

theJournal

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*Sex and Love Addiction
in Today's Society*

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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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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Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous Preamble

Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous is a Twelve Step, Twelve Tradition-oriented fellowship based on the model pioneered by Alcoholics Anonymous.

The only qualification for S.L.A.A. membership is a desire to stop living out a pattern of sex and love addiction. S.L.A.A. is supported entirely through contributions of its membership, and is free to all who need it.

To counter the destructive consequences of sex and love addiction we draw on five major resources:

1. **Sobriety.** Our willingness to stop acting out in our own personal bottom-line addictive behavior on a daily basis.
2. **Sponsorship/Meetings.** Our capacity to reach out for the supportive fellowship within S.L.A.A.
3. **Steps.** Our practice of the Twelve Step program of recovery to achieve sexual and emotional sobriety.
4. **Service.** Our giving back to the S.L.A.A. community what we continue to freely receive.
5. **Spirituality.** Our developing a relationship with a Power greater than ourselves, which can guide and sustain us in recovery.

As a fellowship S.L.A.A. has no opinion on outside issues and seeks no controversy. S.L.A.A. is not affiliated with any other organizations, movements, or causes, either religious or secular.

We are, however, united in a common focus: dealing with our addictive sexual and emotional behavior. We find a common denominator in our obsessive/compulsive patterns, which transcends any personal differences of sexual orientation or gender identity.

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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Letter From the Editor

Dear Reader:

Sex sells. The billboards, songs and TV shows are impossible to avoid. Porn is the number one industry in my area. It's big business.

One of the stories in this issue mentions Sex And The City. I had to take that television show off of my watch list for good. I felt like a freak when co-workers would discuss the latest episode over the water cooler but I couldn't handle the message that I felt the show conveyed: that it's OK to indulge in sex and love addiction.

Rihanna has a new song that I had to write a resentment inventory about because she's singing to teenagers about sadism and masochism. Performers and television shows find it necessary to get more and more into the sickness to remain popular. Our society is locked in a hunger game where they need to become more shocking to get noticed.

People don't always understand sex and love addiction in today's society. Dr. Drew did a TV show on it and it only lasted one season. The whole experience that Tiger Woods and his family went through was talked about in the news but no one seemed to understand going to rehab for sex addiction.

About ten years ago I went to the Los Angeles S.L.A.A. convention. It was a life changing experience. But a local magazine got a hold of the story and did an article making fun of the whole idea of sex and love addiction and of us meeting at a hotel. No one's anonymity was broken, but no one in S.L.A.A. liked that we were misunderstood. We don't need to make society understand to stay sober. Higher Power and fellow members of S.L.A.A. understand. We can talk to them about our fears.

The fact is that there is fear and temptation everywhere. But as long as I keep my focus on my program and being of service, I can be like the horse with blinders on and just walk through and away from society's sex bombardment. I don't have to drive down the streets with all the strip clubs or the in-your-face billboards. I can turn the radio station or the TV channel. I can fast forward my DVR if a movie contains triggers. Speaking from the experience of someone who even acted out in meetings, there is another side. We can be like the sober A.A. alcoholic who goes to the bar for business. We can stay sober in a sex and love addicted society. Hopefully some of the stories in this issue will help.

Lisa C., Managing Editor, *the Journal*

A Note About This Issue

The theme of this issue made it necessary to discuss outside issues. As Tradition Ten states: "S.L.A.A. has no opinion on outside issues; hence the S.L.A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy." Stories do not necessarily reflect the opinion of S.L.A.A. (see below, third paragraph.)

The Conference Journal Committee, a service body within Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous, publishes *the Journal* for the good of the international S.L.A.A. membership. Oversight and policy is provided in accordance with the Ninth Tradition.

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Question of the Day & Answers from Yesterday

“HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE STATE OF SEX AND LOVE ADDICTION IN TODAY’S WORLD, AND HOW CAN WE CARRY THE MESSAGE OF RECOVERY?”

Endemic!! We are seeing only the tip of the iceberg in this addiction. We have to be willing to be vulnerable and share with others and invite them to meetings.

— **Deborah R., Mission Viejo, CA**

As a recovering addict I am increasingly aware of the constant visual stimulus from advertising and mainstream media to which I am as always susceptible. Sex sells, as they say.

— **John D.V., London**

I believe that sex and love addiction is rampant in our society today. In fact, I think society as a whole is addicted to sex. On our group’s S.L.A.A. online website, we are getting about 200 hits a month from mainly the U.S., but also from all over the world. We also get about 30 emails a month from newcomers seeking recovery. We are carrying the message in our chat room daily meetings.

— **Susan G., Sunset Beach, CA**

Absolutely rampant. In my opinion, start with educating medical, legal, and educational entrance points. Had one been more aware of what causes any addiction, early interventions could be put into place. Also more interaction with other fellowships, S.L.A.A. as well as O.A., and A.A. are simply a reflection of inner turmoil. More interaction between groups helps to foster recovery of the individual in all areas of our lives.

— **Juanita, Hyattsville, MD**

Sex and love addiction, like food addiction, is the great undiscovered secret of our society. It is so prevalent that addiction and obsession almost appears normal.

— **Walter, Los Angeles, CA**

Wow! It is just exploding and yet denied. I think that the internet path has to be developed: S.L.A.A. as a pop-up on S sites, available literature, ads in newspapers. Make ourselves visible.

— **Christine L., Montreal, Canada**

With some recent high profile cases, I think this is a good opportunity to have PSAs or look at other more “public” ways to get the message.

— **Deb W., Cleveland, OH**

The fall of our former Congressman and former Governor indicate the state of sex and love addiction in New York state (if not the world.) I think we can carry the message through our meetings and literature.

— **Katy B., New York City, NY**

In a nutshell, it is rampant and getting more out of control as the Internet matures. It is the intention of the UK to carry the message through public information, increased involvement and with the help of U.S. public information.

