

theJournal

Issue # 140

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Cross Addictions

Working S.L.A.A. With Other 12-Step Programs

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

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Letter from the Editor

Dear Reader:

I've been reading through past issues of *the Journal* from ten years ago until the present time to create an archive of all the articles. A large percentage of the articles tell of cross addictions and coming to S.L.A.A. by way of other programs. And I can't count how many times I've heard someone start out their share with "Hi, my name is _____ and I'm a... wait... what program am I in today?" And the laughter in the room tells me that people identify. They say the road gets narrower in recovery. I didn't know what that meant in my first few years of A.A. Now that I have a little bit of sobriety and recovery, I feel it means that once we get clarity, we see other issues crop up. And if they make our lives unmanageable, we have to do work in other programs in order to keep our sobriety in S.L.A.A. It's about emotional sobriety, whether we work other programs around our issues or not. This is where the idea for this theme and question of the day come from.

If you are cross addicted like me, the articles in this issue of *the Journal* may help you to know that you are not alone. They may help some realize that it's time to do something about a "bad habit" that has been bugging them. Or maybe, it will just serve to help clear up some troubling issues. All of the stories were very moving to me and I'm grateful to have read them.

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. 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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Question of the Day & Answers from Yesterday

The Question of the Day from the last issue was, “Has Sobriety in S.L.A.A. revealed addictive behavior that required work in other programs? What was your experience?” Here are some wonderful responses for your enjoyment. They are not presented in any particular order. The next two questions are: Issue #141 – “How has your idea of intimate relationships/sober dating changed through working the S.L.A.A. program?” The deadline for submissions is 1/16/13; and Issue #142 – Safety in Meetings – “Have you ever felt unsafe or triggered by a member at a meeting? How did you (or your Group/Intergroup) handle the situation?” The deadline for submissions is 3/14/13. Please send answers to www.slaafws.org.

“HAS SOBRIETY IN S.L.A.A. REVEALED ADDICTIVE BEHAVIOR THAT REQUIRED WORK
IN OTHER PROGRAMS? WHAT WAS YOUR EXPERIENCE?”

Yes, eliminating my S.L.A.A. acting out behavior revealed some—overeating, as well as overspending. Having access to 12-Step Programs to ease my pain and acting out in other areas is something I am eternally grateful for.

— ELIZABETH P., HOUSTON

No, but sobriety in other programs has revealed addictive behaviors in S.L.A.A.

— ANKE, HEIDELBERG, GERMANY

Yes, a lot.

— JIM B., HAMILTON, ONTARIO, CANADA

Sobriety in other programs brought me to S.L.A.A., not vice versa...Oops...I lied. When I got sober sexually, my “debting” issues manifested themselves...The need for me to learn self care.

— ROB S., NYC

Not so much addictive behavior requiring work in other fellowships as more work to be done with regard to character defects to be addressed in S.L.A.A.

— ANDREW H., ELIZABETHTOWN, KY

QUESTION OF THE DAY

Ya, sure, you betcha—
acceptance after total
shock.

— ANONYMOUS

Yes, I addressed sugar
addiction, but primarily I
had to acknowledge that
alcohol “facilitated” every
bad sexual decision I ever
made.

— ANDREA BETH, SAN DIEGO

The 100-pound gain during
my withdrawal was a HUGE ***.
Then I discovered money and rec-
ognized ***.

— JUANITA J.

Sobriety in S.L.A.A. has
given me the courage to ad-
dress my poor eating habits.
Better sexual health and bet-
ter physical health are my
recipe to a better life.

— ELLIOTT, SACRAMENTO

Work in other recovery pro-
grams made the transition to
S.L.A.A. easier when I became
aware of my sex and love addic-
tion. I think it helped that I was
already familiar with the steps.

— KELLI, AUSTIN

I really did not believe my
drinking was problematic un-
til after I entered this program
and learned more about ad-
diction. I never hit bottom
with alcohol like I did with sex
and love, and quitting drink-
ing was not too difficult hav-
ing begun the steps in this
program.

— STEVE B., SUNRISE, FL

I’m not in other programs, but
being on a spiritual path, I’d say
they’re related.

— MARCELO B., SAN DIEGO

Through coming to recognize addictive patterns of behaviors and
thoughts through S.L.A.A., I realized I am a compulsive overeater.
So I joined O.A.

