truly turned my will and my life over to a power greater than myself regarding this addiction as well as all of my other addictions/compulsions — smoking, compulsive overeating, debting, and co-dependent relationships.

I have found after many years of working through the process of recovery on all levels that spirituality is both a unique and personal experience and has been for me.

I have found the bottom line to be about surrender, and then surrendering on a daily basis over and over again....I have found that once the surrender to a power greater than myself continues to take place daily I can break free of the addiction/



obsession of the mind-body-spirit that plagues each and every individual that has a sex addiction. It is wanting that fix, wanting that hit.

The addiction could be the desire to see a person, wanting to feel a certain way inside, or wanting to recreate a connection from the past. It all comes down to surrender — to fully surrender to something greater than one self.

Then and only then can someone break free of this addiction of the mind-body-spirit.

Thank you, and God bless you.

— KRISTIN, NEW JERSEY

The God Connection Between Intuition And Higher Power

Step two in the 12 steps states that “a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity” and step three follows with “made a decision to turn or will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.” The rest of the steps follow suit making it very clear that God (of our own understanding) through us helps us to work through the disease of sex, relationship and love addiction.

We do have a higher power and through this awareness we can recover from this insidious disease that can not be seen, heard, tasted, or put down like a bottle of wine, drugs or cigarettes.

In my experience it is a metaphor for spirit in that we can't see our higher power. We can only experience it. Every one experiences their definition of God in differing ways. The one thing people can agree on, when looking at their own God, is that it is important to embrace the concept in order to realize that there is a higher order of things in the universe and this assists us along our path.

I can remember as a child thinking there was a higher power in my life but I usually ignored it when I saw my parents. It was safer and easier to see them as my higher power because it seemed to make them happy.

It was in that moment as a small child when I made this choice about God that I became a victim of what I now experience as love addiction. My parents were my first qualifiers and God took a back seat because in order to be safe in life my parents were my higher power.

As I look back and really “get” that fact it helps me to understand that when we put any other person in the position of being our higher power then we can get very lost.

I transferred the higher perception of my parents into my marriage, making my ex-husband into my higher power rather than keeping the higher power that I called God. God waited for me to figure it out and I did *eventually*.

I have been in S.L.A.A. for 14 years and realize that all things

do happen for a reason. And the things I have done on my own, with my own free will, have caused me the most pain and suffering but they have also been opportunities for learning and getting stronger.

I now understand that my higher power helps me to grow and learn in many ways. It's easier for me to learn by listening to that voice inside that many refer to as intuition.

My higher power works through that intuition. As I follow it, I can learn much more quickly and easily than having to be knocked against a wall or on the ground being choked to death in order to see that my higher power wants the best for me. It is up to me to listen to my intuition as a sign that God is helping me to help myself.

Spirit dwells within and it is amazing and can keep me moving forward in my life if I choose to listen.

Parental authority, societal authority and church authority can take a child off the path of their true spirit. Kids easily fear those people in their lives. They learn at a very early age to ignore their inner guidance in favor of the external approval that they are given if they listen to the perceived higher authority out in

the world that comes from their parents, teachers, ministers, and the like. We are conditioned early on to forget our higher power. As addicts, it is hard to hear that voice because we get so used to the pain we are enduring. It is not until we get to S.L.A.A. or another 12-Step group that we realize how much pain we are in. These programs help reconnect us to our higher power allowing us to know that we need to listen and honor ourselves and the higher power within in order to recover and thrive in our lives.

These programs are a blessing in disguise. They allow us to grow up again and learn to trust that spirit within. We take care of ourselves as we learn to re-parent ourselves. We let spirit work through us so we can fully understand and embrace God in our lives. We trust that our spirit has a higher purpose for us. Now that God finally has our attention we can rebuild knowing that God really does do for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

God has been there with me all this time but it was not until I got into S.L.A.A. that I allowed my higher power to guide my life. Each time I do allow that guidance to occur the healthier and happier my life is in general

and the more gratitude for my life I embrace.