— **Jonathan K., London**

The next Question of the Day is “How has your relationship with family members changed through working the S.L.A.A. program and the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions?” Please respond at www.slaafws.org by July 16, 2012.

The Question of the Day from the last issue was, “How would you describe the state of sex and love addiction in today’s world, and how can we carry the message of recovery?” Here are some wonderful responses for your enjoyment. They are not presented in any particular order.

Sex and love addiction is normalized in our society due to lack of education. We can carry the message through therapists and lectures. If I had my way, we would educate children in public education. I think most people think acting out is a normal part of life.

— Susan L., Houston, TX

In today’s world the state of sex and love addiction is largely media-spun to be only negative and sensationalized. I hope with the recent celebrities “outing” themselves, that the addiction is less vilified, and more compassion-based. Ironically, there are also few good therapists who can accept 12-Steps and successfully work with addicts. Denial and media don’t have to decide the sobriety of our nation.

— Elizabeth, Los Angeles, CA

Sex addiction is probably not any more pervasive than before, it is just more talked about, reported, researched and is becoming more understood. Much more work needs to be done to get the message out about this disease in order to enlist therapeutic help and also to get the message to those not yet recovering.

— Bruce M., Omaha, NE

Our culture/society promotes sex and love addiction and many, many people are suffering. The first thing I can do to carry the message is be committed to my own recovery. Sponsorship and service are other ways to carry the message.

— Kelli H., Austin, TX

The state of sex and love addiction in today’s society is alarming. Constant messages of love addiction and sex bombard all facets of our culture. Clearly, movies, the media, ad agencies, etc., fuel the fire. 12 Step programs like S.L.A.A. should consider becoming more visible and vocal about our message of hope.

— Jonathan, Altadena CA

I believe that sex and love addiction is rampant in today’s world and is only just now being recognized as a significant problem. It is difficult to know how to carry the message to those people still suffering while maintaining our Traditions. I’m looking forward to exploring ways to reach out in my new involvement with the S.L.A.A. Conference Public Information Committee.

— Andrew K., Dallas, TX

I see the presence of active sex and love addiction all over the world, including but not limited to political leaders. I sometimes find it hard to determine whether someone acts out/in because of another addiction or because of a separate/co-existing sex and love addiction.

— Owen, New York City, NY

I find that sex and love addiction is rampant in the world around us. I see people who feel empty when not in a relationship or staying in abusive relationships. I can carry the message by staying sober and being available to others and trying to share the solution as opposed to focusing on the problem.

— Rick B., Largo, FL

Question of the Day

I think our culture is an addictive one in all areas. I grew up believing incest and infidelity were the norm. Today I know differently and choose to be in a program that keeps me safe and teaches me a new way of intimacy that is not just sexual.

— **Rita H., Montreal, Canada**

Self: Sex and love addiction skyrocketing. Higher Self: Cannot speak or know others. I learned the best way to carry the message is to continue to grow.

— **Alex K., Berkeley, CA**

Widespread epidemic... at least here in America and is reinforced by media and the Internet. Carrying the message is powerful through personal responsibility (modeling and personal recovery) and growing S.L.A.A.

— **Karen S., Oakland, CA**

As technology grows, sex and love addiction also grows. Carry the message as an individual, as a member of a group, and by your service to those that still suffer.

-- **Elliott G., Lodi, CA**

Thanks to the Internet, sex addiction in particular has skyrocketed, though I've never actually seen a statistical breakdown of that intuitive sense. People seem much more isolated from each other, madly texting for connection.

Our group has been helpful to reporters and clinicians, when we have been approached for public education. It's an important, albeit tricky situation, since few people, myself included, feel safe enough to violate my own anonymity in the name of public education.

On the other hand, I am always ready to help on a one-to-one basis, if someone asks for help.

— **Marsha Z., Jamaica Plain, MA**

The consciousness of the global community around addiction in general is at the highest level of awareness that it has ever been in the history of the world. (How about that for a statement!) With the movie SHAME focusing on sex addiction and even the mention of AA in the movie BRIDESMAIDS, addicts feel more accepted and open to discuss their addictions and problems outside of the world of a psychiatrist or psychologist. As a member of S.L.A.A., I have an opportunity to be "attraction rather than promotion" by being an example in how I walk through life, maintaining sobriety, conscious contact with God, daily meditation, prayer, sponsorship, and being of service in all areas of my life.

— **Brian R., Los Angeles CA**

I think that sex and love addiction is one of the most prevalent diseases in our society today. We can carry the message by having pamphlets and cards posted on the sides of buses, in doctor's offices (the same way there are postings about domestic violence.) We can put them in public bathhouses, porn shops, men's and women's bathrooms, the offices of psychologists, psychiatrists, therapists, attorneys, legal aid, and in courthouses. There should be more public out reach. We should also ask on the posting, "Do you know someone who is suffering from ____"(list some of the most obvious signs or symptoms of sex and love addiction.) List a main number to call or a web site. But, keep in mind not everyone is on the internet. It's of the utmost importance as well to include anorexia because that is what is usually an underlying symptom.

— **Holly S, Wethersfield, CT**

I have been participating in nationwide women's S.L.A.A. phone meetings and experienced how many people out there need this program, want this recovery and yet have no meetings in their cities. Love addiction is presented through so much of our culture's media that our base value is our sexual value and is creating a lot of pain in our society at all levels. Making myself accessible to members outreaching through the phone is incredibly graceful and humbling.

— **Anonymous**

Many very popular movies have some form of sex and love addiction as the theme. It's what sells tickets. We can carry the message by acting in ways that are esteemable.

— **Bob R., Valley Village, CA**

Sex and love addiction is everywhere: billboards, television, movies and at the coffee shop. We can carry the message by taking care of ourselves and modeling for others that that doesn't have to be how we walk through the world.

— **Jess L, Los Angeles**

Sex and love really is only part of the equation. "Identifying destructive patterns in all relationships" is also so critical in recovery. Once I became sober it was glaring how many other parts of my social structure were still toxic!