— JAY G., CLEVELAND

“HAS SOBRIETY IN S.L.A.A. REVEALED ADDICTIVE BEHAVIOR THAT REQUIRED WORK IN OTHER PROGRAMS? WHAT WAS YOUR EXPERIENCE?”

Six months after coming into S.L.A.A., I ended up in Overeater’s Anonymous. I used my eating disorder to numb out my withdrawal pain. Thanks to Higher Power, I’m 3 1/2 years sober in S.L.A.A. and 3 years abstinent in O.A.!!!

— RICK B., LARGO, FL

When I put down the sex, intrigue, and fantasy, I found myself picking up food more than ever. I’m now working on my “food issues” as part of my S.L.A.A. program by incorporating healthy eating into my top-line behaviors.

— WHITNEY N., NYC

Yes! From the beginning I realized that I used food to escape from feelings in much the same way that I had used acting out in my sex and love addiction. This is not new, but in sobriety in S.L.A.A., it became more and more obvious. I am now attending meetings in another fellowship to address my food issues.

— SARA S., TAMPA

Yes, my sex and love addiction was connected to my being an adult child of an alcoholic and being codependent. I have attended Al-Anon and CoDA.

— RICK K., SANTA CRUZ

Yes, I realized I was addicted to my qualifier’s status. I wanted a lover to take care of me. The money program has helped me develop a sense of self (and savings!), so I am self-supporting and less likely to become love addicted to anyone based on financial fear.

— TOM B., LOS ANGELES

Actually it was in A.A. that I found out that I was a nicotine addict, codependent, and then a sex and love addict. Then I realized I was a service addict and a sugar addict. I have been a member of NicA, CoDA, and Weight Watchers. Today my primary program is S.L.A.A., but I attend A.A. and practice the R.C.A. program and have sponsors in all three programs.

— RITA H., MONTREAL

QUESTION OF THE DAY

Yes, the deeper my recovery has been in S.L.A.A., the more I've realized how much I have to learn and grow. Recently, I'm learning that I have emotional reactions that are well-addressed in Al-Anon.

—KAREN S., SF/EAST BAY

Yes, I have come to realize that avoiding responsibility and self care is part of excessive emotional dependency and includes me in D.A., CoDA, and U.A. (under earners).

—CONRAD G., OAKLAND

Al-Anon — different view of 12-Step Programs. O.A. — have not attended meetings, but contact with O.A. members has helped me with my awareness. E.A. — have not attended meetings, but reading their basic text gave me a clearer understanding of how the 12 Steps work.

—JACK S., LARGO, FL

Yes, other than working the steps in S.L.A.A., I use CoDA to work on my emotional sobriety. I am not working the steps in that program, though.

—MARTINA, MUNICH

For me, it was the reverse. I was in D.A. and asked my sponsor how he got/could afford his big home, wife and kids, and car and pets. He suggested that I write what I want in a partner and place it in a 'God box'. I did that and a month later I found myself in S.L.A.A. One month after that I broke up with my four year on-again off-again girlfriend, got a sponsor and committed to S.L.A.A. 100%. A simple question about how one can afford a family made me realize I had huge intimacy issues and that although debting was my initial problem it pointed to a deeper issue.

—TOM, LOS ANGELES

My experience in S.L.A.A. helped reveal my powerlessness over alcohol. I upped my A.A. game, and, thanks to God and program, I haven't had a drink in four years.

— BEN V., LOS ANGELES

“HAS SOBRIETY IN S.L.A.A. REVEALED ADDICTIVE BEHAVIOR THAT REQUIRED WORK IN OTHER PROGRAMS? WHAT WAS YOUR EXPERIENCE?”

My experience has been... well... definitive and on point... that uncover a rock and all sorts of organisms appear... alcoholism... debting... codependence... But the saving grace is that I am given an opportunity to address and grow. Going to other 12-Step rooms is not looked upon by me as penance or punitive, but rather an opportunity to get and gather new information — like dating, which is just like information gathering and processing.

— DEJOHN, LOS ANGELES, CA

What can I say? As I put the lid on this disease my other addictions/compulsions soared high, especially food and spending/debting. But I've learned to work on most what kills me the fastest. God's the answer.

— BIRGIT W., BURBANK, CA

S.L.A.A. has revealed my compulsion with financial issues and compulsive spending — a consistent lack of self-care and ability to satisfy my basic needs for food, shelter and medical care.