I feel very blessed. As the serenity prayer states: “God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the cour-

age to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.”

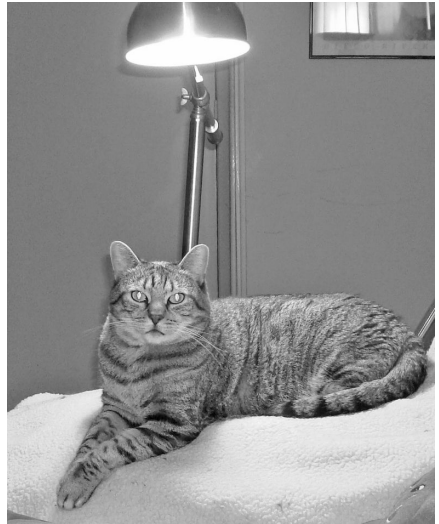
Namaste, and God bless.

— HOLLEY, ENCINITAS, CA

Spirit In S.L.A.A.

At the end of the existentialist play “No Exit,” one of Sartre’s characters realizes that “Hell is other people.” Thanks to S.L.A.A., I’ve come to believe the same could also be said about ‘Heaven.’ Before working the Steps, I was always slightly scared of others — threatened by their opinions and especially by all their Gods.

Now I’ve come to fully appreciate that everyone has his or her own Higher Power. In fact, this is a new mental refrain whenever I’m feeling responsible for someone else’s problems: “They have their own Higher Power that will get them through any situation.” It’s such a relief not to feel compelled to play God anymore, and to feel like I don’t even want to play God. I no longer want to be worshipped by lovers — which seems crazy, but before S.L.A.A. that was actually on my list of



what I wanted in a relationship. I thought being loved to the point of worship was the only way I’d ever feel safe and secure.

Thanks to my new understanding of this Higher Power, I can hang in the same room with other ideologies more. I even went on a date with a guy who identified himself with my opposing political party, which seemed so impossible for me until finally taking this contrary

action (literally!) I was always afraid of clashing, of conflict. Due to my family history, I had a lot of fears of being overpowered or dominated by a lover's way of thinking. It was hard to both hold my own ground and find common ground with anyone whom I disagreed with on important issues. S.L.A.A. has taught me how to "play well with others" — something I haven't done since elementary school.

My parents were atheists. They both had some religious indoctrination growing up, my father's family is Jewish and my mother's family is Christian. Their own fathers abandoned them, divorcing their wives in an era when this was considered shameful. Between the rage, injustice, pain and hypocrisy I think their sense of spirituality paid the price.

Growing up in a conservative Christian community without attending church, I was occasionally scolded and condemned to "suffer in hell" by peers and their parents simply for having different beliefs that didn't include a belief in God — or hell for that matter. Later, followers of other religions would verbally condemn me, as well, especially if I disclosed my homosexuality.

In college, I attempted suicide. The main reason, or so I

thought, was because of unrequited love. That night in the hospital, the treating therapist told me the real reason was because I couldn't accept my sexuality and was afraid to come out to my parents. The next day I would discover a truth that I now feel is universal and absolute in any cataclysmic event, and mundane events too: the true motive was to realize my own spirituality.

An acquaintance had killed himself two months earlier, and several weeks after that a friend was committed for a failed suicide attempt. If I was going to try, I wanted to really die. I didn't want anyone saying that I was only trying to get attention.

After swallowing a bottle of aspirin with a handful of prescription painkillers, I remember waiting to die, and feeling acceptance and also like there was something beyond this life, it wouldn't be the end. There was a loud knock at the door followed by hysterical howling. It was my cat that had run away three weeks earlier!