— **Tim L, Los Angeles**

Sex and love addiction is rampant; I believe it might even be the primary addiction with most. We can carry the message of recovery by creating more meetings and literature in other countries.

— **Audrey, Hollywood**

Today's Active Addicts And Their Techie Toys

Addiction took off like a torpedo in the early 1990s. Acting out with sex and/or love immediately became easier with the explosion of the Internet. Most people in the world, and certainly in the United States, now have easy access to computers, which in turn provide instant access to more pornography than any one addict could possibly crave or need.

Sex and love addiction is everywhere. Some politicians do it. Some celebrities do it. Both high-profile fields tend to give addicts a false sense of importance. At the same time, addicts' misbehavior can be conducted in the privacy of the addict's own home, office, or hotel. Like a naughty child whose parents are too busy or just plain neglectful, today's active addict has an array of techie toys at his disposal. Laptops, Ipads, Androids, Twitter, Facebook, you name it. In the time it takes you to read this article, there are probably countless new adult toys being invented, with the insatiable addict always in mind.

When the stress of professional deadlines or related obligations becomes unbearable, the active sex and love addict may choose to act out instead of face the reality of adulthood.

Imagine a child who doesn't get his way; well, he learns how to throw a temper tantrum,



flinging himself on the floor, stomping his feet, crying and screaming, until someone finally pays attention.

Such dramatic displays of discomfort are learned at a young age. Once we reach adulthood, that loud, obnoxious scene seems to come back to haunt us, and aggravate those around us.

While children may scream for their favorite toys, ice cream, cookies, or candy, the addict learns to turn to human sex toys for relief.

What could work faster than emailing the object of one's desire? Or say, pressing the number on your cell phone to hear that voice — the voice that seems to offer immediate gratification?

Once, the addict had to find the necessary change to feed the nearest payphone.

Well, those days are as old as dial-up connections.

Progress has made addiction available 24/7, anywhere one steals a free moment, the hell with being a grownup.

Most newcomers to S.L.A.A. are either found out by a spouse, partner, employer, or in the most devastating cases, by the correctional system. Eventually, everyone hits bottom. The relatively lucky addict will turn himself in, so exhausting and painful is this addiction.

In many cases, a skilled psychotherapist will make the referral himself, proving how important it is that our organization keep spreading the word. This makes it all the more important that seasoned S.L.A.A. members come out, while at the same time, protecting their anonymity.

— **Marsha Z.**

Love Addiction In Today's Popular Culture



PHOTO BY JAMES E.

Alcoholism just isn't as funny as it used to be. Remember the 1981 version of Arthur, where Dudley Moore played a lovable carefree alcoholic, whose drunken antics were amusing and whose obsessive quest for love was endearing?

Update that to 2011, and Russell Brand's Arthur is an unhappy, self-destructive alcoholic who has to sober up before any Hollywood happy ending. DUI's just aren't as sexy as they used to be.

The 2011 Arthur's obsessive quest for love, however, is still endearing.

Why is love addiction the only compulsive behavior society still gives a stamp of approval? Okay, maybe exercise addicts and a few workaholics get a pass. But that's about it. Activities that promote liver disease, lung cancer, diabetes and home foreclosure are no longer romanticized onstage, onscreen and in song. Why, then, is Hollywood still stringing garlands on an addiction that gives most of its sufferers thoughts of suicide?

Movies used to glamorize its stars by having them stare at the audience through a trail of cigarette smoke. Today, consumer advocates and health associations lobby to get smoking off the screen altogether. No one is bothered that John Cusack really is kind of a creepy stalker in *Say Anything*.

Popular culture doesn't simply condone love addiction, it teaches us how to do it.

As long as I can remember, I have been told to expect that "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face" it will feel as if "I Can't Get You Out of My Head." I will know immediately that "You're The First, The Last, My Everything" and "If Loving You Is Wrong, I Don't Want to Be Right." From that moment on, "(Everything I Do) I Do It For You."

Nor do you really need to have a say in the matter, as long as "I Want You To Want Me," because "One Way or Another" you know

"I'm Gonna Make You Love Me." Don't you get it? "You Must Love Me," because "I Can't Get Used to Losing You." And "I Will Follow" if you try to leave, because I am "Crazy In Love," "Crazy for You" and generally all-around batshit "Crazy."

Oh, yeah. It's you and me against the world, kid, and I won't last a day without you. I can't get used to losing you no matter what I try to do, because woman needs man and man must have his mate, that no one can deny. I need you, oh my darling, like roses need rain. I'll sacrifice for you, I'll even do wrong for you (oh, baby, oh baby.) I would fight for you, I'd lie for you, walk the wire for you, oh, I'd die for you.

Don't you remember you told me you loved me, baby? I sit alone at home and cry over you — what can I do? I can't live, if living is without you. Only the lonely know the way I feel tonight, and I'm so lonesome I could cry.

Don't even get me started on the Country charts! Have you ever actually listened to a George Jones song?

Face it. We've been programmed by everything from Shakespeare's *Romeo* to hip-hop's *L'il Romeo*... and sometimes that information is not only wrong, it's downright dangerous. Whoever produced the Crystals' "He Hit Me (It Felt Like a Kiss)" should be in jail.

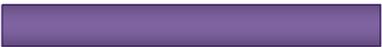
Oh, wait. That was Phil Spector. He is in jail.

For seven seasons, we watched Carrie Bradshaw pursue her love object on *Sex And The City*. This was a man with no name, a man who made it perfectly clear from the get-go that he was not interested in a relationship with her.

She, however, is convinced that he's The One. She sleeps



**You know
what they
say
about
expectations:
they're
resentments
under
construction.**



with him when he is married to another woman. She sleeps with him when she is living with another man. She hounds him, stalks him, wheedles and cajoles him, guilts him, lies to him, lies to herself ...and this is the heroine.