—ELIZABETH, LOS ANGELES

I actually got sober in another 12-Step program 8 years before coming into S.L.A.A. My worst sexual acting out came after getting sober. I committed an offense and went to prison for a year. By the grace of God, I stayed sober from alcohol and today need both programs.

— TRAVIS W., LITTLE ROCK

After being in S.L.A.A. for 6 months or so, I realized that the problems I have with money are connected to the same feelings that drove me to my sex and love addiction. Because my work in the S.L.A.A. program has given me some relief from these feelings, I decided to attend meetings in a money 12-Step program.

— DAVID, HOLLYWOOD, CA

Going through the Steps in S.L.A.A. and withdrawal push my addictive behavior to food and spending. It has really highlighted my behavior as unmanageable and that brought humility. Humility brought further surrender and willingness. Yay!

— SUZANNE, LOS ANGELES

Whitney N., NYC
submission for the Journal, #140
September 17, 2012
"Diamanté" (a poem in form)

We
Are no longer
We

You
Your Sickness
Spiritual Mental Physical
Lying sneaking drinking snorting
Cavorting, thieving, my grieving your death around the corner.
I left. I hope you are learning loving living giving
Growing not knowing what tomorrow may bring
Surrender Serenity Sobriety
Your Recovery
You

I
My Sickness
Obsession Dependence Denial
Caretaking heartbreaking isolating covering the tracks
One day, waking up, breaking up, leaving, letting go
Standing on my own two feet again
Honesty, balance, joy
My recovery

I
You
Were as sick as
I
Was as sick as
You

Love, Money And Addiction

I came into the rooms of S.L.A.A. just over a year ago. It was approximately four months into working the 12 Steps that I had a major realization; I would use my love addiction to excuse spending inappropriate amounts of money on women that I was dating and wanted to impress, making them believe I was something that I am not.

If I was dating someone exclusively, I would also spend inappropriate amounts of money on them for gifts, somehow equating that if I was the best, most thoughtful boyfriend they've ever had, that they would never leave me. At the same time, when I wasn't in a relationship, I would spend money at massage parlors and bars where I would constantly be on the lookout for my next conquest.

When I did Step 4 and did an



incredibly detailed inventory, this pattern became crystal clear. I was using my sex and love addiction as an excuse to spend money that I didn't have. The spending was compulsive and resulted in carrying debt.

I did walk into a D.A. meeting shortly thereafter and the whole experience combined with what I was going through in S.L.A.A. proved to be too overwhelming for me. I couldn't handle both at that time.

It's been 8 more months, I am clear now that the spending patterns and resulting debt has cropped up in other places.

I find myself buying workout gear, expensive workout gear with

the justification that, “well, at least I am doing something ‘good’ for myself (i.e. working out.)” But the fact of the matter is I don’t “need” any of that stuff. It just “feels” good to have it. I know this

is addictive behavior, primarily because I cannot manage my finances on my own.

I have committed to going to my first real D.A. meeting as an active participant this week.

— GREG G.

Getting To The Core, Crippling Issues



I began 12-Step program work in traditional A.A. and am continuously sober 7.5

years. After initial years of practicing the principles of the program as they relate to

alcohol, I eventually sought help for my tendency to compulsively overeat (while over-exercising to keep up appearances).

I also quit smoking during this time. Once alcohol, substance abuse and overeating were removed, I was left with emotions and especially the way I dealt with “relationships” in my life.

My compulsive tendencies to obsess, fantasize and pursue unavailable men ran rampant throughout my life experience, even from childhood.

Having removed the surface problems (drugs, food, alcohol) allowed me the time, physical space and open mind to discover the core and serious, crippling issue of unhealthy relationships.

I lost 25 pounds early this summer and came into a healthier, more attractive weight.

Men were attracted to me and I did not know how to deal with it (except to gain the weight back and get rid of the problem!!).

This scared me. For my own health and personal happiness, I wanted to keep this weight off and knew instinctively that I had to look at my problem with relationships, obsessions and compulsive fantasizing.

I *had* to change. It all *had* to change because the problem was

in my mind and this took fundamental change.

Earlier this summer, I began to explore S.L.A.A. when I found myself quickly obsessed over a chronic, alcoholic man who showed me a little interest and attention. I immediately fell “in love” with this person and became obsessed.

Thankfully, I was able to realize something was very wrong with my heart and mind at this point. I talked to several women in traditional A.A. and found the WANA (an S.L.A.A. women’s phone meeting) contact.