I tried to ignore him but he wouldn't go away. I didn't want the cat alerting the attention of anyone, so I unlocked the door to let him in. He was in a hysterical state; it seemed like he knew what I was doing. Immediately

he jumped up on my desk, purposefully knocked the empty pill bottles to the floor and lunged out to put his paws on my chest while looking into my eyes and meowing so intensely. I felt a hopeless chill realizing my plans were dashed because surely this was a sign and I would need to find a way to live.

For the next 24 hours, there was a constant team of professionals who assumed responsibility for my caretaking. There were notifications to be made, living arrangements to decide, protocol to be followed and sometimes improvised. It was really rather ironic, for I don't think I'd ever received that much hands-on care in my entire life, while at the same time it didn't feel like anyone could even see me, much less communicate with me. It was all meaningless words and formalities.

They allowed me to return to my dorm room to pack a bag. The dorm's Resident Advisor had slipped an amazing letter under my door. It talked about her experience with suicide. She discussed spirituality and the fact that I was on a spiritual path. The words riveted me; they grounded me. She pointed out how I'd always explored the path of the soul in my poems and plays. Honestly, this had been a

literary device to me only – suddenly the concept became very real. I realized I had a soul.

Seriously, it felt like I'd thrown off some cocoon and was sprouting wings. I'd been drowning long before my suicide attempt, long before my failed love affair. People had thrown me lifesavers but the only one that I could hold onto, that could bear my weight, was the gift of my own spirituality.

I devoted myself to exploring my spirituality in the new age movement, experiencing some mind-blowing spiritual peak experiences. There was an inner divide though, I was an undiagnosed sex and love addict. While I wouldn't talk about my sexual acting out and romantic obsessions with my spiritual peers, I did share everything in therapy. Throughout the years I've had many therapists – some of them were quite helpful. The problem was – I didn't, I couldn't, know the real problem. I wasn't fully aware of my secret inner life or my distorted perceptions that were so embedded I took them for granted.

Coming in to the rooms of S.L.A.A. revealed to me the truth about myself through identifying with other people – people who I would probably never let into my life. It was in hearing members

share about their disease that I began to relate and see the real me.

Until S.L.A.A., I talked about spirituality to anyone who would listen. I tried to play guru and savior, this was one of the ways I tried to seduce people into relationships or one-night stands. I did not meditate. I did not participate regularly in any spiritual practice. You could say, I was really a spiritual fraud.

Working with my sponsor, I learned how to meditate every day. I started regularly attending a spiritual practice, taking volunteer positions wherever I could. Since my spiritual awakening in college, I've declared that spirituality is the most important priority in my life. Finally I've arranged my time to validate this truth.

Judgment is one of my biggest challenges in my spiritual practice. There are certain rituals we perform, and it was difficult for me to participate because I had so much judgment at first. Over time, I've come to realize the Anaïs Nin quote: "We don't see things as they are, we see things as we are." I had to close my eyes to my outer experience to participate in the inner experience. As soon as I started to look beyond the superficial failings of

the day, the world responded by revealing meaning and connection. This is now an indispensable part of my practice in 12-Steps, as well.

I still don't have a conscious overview of my spiritual path, and through S.L.A.A. I've learned and accepted that I don't have to know. Higher Power will let me know when and if it's time. If it's not to be revealed in this lifetime, then maybe more will be revealed in the next. Hopefully I'll just be lucky enough to find a 12-Step meeting there in the ever-enlarging Eternal Serenity.

— TOM B.



To Do List:

#1. Subscribe to the *Journal*

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

#3. Enjoy reading the *Journal*

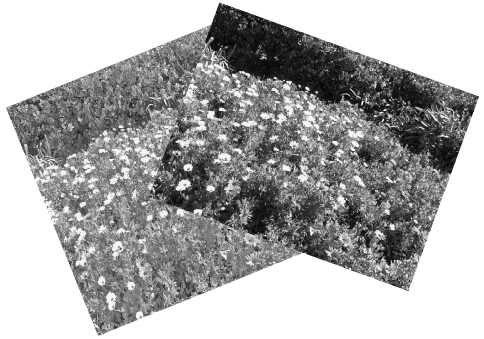
Changed But Not Cured By God

I had been up three days in a row, and still I could not sleep. I was at my grandparent's house; I was too tired to safely drive home. Lying on the floor in their living room in the middle of the 3rd night, I heard a voice begin to speak in my head. "I love you and will always care for you."