I have seen love addicts go into withdrawal between Twilight novels. Forget 50 Shades of Gray; women hid New Moon paperbacks from their husbands as if they were liquor bottles. Stephanie Meyer's teenage fantasies — and aren't we love addicts still teenagers in oh, so many ways? — made toxic love look like spring break. Alienated outsider loner Bella feels awkward and unlovely, until she meets brooding loner Edward.

But wait! Edward has loved her from the moment he smelled

her (not joking), and proves it by saving her life... again and again. He sort of wants to kill her and eat her, which keeps it exciting.

He also wants to kill himself, which lets her play the rescuer. She will literally forfeit her immortal soul to stay in the relationship.

I gave my car keys to sad and dangerous men more often than was wise. I'm not going to give them my soul.

I'm not saying every entertainment has to be emotionally healthy. "I Want To Explore Appropriate Boundaries with You" makes a crappy pop song. "Once" — a movie where (spoiler alert) the guy doesn't get the girl — bored me to tears.

But currently, we don't even have any Weight Watchers commercials to counterbalance the onslaught of KFC ads. Love

is magic, love is salvation, love is all there is. If all you want is everything... you're bound to be disappointed. You know what they say about expectations: they're resentments under construction.

Eventually, I would like Hollywood to tack on a "Professional Drivers; Don't Try This At Home" or at the very least a "Your Results May Vary" disclaimer on some of these plots.

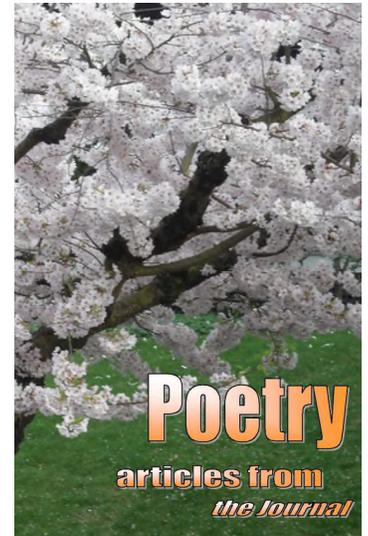
If not that, then at least throw in the occasional love story that doesn't end with a wedding as if it was the romantic equivalent of spiking the ball in the end zone. Otherwise, Four Weddings and a Funeral is less a movie title than your biography in a nutshell.

— **Ethlie V.**

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Addiction And The Information Highway



PHOTO BY JAMES E.

Dear fellows:
From my point of view, which is the only view I have today, society is clouded with so much massive spreading of viral information online: postings, sharing, blogging, articles, newspa-

pers, and advertising. What I view is a junk collection, deciding how I process this material.

I mute all commercials. I hide stories too hard to bear but indulge in some grisly detailed crime or smarmy political agenda waiting for my disgust. To-

day's information highway never takes a slow stride. Ever churning out agendas, I guard myself and am still afflicted. I live in Los Angeles, a huge city. I seek out nature to calm myself.

So when I'm asked what I think about Sex and Love Addic-

tion in Today's Society I pause to examine my own feelings about this subject matter.

If I was not affected I could turn away. When I was suffering a gruesome slow torture from this disease I could barely breathe. I was grateful to find Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous to begin my very long healing process.

Today I ponder with reflection and with gratitude. I'm in a healthy place with my sexuality. But I will always be affected and unable to turn away.

I see angry politicians creating wars on the sexes as if there is a group of rabid poor sexual nymphomaniacs carelessly skipping birth control, having wild unprotected sex in order to clog up our welfare system.

There is so much hatred targeted at Planned Parenthood and the welfare system. There is a megaphone of spewed shock jock drool to up ratings liken to the hair on the coke can Clarence Thomas of its day.

I see children in the juvenile halls arrested for prostitution. Crimes against them are despicable. Los Angeles County is the second largest to Vegas where child prostitution thrives and there is very little healing efforts available.

Our pimp culture in gangs, hip slick guns, drugs, money, fame are colored and disguised to be sold as power. Controlling aspects in movies, art, fashion, what we post, how we communicate and create belief systems based on what lies are being sold shape our thoughts, our actions and how we choose our quality of life.

For me addiction eliminates choice. Healing and surviving sex and love addiction after experiencing a depraved loneli-

ness working in the sex industry, I'm offered choice once again, as if it's a present wrapped in innocence. This choice with the help of a God (yes, to my understanding), allows me to decipher what I choose to allow in, who I interact with. Now if it's news stories like the above cited I can turn away unaffected, stay unaware and ignorant or see what I'm inspired to do to help make changes, small or great, to empower those suffering.

Today I see suffering: pain, loss, misery, fear and hunger for power. So what do I choose to do?

I practice compassion and pray about how I can help. I can use my story of healing through words, art or the body to help transform the people I encounter.

Instead of being angry at the injustices that continue in the world, that have always been there and will continue to be, I choose to have a different relationship — hence perception — with the experience of darkness. I turn within to the healing light that I keep on lighting through spiritual practice, through choosing the right actions and values that work for me today. And I lovingly detach from the hatred.

My sexuality was something outside of me when I was deep in addiction. Something I lost choice over, being driven by self punishing behaviors that degraded my being. Unaware, I kept on.

Remaining unavailable to myself, abandoning who I was, not taking the time to know myself left me in places and situations where I was the victim blaming others.

That vulnerable place lets

society lead me like a puppet, training me to follow pain. My sexuality followed down far away from something I owned, valued and cherished.

Having to heal and love myself alone, with God, was vital before joining a beautiful loving partnership with someone I respect and value as a union I would stay in.

Taking the patience to learn who we are as people together allows a comfort necessary to build the trust so essential for healing. In this partnership I want to be kind, loving and sharing.

For that reason, I want my sexuality within me to offer what is beautiful about me. Free from addiction and cloudy darkness, only the light within the partnership is offered.

So I cannot hop on the viewpoint that Sex and Love Addiction in Today's Society is everywhere reaching it's dark creepy feelers into every aspect of our life, simply because it's true, but because it has always been.