I began reading all of the S.L.A.A. material that I could find.

I also ordered some classic books on love addiction. Fortunately, I had time during the summer to put some good hours into establishing a foundation of knowledge of the S.L.A.A. program and details of this addiction.

I also attended many phone meetings and racked up a larger phone bill as necessary and made time to work the program. I was willing to go to any lengths to stop a problem that had led me into many unhealthy and twisted, obsessed, fatal relationships.

Well, knowledge is power! The program immediately put a

tremendous perspective on healthy boundaries, healthy interpersonal rapport, bottom lines, redirection of thinking patterns and understanding what my mind does in regards to relationships.

I am grateful that I also had so many women in WANA, A.A. and O.A. to talk to regarding my thoughts and emotions as I worked through yet another “wildfire” fantasy relationship.

Now that I have an initial knowledge of my condition, I see so many red flags when it comes to men.

I know to call friends in the program to share what I am thinking and get perspective.

The thinking and behaviors that I used to immediately defer to which resulted in fantasizing and unhealthy compulsive obsessions, now lead me to realize how such thinking and behavior strongly trigger me to want to drink, eat and abuse other substances.

The foundation of my other compulsive behaviors *are* my

problems and thinking disorders regarding relationships. S.L.A.A. teaches me what healthy relationships are and for this I am so very grateful.

Having this helpful knowledge base and having “formulas” for dating and self-validation, plus a community to share my experience, strength and hope, has provided a new dimension to my work in the other programs.

Relationships and filling that personal need to be loved and validated has revealed itself to be the absolute foundation of all other addictions.

Therefore, I have to continue to look at my emotional balance and health of relationships in order to have a real chance to live an optimal life of sane, happy usefulness.

I am in the best place possible as a result and life can truly be happy, joyous and free. I can be available for healthy relationships now rather than spinning my wheels in destructive ones.

Thank you S.L.A.A.

— LINDA E.

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Back On The Path

I first got sober in Alcoholics Anonymous 15 years ago. As for most alcoholics, it was the end of a painful journey that led to despair and incomprehensible demoralization. I was having a torrid and torturous affair with a married man, which came to a finish at the same time my drinking and drug use did. I had no idea I was a sex and love addict then.

When I stopped drinking and joined A.A. it was the only thing I could handle for at least a year. My life opened up after that and I became able to work again and achieve some goals. My sobriety, though, caused me to recoil from the advances I received from men, as my unconscious fears in that area began to surface. I didn't know I had the makings of sexual anorexia within me because up to the point of my sobriety, men and sex were always a part of my life. In retrospect, give or take a couple of the encounters, it was rarely done in a loving and joyful way.

When I reached my three-year birthday in A.A., I joined Nicotine Anonymous with the help of some friends. I quit smoking and within the year, I was back dating men and there was a point in that time



that I went from one unavailable man to another in short lived, unsatisfying relationships that I see were the beginnings of my sex and love addiction reappearing.

I grew up in an abusive alcoholic home where abandonment and criticism were part of everyday life. I have sexual abuse in my history, assaults and a debilitating rape. I disassociated from most of these experiences until I joined S.L.A.A., but they in-

formed my decisions, my attraction to unavailable men and the idea that my basic value was that of a sex object. My identity became a combination of sex and self-hatred, with fear underlying all of it. I felt that this is just what happens to me, this is my lot in life.

I was five years sober in A.A. when I finally found S.L.A.A. on the heels of the most painful of those relationships that I began having in sobriety. I found myself returning over and over to an unavailable man who pursued and rejected me, over and over again, and this triggered all of the PTSD that I had been experiencing my whole life, but had no idea that's what it was, because I was so used to just feeling crazy.

I acted out with this man on and off during my first two years in S.L.A.A. I was finally able to break away for a period of time, but he contacted me again and my withdrawal from this 3rd or 4th time together became too unbearable.

I secretly began smoking again after I had achieved three years "smober" in Nicotine Anonymous. I still went back one more time to this man after I started smoking again, but was finally able to leave him for good and get three years off my bottom line of no contact. Still, during this time I secretly

smoked on and off as my sexual anorexia moved back into place.

I became entrenched in S.L.A.A. and received many gifts in that recovery. I sponsored and was sponsored; I created lasting friendships and found a safe place to talk about secrets that I'd hidden most of my life. I was even chosen as the representative for my city to attend the yearly S.L.A.A. conference; I grew immensely in personal awareness and consciousness as a human being.