I asked the voice if it was God and felt a sense of surety as a response. Listening to that voice for the rest of the night kept me safe, kept me sane, and kept me from harming myself. For that, I am very grateful.

I mistook the conscious contact that I felt that night, almost two years ago, as a sign that my Higher Power had permanently changed me: I was cured and the path of recovery would come easily to me. How very wrong I turned out to be.

The profound spiritual experience that I had that night quickly faded and was insidiously replaced by willful mania. I made a spontaneous trip to the East coast to meet with old program friends, maxed out two credit cards, intrigued and became obsessed with a complete stranger that I met at the airport,



and made plans to start a grand, new 12-Step program that would change all of humanity. I was insane.

Over the next two months, the mania faded and was replaced, after the death of my grandfather, with intense anxiety and depression. I went into the deepest period of social and emotional isolation and anorexia that I have ever experienced. I missed my grandfather's funeral, became convinced I was deathly ill, cut off all contact with friends, relatives and co-workers, and left my apartment only to get groceries. Within a month of this, I ceased believing in God. Within another week, I became suicidal.

Scared by my frequent thoughts of suicide, I became desperate enough to reach back to program and through that to seek and accept the help I

needed from medical professionals. I began, in a small way, to do the work of allowing my Higher Power to direct my will and my life.

I see now that the disease of Sex and Love Addiction and spiritual illness that lies underneath are so subtle and pervasive that without daily action to turn my will over to a power greater than myself, my addiction will hijack any authentic spiritual experience and remold it into a copy of the disease, itself. I truly am powerless over my life and am daily dependent upon the 12 Steps and the 12-Step fellowship in order to have the ability to let my Higher Power into my life.

A year ago, I began to work with a new sponsor and started the slow process of developing a new spiritual way of living. The core of this new daily practice was (and still is) following the direction of my sponsor, to the best of my ability and accepting the advice and guidance of friends in program where it does not conflict with my sponsor's direction. All past attempts to control my program and control my spiritual development have led me further into my illness. This new way of living started with simple, clear direction that pushed me to pray and connect daily with other S.L.A.A. mem-

bers, to be of service both over the phone and at meetings, and to do daily work on my Steps.

This past year has seen the most rapid, positive change within me that I've ever experienced. Over the past year, I began my 4th Step, took my first steps in sponsoring other men in S.L.A.A., and have recently also started doing my first ever 5th Step with my sponsor.

Being a sponsor has been a tremendous challenge to my addiction, especially my desire to isolate and sink into shame and self-pity. Sponsorship and the opportunity to work with others in program have kept me on the daily spiritual path of recovery in times where every other tool has failed. Many times I have given guidance to a sponsee and asked myself afterwards, "am I doing that?" Many times I have been humbled by a sponsee who was more willing to take action and use the tools of recovery than I was in that same moment. The desire to be of service thus led me back into action in my own daily recovery.

Without the daily practice of seeking my Higher Power through prayer and action, I would not have the ability to work my 4th and 5th steps. To this day, the process of working my steps frequently triggers my

addiction and leads me into fantasy or extreme fear and/or anger. The tools that I learned while reworking the first three steps have become my ticket back to contact with my Higher Power and sanity, today.

Through the 4th and 5th Step, I have been led to uncover and share with my sponsor the full nature of the spiritual illness that underlies my addictions. It has been humbling to see the extent to which old, dark beliefs still pervade my thinking and influence my actions. Belief in a cruel universe, a vengeful and spiteful God as well as fantasies that I am a horrible, unlovable person lie beneath much of this old thinking. Through daily action and use of the tools, I am given the ability by my Higher Power to be conscious of these negative beliefs and practice new thoughts and the belief in a loving and nurturing God.