From the days of Marquis De Sade to our local school teacher playing twisted crimes with our children, the disease of Sex and Love Addiction is rotting our finest relationships at every turn.

The good news is that people who survive can experience years of reprieve and stay sober.

They are able to come out of the shame and shadows to proudly announce "I did it! I have a new way of being that is filled with freedom from my disease and I am here to be an example and share with you that it can be done!"

One breath at a time. It can be done!!

Lovingly, Jill

Combating Disease When Addiction Is Available Anywhere In An Instant

When I came to S.L.A.A., I had to get the pornography I was addicted to by mail, sent in anonymous envelopes to the small town I lived in. It wasn't available on TV and computers were massive boxes in big rooms with spinning reels of tape. But I had a big screen in my mind's eye, and I could run the movies endlessly without a picture, a magazine, or a book to give me the images. It took 12 Steps, the help of many trying to live soberly using those Steps, and much help from my Higher Power, God, for sure, to give me the power to turn off that projector in my mind, and stop the other activities one day at a time that shamed me so deeply.

My addiction gave me the compulsion to replay over and over the starved, distorted version of how to get and give love that I learned as a child, when I could not even imagine that there was any other way to find love. I practiced that same strategy over and over as an adult, mind-altered by my pursuit of the intensity that would muffle, for a while, the genuine spiritual and human needs that I was trying desperately to will out of existence.

Today I could get the images to send my addiction into instant overdrive on a tiny screen I hold in one hand and take with me everywhere. Computers are also everywhere, with access to the subject of my addiction at levels I never imagined when I was first in S.L.A.A. I could

stalk someone without leaving my house. My obsession could take over completely, and there would be no witnesses to what I did. Acting out would be available 24 hours a day, every day, in privacy, safe from most laws that once forbid it. And no one would even need to know I was doing it.

Except me.

And God.

In today's world "acting out" is like fast food — you can find it at every corner, and can get all you want at the drive-in window — unlimited pictures, videos, and text, at no cost above what I pay for anyway to talk to my family, friends, the dentist and people who want to sell me stuff.

But the heart of addiction has not really changed. For me and perhaps for other sex and love addicts as well, my powerlessness still means I cannot control the time I spend pursuing my addiction, or the loss of intimacy with friends and family, the lost opportunities in my career, and the cancer-like growth of a soul sickness that fills me with shame, once I let myself yield to the temptation to let just one brief scene play out in my mind.

My addiction was low bottom when today's technology did not exist, and my addiction still exists today, with or without computers and cell phones, and wireless communications.

It is tempting to say it is harder to stay sober today, with all that instant access to the "drug of choice" in the arena of

sex, love, fantasy addiction, and anorexia. It is tempting to dwell on the provocative display of bodies in sexy poses that are used to sell almost everything, and to believe there are no "safe" places. It seems easy to blame temptation to slip and relapse on the glorification of sex that seems to be everywhere at least in the American culture.

But the simple truth is quite different. Today, yesterday, in March 1978, a day from now, and 10 or 50 years from now, the problem is exactly the same. The enemy is me.

I can choose to 'go it alone' with my addictive acting out, but I can also choose to use the internet only for e-mails to my family and sober friends, and to get information for a school project. When I glance at those provocative bodies and sex or romance-filled pictures from all the media, I can immediately pull my eyes away to look for children at play, or an old person sitting in the sun, to look for a homeless person to give a dollar to, or pick up some trash and carry it to the nearest trash can.

I can watch children's movies and TV shows, inspirational stories and the news. I can go to meetings and make outreach calls. I can sponsor someone so I have the welfare of someone else to care about. I can call my family members and friends and tell them I love them and I'm glad I know them. I can do something to help someone else. I can pray with gratitude for my sobriety today, and to

ask for help to sustain it for the rest of the day.

I know there are temptations to act out everywhere today, but even when it seemed easier to avoid temptations, I searched them out. I acted out then just as much as I could today. What was different was that it had to be a true miracle for me to find recovery. In my own opinion, the addiction in today's world is just exactly the same as it has been in all of the 3 and 1/2 decades S.L.A.A. has existed.

What has really changed radically since S.L.A.A. first started is the opportunity for recovery!!! Our fellowship can use the same media that advertises sex, to make information about addiction and recovery readily available, to quickly reach out to someone suffering from the addiction. Individual stories for others to identify with can be available with details mixed so that no individual can be identified. We can share our stories of recovery without risking anyone's anonymity.

By far the most important change in today's world is access to fellowship. Where there are no face to face meetings, we can offer meetings to anyone by phone and Skype, so that isolation by distance and cost no longer separate people from the encouragement and support of sober fellowship.

No local sponsors? We can sponsor people from

the other side of the world. We can be recovery partners with people scattered all over the globe.

The opportunity for outreach and for service remains. Virtual meetings still need people to chair or tell their stories. Someone must manage the "door" to the meetings to let people in. Newcomers still need to be called and sponsored. We need S.L.A.A. members in recovery whose stories include phone sex, fantasy, anorexia, the internet as it is used to act out and to act in. We need people who have learned to turn off the mental fantasies that bar us from genuine experiences of love and support from and with others. We need sober members who have released the shame within and who can now share from experience about moving through withdrawal to new challenges and discoveries of living without the addiction, free of shame and available for fun and joy in living. The same technology that spreads temptation, will just as effectively carry recovery support to anyone, almost anywhere, who has decided they want what we have. Yesterday, today, and tomorrow, we have always had instant access to a Power greater than ourselves. Today and tomorrow, unlike yesterday, with today's technology, we can also have the fellowship which is so vital to recovery. Thank God.

—Barbara

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Sex And Love Addiction In The City

In every era, in every epoch, there are dominant societal attitudes toward love and sex. This is a human problem to be able to define one's own attitude and values in relation to any society.

Societies are like families on a grand scale. I think it's very likely that societal or familial dogma and dysfunction are the result of historical trauma that has been suffered and passed down generation after generation. There's some compassion to be had there for societies that create such suffering, for these same societies have surely suffered.