When I reached three years off my bottom lines, five years in the program, I began to experience a lack of faith, hopelessness in my ability to ever find myself in a real relationship. During those three years I was abstinent and in untreated anorexia. I began to feel as though I was abnormal, different from my fellows, whom I was seeing getting married or in successful relationships. So I left S.L.A.A.

I never really addressed my fear of men and the anorexia that this caused. Dating was scary and uncomfortable for me, even though, I tried to do it from time to time.

I was obsessed with seeing couples on the street or in magazines and grew more and more despondent without really knowing it. After a year, I reconnected

with a man from the past who was a friend of my sister. They were both photographers and he had recently reconnected with her.

I knew he had always carried a kind of torch for me. I had posed for him in my drinking days and had a few intimate indiscretions with him that I didn't really want to have. I realized my feelings were the same as they were 15 years ago.

I wasn't interested in him, but I wanted so desperately to break my abstinence, I started a sexual relationship with him. After a few months I ended it, hurting him, but I felt somewhat normal again because I had had sex.

Months passed and my loneliness and anorexia returned and I became reconnected with another man from my past...the married man I was with when I first became sober.

We started up again having an affair. It became obsessive and sexual; we were even sending pornographic movies of ourselves back and forth.

He was still married, but to a different woman than before. I justified this by saying I needed to feel sexual and desired again.

But something else had taken place. Not only had I left S.L.A.A., I had stopped going to A.A. as well. As my anorexia became too unbearable, I began to abuse

some pain medication I had been prescribed, then began stealing it in large quantities from a person I knew who had an abundance of it.

This ultimately led me to drinking again and I lost the 13 years of sobriety I had in A.A. I began smoking again and was using these drugs and drinking during the affair with the married man, and this lasted for about 7 months.

My life unbearably unmanageable, I tried to get sober again. I stopped taking the drugs which helped me end the relationship with the married man, but not days later I was contacted by the very man who I had first come into S.L.A.A. over.

I had naively contacted both of these men through social media at very low, angry and lonely moments, not realizing that sometime later they would both reenter my life.

I stopped using and began to get sober again but then also started seeing my qualifier.

It had been 5 years since we had seen each other and it started back up right where we left off. With my focus on him, I was able to stop smoking and using the drugs.

He was pursuing me intensely and it felt good, but then the pattern of our old relationship be-

gan to surface.

He told me he was unavailable and the love avoidant, love addict scenario was in play. After a few months he broke it off and I fell into a withdrawal that was as dark as all those years back when I first joined S.L.A.A..

Despair and thoughts of death were my only friends.

I began to focus my attention on getting sober again in A.A. and as the months passed, so did my withdrawal.

My close friends encouraged me to return to S.L.A.A. but I refused.

I didn't think I needed it and I was hell bent on doing everything on my own.

At about 10 months sober this man contacted me again, this time on my birthday. It unsettled me terribly, but still I didn't want to return to S.L.A.A.. Six months passed and I regained 17 months of A.A. sobriety when he contacted me again.

Because I am powerless, I answered the call and we began to see each other yet again.

Things seemed different this time, we had gotten closer than ever before but ultimately the same thing happened when his love avoidant clashed with my love addict.

This was the man I wanted and

it seemed I was only able to be with.

Our sexual connection was very powerful and I began to believe he kept returning because we were meant for something more. When it again ended two months later, the pain was too great and I used again and smoked again.

I lost the 17 months I had worked so hard to get in A.A. and I lost the 15 months I had worked so hard to get off of smoking.

I even stole the prescription drugs from the same person I had stolen from before.

Luckily this relapse lasted only for 4 days and not 7 months. My life completely unmanageable and in shatters, I finally admitted my powerlessness over my sex and love addiction and have since returned to S.L.A.A..

I am just starting back and feel uncertain and nervous about my capacity to get sober again in all my programs.

But at least with returning to S.L.A.A. there is hope that I don't have to keep destroying myself with self hatred and this disease that tells me the best I can do is what I only have allowed myself to have.

—ANONYMOUS

Storied Limitations

A Sex And Love
Addict Story In
Three Parts



Editor's Note: This story contains images that may be triggering to some.

CONCLUSION

From the last issue of the journal...