I understand very little of the nature of my Higher Power. I sometimes think of H.P. as God, Brahman, Allah, the Creator, the Spirit of the Universe. The names do not matter. All I know for certain is that my Higher Power is greater than me and that my Higher Power loves me unconditionally. From that, everything else stems. From that understanding, I have been led

to find a community of faith in Los Angeles of many others who share this open belief in an all-loving Higher Power. This community has been such a blessing in my life and has given me another place, in addition to the fellowship of S.L.A.A., where I am welcomed and accepted, despite my addictions. In this community I have been challenged again and again to seek outside myself to be of service and challenge those old instincts within me that tell me that I am unworthy of love. Little by little, I enjoy periods of freedom from those old beliefs.

This past year has also seen many other blessings. Almost exactly a year ago, my son was born and I began the process of co-parenting with his two Moms, a loving lesbian couple. My social and emotional anorexia have been challenged continuously as I have watched my son grow and have deepened my relationship with him and his two mothers. During this period, I have also joined another 12-Step fellowship to deal with my financial compulsions, an action that has guided me to a new job and greater responsibility and challenge. Further, I have been led to renew my commitment in another 12-Step fellowship and deepen my surrender over my

addiction to food. These things are not the “prizes” of taking spiritual action, but rather are blessings that I get to keep as long as I continue to work my program. I have experienced many times how quickly my illness can take away all the good things in my life and lead me into intense isolation, pain, and thoughts of suicide.

I am very grateful for the simple daily course of action that has allowed me to grow along spiritual lines and taught me how to be a more loving person.

Without the fellowship of S.L.A.A., the direction of my sponsor, and without the 12 Steps, spiritual growth would not be possible for me. Through my past experiences, I have become convinced of the fact that I cannot live in a vacuum. I must open myself to others in order to also open myself to the blessings that my Higher Power seeks to bring into my life. Thank you all for working this program of recovery, and may you also trudge the road of happy destiny!

—ANONYMOUS, LOS ANGELES.

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



Share space

Inspired By A Journal Story

Monday meeting night was fast approaching with no topic in mind. As the group chair, I never had any trouble coming up with a topic for a given meeting; matter of fact, it always came to me quite easily.

I'll take that back, when I first came to S.L.A.A., things were much different, especially when it came to my turn to chair. Back then, it was still about the ego, and the image that I felt that I needed to portray. I would struggle between various topics, hopefully choosing what would most impress the group with my chairman abilities. It was always good to hear the accolades, and job well done, as we filed out of our meeting place. I might have im-

pressed a portion of the group, but I always went home feeling that I had fallen short of addressing my own recovery needs.

Over time, my sponsor, therapist and others with long term sobriety began to echo the same message. Stop worrying about pleasing and impressing the group, be true to your own heart and recovery needs. They explained how it wouldn't be selfish doing so, and that I would be pleasantly surprised in how my needs are often similar to others. The advice was priceless... When I finished my sharing on the topic, the floor would be open for others to share as well... That's when the healing began; their hope, strength and recovery would begin to pour



out. It's what I needed to hear!

Years have passed, and the wisdom of others, and what has proven to work best for me, had now become woven into the fabric of my tool belt. With that said, I still came up empty with no topic for tomorrow's meeting. It was different today than in past years, I wasn't worried. I had developed a trust and faith in the God of my understanding. I knew it would be OK, that it would all come together before the meeting started. I didn't know exactly how, but it did!