Individuals (and entire societies) can be traumatized by abuse, neglect or even misinformation, which is a form of psychological abuse. Commonly, survival depends on developing a coping pattern that, untreated, will be repeated into adulthood on a progressively expansive scale.

For children, a coping pattern of disassociation and shyness unattended may develop into social and emotional anorexia. Self-soothing through day-dreaming may develop into compulsive fantasizing leading to love addiction. Auto-regulation via materialistic pleasure-seeking may develop into full-blown sex addiction.

Sometimes I think that society is like a traumatized child seeking relief. Look at all the isolation in our technology, the fantasy in the stories we tell and



PHOTO BY JAMES E.

the songs we sing, the pleasure-seeking in practically every advertisement.

In the U.S., kids grow up in an increasingly pornographic culture while sexual education focuses on abstinence. Such incompatible extremes model dis-

connection more than anything. Like addiction, it's a case where the right hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing.

I'm familiar with similar incompatible extremes. I deluded myself that true love would make me a complete person

while objectifying almost everyone I met. I lived in the pornographic culture of my habitual thinking set against self-sacrificing ideals that, by nature, I could never fulfill, which further drove my psychological split.

My own sexual education started at an earlier age than my peers. My mother grew up with a lot of shame for her lack of sexual education, and wanted her children to be better informed at an early age. This was her politic, her own experience taught her that society was wrong in this regard. Consequently our sex ed talks were all conducted in public, such as while walking down the street or shopping at the mall. I think she wanted people to know it was okay to talk about these subjects with your kids. Of course, I never heard a word! I was far too ashamed to have my mother teaching me sex education in public.

Ironically, sex and love were taboo subjects in our family apart from those one-sided public lectures. My parents were both emotionally anorectic. The mere mention of love, much less sex, sent a palpable chill through the house.

As a gay teenager in a homophobic small town, the mere mention of any form of love and sex in school sent me into my own tailspin of terror. I was hyper-aware of being different – to me, homosexuality literally made one terminally unique. I could act out anonymously, blindly grasping my way to truth in the dark, but I could not be present for an open, honest exploration of real love and real sex.

When this got unmanageable

enough and I joined S.L.A.A., despite all the sex and love I experienced, I came to realize that I didn't even know what sex and love really were. I didn't know my own values.

In recovery, there comes a whole question of how we define and express our developing personal values of sex and love. How do we find our way now within the context of our culture? I think there can often be the wish to change society, especially when we witness so many societal beliefs and behaviors that we recognize to be damaging and addictive.

A lot of times the natural desire to change society is wanting to control, and that's not change – that's more of the same, that's more dogma (the result of trauma.) It takes a very fine hand to let go of outcomes, and yet to stay strong in recovering healthy values. This is not to say that there isn't negative sexual and romantic propaganda in our society appropriately deserving of the recovery we've been so freely gifted.

I know for me, when I feel like the world needs to change – really I need to change. I want the world to change so my experience will be better, so it will help me along. I won't have so much judgment and disappointment if only the world would get better.

Before S.L.A.A., I used people as projects. I picked partners who needed saving, so once I made them better they could save me. Just like the times I want to save the world and create a happy and peaceful society that will make it possible for me to be happy and peaceful. As they say in 12 Steps, cut out the middle man! I don't need to

save anyone outside of me in order to be saved (by surrendering my life and will to HP one day at a time.)

I believe anyone can become self-actualized anywhere in any situation. We know there are people worse off than us. We know there are people born into oppression. There are examples of real people who became self-actualized despite worse and oppressive conditions. That means we don't need our situation to be perfect to become self-actualized.

For some of us, the act of becoming self-actualized might require standing up to society and speaking our truth. If we've been inhibited, if we've been too scared to relate and share ourselves, becoming self-actualized might include sharing ourselves. This might include sharing our program with those who are attracted to our recovery.

We model the shared values of S.L.A.A. and the world changes because we are changing our vibration, the way we think, the way we act. Service is a tool we can use to change our addictive patterns through expressing our truth. We learn the difference between expressing our truth to change the world and expressing our truth to claim our personal values.

When we share and put our energy into service we behave like the Light and in that way we can connect to the Light. I've heard there is a spiritual law that the Light can only dwell in a similarity of form. To attract greater light into our lives, let our lives in recovery illuminate our society.

— Tom B., Los Angeles

Share space

From The Brink Of Destruction To Happiness

My life began as normal as you can imagine. Born into a staunch Catholic family, I was the fourth of six children.

My father was strict. Kneeling in prayer was a daily ritual for us and church was a must every Sunday. I was grounded in my religion from an early age and I was then, as I am now, a firm believer.

Although my childhood was fairly normal, on reflection there were some incidents that influenced the course of my life. My father believed in “spare the rod and spoil the child.” Being the most mischievous of my siblings, I was at the receiving end of many canings. During one particular incident, I received 70 hits on the hands – I remember the pain, the hurt, the bruises and the anguish I felt to this day.

My mother was and still is

what I consider to be a congenial sort of woman, however, I do not remember receiving much nurturing or attention from her and to this day our relationship can only be described as cordial.

I cannot recall any praise or validation from either of my parents while growing up. I was never made to feel special in any way and in fact one painful memory that lingers is wondering why I never had any baby pictures when all my siblings had some.

It’s difficult to pinpoint an exact time when I became a sex addict but certainly there were occurrences in my early years that, combined with my perceived lack of nurturing from my parents, contributed towards sex addiction. One of these

incidents was witnessing a man rubbing himself against women in a crowded marketplace when I was very young, before even my teenage years.

I remember watching him when he turned to look at me – his eyes were red. He did this over and over again to every woman he encountered, making it look like an accident. I guess being very young and impressionable, I did not know what that was all about and later on I do recall myself wanting to imitate him in crowded places and get a kick out of it. Fortunately, as an adult, realizing the severity of such an action and the trouble it could have gotten me in, I did not engage in that.