The scariest was when I was alone because I would constantly push the limits of how many different drugs I could take and how much I could take to reach more and more extreme orgasms. I frequently woke up later from blacking out not knowing what happened.

And the story concludes...

When drugs or the boys didn't do it, I was at the club every night. I never felt alive until I walked in and took off my shirt. And if that didn't get me high enough I jumped up on the box so everyone could see me dancing. A few times I was brought in to Go-Go dance and one time I won a strip contest. It was mortifying because I had felt so ashamed exposing myself.

Along the way I happened to be arrested, and through great fortune, or maybe through narcing for the federal government, my court case was dismissed. When I called my mother to let her know, she about dropped the phone. I hadn't realized that she cared. This affected me on a deep level and a few months later, living in an abandoned apartment in D.C., I had a moment of clarity. I came to and was startled to find myself existing the way I was, so I called my parents. They came, no questions asked, and I moved back with them and started detox.

When I went off to rehab, the first thing I did was go straight to the men's room and masturbate. While in my drug addiction, the porn on my portable DVD player was always on repeat, it acted like the background noise. And now

they wouldn't let me have it in rehab so I masturbated "at" them instead, I stormed to the bathroom thinking, "fine I don't need it, see."

After rehab my life narrowed between work at a non-profit, an A.A. meeting on my lunch break, an outpatient program after work and CMA meeting at night. I took meds. I started to exercise. I felt like my life was coming back together. It showed too because the guys in program were intriguing with me more.

I still prowled the internet for sex, though, but was more covert and used social media sites. Still, it was mostly the hunt I liked. And I masturbated all the time too, at work, in the car, in the gym shower and at home. Whenever I felt the compulsion I would bow down to its impulse.

One time, another program fellow and I went on a date. I found myself excruciatingly uncomfortable, fearful of engaging sexually because I didn't know what I was going to do. Ignoring my feelings I willed myself on top of him and I, of course, was too uncomfortable to perform. When I was on meth, I popped Viagra, but now I couldn't take any meds that were not prescribed. So I did as I always did and focused on him and took the focus away from my problem. Afterwards we parted and never

saw each other again. I was so embarrassed I shut down sexually, stopped cruising sites and stopped dating. I just focused on my recovery and getting better through the 12 Steps. It was probably better for me anyway.

After a year of recovery work, I moved out to Los Angeles. I heard of recovery out here but was ecstatic to learn it was even better than I thought. I immediately slipped into the gay A.A. meetings around West Hollywood. As the new kid on the block, I certainly got a lot of attention, but my insecurities kept them all away. My first year in L.A., recovery was exactly what they said around the rooms — the three M's — masturbation, movies and meetings.

Eventually though, masturbation and porn began to make me late for my job and I also started having awareness around its frequency. I didn't like that I had no control over the compulsion. I tried to stop for a week and lasted two days, which freaked me out.

Asking around the A.A. rooms, I was told to not worry about it because porn and masturbation was just something that gay men did, or just men in general. Plus, I was getting sober at 23 and now 24. Furthermore, having random sex with people you met at bars or on the internet was the norm. It

happened that quite a few times fellow A.A.s would 12-Step another person while on a sex site. It took service work to another level.

I was surprised when a close program friend and I eventually found ourselves in a relationship. It was a short one. I don't know if I was ever even attracted to him and when we found ourselves engaging sexually I was unable to perform.

This was not good enough for him because he had needs so we broke up. I was wounded from this but it didn't matter because the love addict in me had begun to once again emerge. The next guy, though, made it seem like I didn't have any performance problems at all.

He was much younger, beautiful, had an incredible body and he liked me. The hits were endless with him. I couldn't get enough. I wanted all of him. I loved parading him around so that I could hear how adorable he was. And we both were raised Mormons! How lucky was I! And rather than see the red flags for just that, I saw them as things I could fix. They were like distress beacons signaling my heroic rescue. He was perfect.

He reminded me of D, my first qualifier. I had no other desire except to be with him. I let go of my visions and spoke of them in

theory. My whole life was to become his and, no matter what, we were going to make it work. This was mostly because sex with him was like a fantasy.

He was able to "go" at least twice a day. I found that I was only able to do it once a day, or ideally, every other day. I beat myself up for not being at his level where his libido was concerned. Eventually, sex became the thing that held the relationship together.

It was what kept him around. The kind of sex, the intensity and the frequency determined the well-being of the relationship. And if I couldn't please him, or keep up, then I was doomed to be alone.