As I pulled into the parking lot of the church where our meeting is held, I had remembered that our new *Journal* subscription had arrived the previous week. In a rush the previous week, I had torn open the brown mailing envelope, and placed the *Journal* on the table, never getting an opportunity to look through it. Well, tonight I couldn't get my hands on it fast enough. Excited with the thought of using the new *Journal*, I entered our meeting space and pulled our meeting material storage bin off the shelf. As I removed the lid, there it was, with its colorful cover, "Tools of Recovery — S.L.A.A. 35th Anniver-

sary Issue." I randomly opened it, and was now staring at, "An Inspirational Story." I quickly scanned the story, as my body developed an instant case of the goose bumps; this was my story!

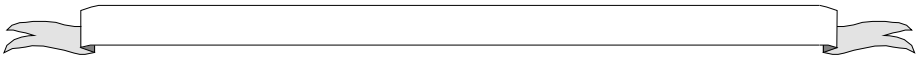
The meeting started without delay, and we all took turns reading this incredibly inspiring story! If you haven't had the opportunity to read this particular story, take the time to locate a copy of *Journal* issue #131.

Without telling you too much and spoiling your reading experience, this is the story of how the Delaware Valley's Inspirational Phone Line began.

The story even included the phone number, which created a frenzy when the reading was over. Several of us immediately reached for our cell phones and began dialing the listed number. In moments our whole group was listening to the inspiring story of the day on speaker-phone!

What a meeting, who would have ever thought?! So much to be grateful for; thank you God, the *Journal* committee for providing such a wonderful recovery resource and to those of you that tell your stories...

—MICHAEL M., WILLAMANTIC, CT



Quotation Corner

90% of what you're feeling right now is from the past and 10% is what he/she said.

Once the bird has flown the coop, you may be able to catch it and put it back on its perch. But they never quite sit right after that.

Today is the tomorrow you worried about yesterday.

When I was new, I didn't think I had obsessions, until I started thinking about it. Then it was all I could think about.

I wasted years thinking about the wasted years.

Often what hurts in the short term is ultimately rewarding; while what feels good in the short term is ultimately punishing.

Experience is knowing a lot of things you shouldn't do.

God's love is stronger than my self-hate.





Cartoon by Andrew K.

AVITABLY...

K FINANCIAL

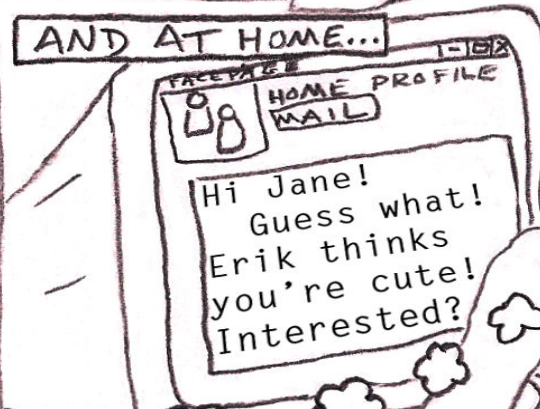


STEPHEN



AND AT HOME...

K...



SIGH.



Calendar of Events

Phone Meetings

There are numerous phone meetings. A good place to start is the S.L.A.A. F.W.S. website: http://directory.slaafws.org/intl_phone

Feb. 11, 2012

Sponsor Self-Care

March 10, 2012

Recovery Partners

April 14, 2012

Promoting Sponsorship

Telemeeting Series

Skills for Healthy Loving

3rd Saturdays Monthly 11 a.m. Pacific time email: healthyrelationships@slaafws.org

Upcoming Events

Dec. 16-18

S.L.A.A. 12 Step Weekend Retreat in Chester, Vermont
www.slaanei.org/vtweekend.html

All Aspects of Sponsorship

2nd Saturdays Monthly 9 a.m. Pacific time

Nov. 12

The Anorectic Sponsee

Dec. 10

Giving Directions

Jan. 14, 2012

Sponsorship Formats

Nov. 25 — Nov. 27,

15th Annual Spiritual Renewal & Recovery Retreat. Serra Retreat Center, Malibu, CA
www.slaalosangeles.org

S.L.A.A. is here to help!

Go to www.slaafws.org

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.

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.



theJournal