Coming from a typical Asian



PHOTO BY JAMES E.

conservative family, I was not taught anything in regards to sex from my parents when I was young. I grew up believing that I would only have sex after I was married. Holding onto that belief, I did not have sex with any of my girlfriends in my teens.

Unfortunately, despite my beliefs, my first sexual experience was when a colleague introduced me to prostitution. He took me to a brothel and there I had sex for the first time. Soon after the brothel became a place I would return to from time to time to escape or just to “feel better.”

As I grew older, I discovered

“Health Centers” or “massage parlors” that had sprouted everywhere in the city and where I could get my sexual fix. In my later years I also discovered, “girly bars” and KTV lounges that I indulged in whenever I felt like it or whenever I felt pressure at home, or stress at work. I continued to indulge in prostitution when I was bored, sad or even happy. I had some friends who went to these places occasionally so I developed the belief that it was the norm and a “man” thing.

I remember an acting out incident during a past birthday where I was waiting for my then fiancée who was working late.

Feeling bored while waiting for her, I called and I lied to her that I would be going for a quick beer in one of the nearby pubs. Instead, I ended up going to a KTV Lounge, had a few drinks and ended up having paid sex. In order to get my fix, dishonesty was a part of my daily life.

Despite all these incidents which I kept secret from my fiancée we subsequently got married and soon after my addiction escalated further through an affair with our domestic helper.

At that time I was continuing to spend money on prostitutes and it started to worry me.

While thinking of the money issue at the same time my wife had told me that my snoring kept her awake at night and asked me to sleep in the spare room. I used this as an opportunity to start an affair with our maid and this fuelled my sex addiction further.

I was subsequently found out and kicked out of the house. Instead of feeling remorseful and reflective on what I had done, in the insanity and selfishness of my addiction, my first instinct was to call some friends of mine and hit the girly bars the same night. I drank a lot, partied the night away and ended up having sex with a prostitute. I was numbing myself with total disregard of my actions, past and present.

A few months after that I managed to reconcile with my wife. It was at that time, around 6-7 years ago, that we realized that I had a sex addiction problem. After some internet checking, my wife found a website that contained the 40 questions of self diagnosis. After answering the questions I realized that I had a problem with sex addiction.

I found out about S.L.A.A. in Singapore and started attending the meetings. It felt good to share and I formed a bond with several other men in the group. After a couple of years of meetings, I decided to make an effort to get sober and I managed a year of sobriety just by attending the meetings and using my willpower. At that time though I did not make an effort to get a sponsor. There was only one in our group, and I did not work the Steps. I now know that recovery does not come by only going to meetings and staying sober by 'white knuckling' as they call it in A.A. How do I know? A year later I relapsed and my addiction started to escalate again. I now realize that

back then I was not really willing to work on letting go of my addiction.

Over the next 4 years I got worse and worse, drinking more and acting out more. My wife decided then that she had enough of all this as our fights became more intense and regular.

I recall an incident when we had an argument, I was so arrogant and uncaring that I just took off, travelled to a nearby island and stayed there for a couple of days drinking and having sex with prostitutes. Soon after that we separated due to my out of control behavior.

Last year I was at my wits end, had given up on myself and was resigned to a life of being a sex addict. I was now a full blown sex addict and had gone from one to a hundred in my sexual behaviors. In the insanity of my addiction I did not practice safe sex with some of the prostitutes I was sleeping with. I did not care for myself and had practically given up on my life. I was a wreck and I even got prepared to die because by then I could see no way out.

Even though we were separated and I was in self destruction mode I still kept seeing my wife at the time. The amount of suffering my wife has gone through being a sex addict's spouse was indescribable. She was then also in full depression.

One day I went back to see her and as I let myself into the house there seemed to be no one at home. I slowly opened the master bedroom door to look for her. It was then that I saw her sprawled out, hair disheveled, face down on the bed. I picked her up and saw that she had been crying and in a bad state. I ask her whether she was crying like that all the time and she said that since we had separated she cried all day every day.

She told me that she banged her head against the wall and at times burned herself with very hot water from the shower as she could not take the pain she felt. She had to do this in order to numb the pain in her heart. She also had to take extremely strong medication just to get through each day and most times she would be severely affected by the array of drugs that she took.

The image of her when I walked into the room that day broke my heart. For some reason I realized then and there what I was doing was not only killing me but also my wife. If I did not want to get sober for myself I could at least try and be sober for my wife....someone who has loved me so much and so dearly without any reservations. I realized that finally I had to do something about my sex addiction in order to save myself and save my wife.

From that day on I told myself that I needed to change, have real willingness to recover and take action. I went back to the S.L.A.A. meetings and became willing for the very first time to find a sponsor and work the steps.

I found a sponsor by asking one of the members and soon after I started working the steps with his support. I started praying to my Higher Power every morning to keep me sober and every night I thanked my Higher Power for the day.

Soon after, the initial hourly and daily struggles and the pull of addiction started becoming less frequent. The combination of wanting to be sober, going to meetings and having a sponsor, working the steps, learning how to be compassionate through providing service to the group and others and connecting with my Higher Power started changing my life.

Today I am close to 8 months sober. Things have changed a lot

and are changing for the better. Last year I was heading towards self destruction and hurting people around me along the way. Today, I am learning each and every day what it takes to lead a good, healthy, rewarding life. And I am starting to experience that.

My wife and I are rebuilding our relationship and marriage and have never ever been so

happy! Never before in the last 20 years that we have been together have we felt like this for each other.

Despite the occasional triggers, which we are learning to deal with, the constant quarrels and unhappiness have now been replaced by many moments of laughter, peace and happiness.

For these I thank my Higher

Power, the meetings that I attend twice weekly on Mondays and Thursdays, the lunch meetings with other members, the Steps that I am working on, my sponsor that helps me with accountability and responsibility and of course my wife who suffered so much but never gave up on me...I am grateful.

— **S.L.A.A. Singapore group member**

Are These Extravagant Promises?

Editor's Note: The author refers to A.A.'s Promises. This is not S.L.A.A. Conference-approved literature although some S.L.A.A. groups/meetings choose by group conscience (Tradition 2) and group autonomy (Tradition 4) to use them.

The correct answer, of course, is, "We think not." However, it is not the answer I always believe. Promises are for the future. I may not have them fully in present experience. But hope tells me that this is where I am heading in the future. I can have a life where I have purpose, fulfillment, and a sense that I am appreciated and loved.

The problem, of course is that sometimes the promises happen slowly. Character defects seem to move away at the speed of glaciers. I begin to doubt that they really will move away at all. Plus, the pain doesn't just disappear. Changing modes of thinking is not like changing a shirt. I think that perhaps I got some insight to overcome my obsessive thinking and then circumstances take me by surprise and it doesn't seem like my thinking has changed at all.

My addiction, of course, claims to have the solution. I can

have purpose, fulfillment and a sense that I am loved. By making a few dubious decisions (that my sponsor wouldn't understand so I won't bother telling him) I can have it tonight. The euphoric excitement that comes from believing that an accessible, crack cocaine experience can give it all to me instantly is luring. And it would be rather nice if it were actually true. But something within me knows that it isn't true. Something within me (and the voices of the fellowship remind me) that if I go down the path my addict is suggesting I will come out the other end back in the gutter of despair, depression, shame and self-loathing.

At a meeting, we entertained the phrase, "Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now." (A.A. Big Book pg. 58). I thought back at how, before I was in the program, business trips and

acting out were the same thing.

I remembered walking around a park in a large city realizing that when I was gone away alone it was inevitable that I was going to act out and there was nothing I could do about it. In my years in the program, I have gone on dozens of trips without incident. What an enormous change!

A preacher once said, "God's will is like the Hebrew Bible, you have to read it backwards." (In the Hebrew language, one reads from right to left). If I look inside me now, it often seems as if no change is happening at all. It seems that the promises are just a mockery and a sham. But if I look at my history since I began working the steps (reading my life backwards), I see that I have indeed made progress and I am moving in the right direction.

Are these extravagant promises? We think not.

— **David B., NC**

There Is No Blame...

What I have come to discover from much work and many years in S.L.A.A. is that whatever has occurred in my life regarding personal relationships with the opposite sex has taken place because I was a participant! Once I got this little insight, most of the anger and hurt I had been feeling regarding so-called “qualifiers” pretty much melted away. In all my relationships, I really am the common denominator! (And there’s no “yeah, buts...”). I am an adult...I showed up for whatever the other person had to offer!!!

A self-parenting teacher told me years ago that all relationships are like a see-saw — if one person on the see-saw carries more weight than the other person, the see-saw will not be able to balance. And that was pretty much my pattern of relationships before and even during my experience in S.L.A.A. I was willing to do “everything and anything” to make a relationship happen, yet I kept picking people who were barely able or willing to even show up. This in turn triggered enormous “family of origin” pain in me — gripping, paralyzing pain, and I did it over and over and over again. It took me a long time to “get it.” I mean, really “get it.” To truly value my own existence first before involving myself with another.

I am writing this in the hopes that possibly someone reading this will not continue to experience these same types of hurts and disappointments. If I can help another, the Third Step

prayer says, then my victory over the pain, suffering and addiction has meaning.

I hear from sponsees and others of the terribly deep, intense pain and suffering that goes along in a situation with a potential or real partner not going the way we want it to go...for example: “We had a few dates, (or a few months of dates), and he hasn’t called.” What is the expectation on our part? And at least as important, what is the obligation on the part of the other person? He/she has *none*. Imposing expectations and obligations means we are being hostage-takers. I know we all want “love” but are we still going about receiving love in our old, addict-learned ways? If someone does not want to continue contact with you, it’s important, vital, to go within and accept whatever feelings that may bring up, accept this moment in life, and let go of any expectation that this particular dating experience should carry any more weight than “an experience.”

This is one reason why it’s so crucial not to get physical before knowing the person. And 10 dates is not “knowing” someone. I hear over and over again in meetings how people date for a few weeks, then suddenly they are “in a relationship.” They are “in bliss.” Then they come back to the meeting a few weeks, months later, and talk about how much trouble and pain the relationship/other person is creating. But that is OUR doing...once again we created a “love” situation without learning enough about the other person

first. It takes time to fully experience another person. But, in three or six weeks time, if there is physical attraction, all we can know is our fantasy of who we hope, wish and pray that person will be. We don’t have the necessary experience and information about the other person to move into the sexual realm, and people so often do, and cause themselves so much grief and pain and heartache, and then, as we say in our “Characteristics of Sex and Love Addiction,” blame them for not fulfilling our fantasies and expectations.”

It is vital for us as recovering addicts to take care of our emotions, our feelings, our hearts, our bodies, before involving ourselves with someone else. We do need to “become responsible for ourselves before involving ourselves with others,” even when the need to bond and give and receive love is so great and strong and primal. I never knew before coming to S.L.A.A. and other 12-Step programs that there could be so much joy and fulfillment in discovering who I am, completely separate from others. What are my values, my interests, my tastes, my passions? The way I grew up was so much about taking care of others, pleasing others (to “get” love...which didn’t really work even then!) that I did not know these things about myself and perhaps even worse, didn’t know how to value me. Through lots of years of hard work, and showing up, I am able to feel and acknowledge the value of myself.

— C.H.

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Did you know that you can call the Inspiration Line at any time to help you get through a particularly difficult day?

Did you know that 24 hours a day, every day, there is a message of experience, strength and hope to help Sex and Love Addicts?

Did you know you can call the Inspiration Line NOW ?

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The Inspiration Line is presented to the SLAA Fellowship by the Greater Delaware Valley Intergroup. To find out more or to volunteer, call the Line and leave a message.



THE WORLD
REVOLVES
AROUND
HIM



Cartoon by Andrew K.