Sex with him was fun but I could feel the distance between us when we engaged. I'd watch his eyes dilate and feel him check out the second we became sexual. This always pained me until I slipped away into my own sexual oblivion. All I wanted was to be closer to him and I was using sex to do that.

So I started to creep into Al-Anon meetings thinking they could do the trick. But, instead, became more aware of my lack of control. I felt pain from unfilled dreams and I began to sleep more at my apartment. His reaction was to pull back as well and become closed off. A few times I'd catch him looking at other guy's

profiles on the internet. I'd get hysterical, feel like the world turned upside down and then try to hide it, for fear of pushing him away further.

This relationship came to an end one night when I wouldn't go along with his desire to have sex in the car on some dark street. At the time, I just wanted affection.

This event gave way to his admittance of not wanting to be in the relationship anymore because it was unfair to me that he lacked the self love necessary to make it work. I remember those being big words even now. I immediately felt relief, like always, which again took me by surprise.

But, like before, I ignored that feeling and jumped to the devastation. When he left, the first thing I did was cry while masturbating.

The weeks that followed were horrendous. I no longer had the aide of alcohol and drugs to soothe the feelings, so I upped my meetings. I went to at least 2 if not 3 a day and drove around listening to sad music and crying between each song. I rallied the troops of my A.A. and now Al-Anon fellows who were kind enough to just let me sit on their couches because I was scared to be alone.

Barely a month passed and I still felt miserable until I had one of those shares in Al-Anon where

I didn't really know what I was saying but I was speaking out loud so that maybe someone could save me. Rescue me. Listening to myself, I was saying something about breaking up with this guy but couldn't stop obsessing about him. And the pain was awful and maybe we'd get back together. And so on and so forth. They politely listened, allowed me my space. And that was all. No one came up to me afterwards. No one was moved by my sorrowful tale. No heroics. Nothing.

I was moved to share because my Al-Anon sponsor proposed I begin a thirty day no contact with my ex. I turned pale, and then maybe paler. I may have even swallowed my throat, I can't remember. But thirty days?!

I would miss that moment when we both realized we were wrong and run back into each others' embrace. How would I know if he decided to move on? Or what he's up to? Or where he's going?

"God abhors a vacuum. You're just going to give him thirty days to come in and clean house," so said my sponsor. "It's a giant leap of faith."

Despite a few years of other 12-Step programs, conscious contact with my Higher Power was barely moving up on the priority list, I knew I needed this leap. I also

was reinforced with the idea that if I did the jumping, God would do the catching, open hands, net thing he's so good at. So I leapt on a Sunday and on Monday I was caught. Landed right on a collision course with my ex. He was exiting as I was entering a clothing store – literally smacked right into each other. Oh, the serendipity! That was my sign, which was all I needed to know – that even God wanted us together. But no one at the meeting seemed to agree.

I went alone to breakfast at a place nearby and attempted to read my book ignoring the fellowship all around me. A young girl from the Al-Anon meeting cautiously saddled up to me. She looked unsure about what she was going to say or if she should say it. I looked up from my book greeted her and waited for her words. Which by the way, I was sure were going to be about hoping I find my destiny with this ex and so sorry about the pain. "Have you ever been to S.L.A.A.?" she said.

"What?" I said

"I know this is a program of attraction and not promotion, and I never do this but I go to these meetings and I think you might like them." She said. "There's a meeting tomorrow, want to come?" she added.

The next morning, my body

found its way to the meeting. And I heard about qualifiers. I heard about withdrawal. I heard about obsession. I heard about intimacy, self-love and self-care. I heard me. And then I thought, "Oh, this must be God's net."

Equipped with my knowledge of basic A.A. tools: Go to meetings, find a sponsor, get commitments, do the steps and reach out to newcomers. And knowing that my compulsion to drink and drug had been lifted, I began to apply the same diligence here. I began to ask God to remove this thing – this sex and love thing. At the time, I still had no idea what it was. I knew I didn't need to know either.

My only focus was to just start taking action. I grabbed the first literature commitment I could and read everything. I grabbed a sponsor who began to take me through the Steps. I wrote out my sex and love history, marveling at the long list of sexual partners (most were named by the article of clothing I think I remember them wearing).

My sponsor worked with me on setting down bottom lines; no porn, no masturbation, no intrigue, no sex outside a committed relationship and then auxiliary bottom lines (in the grey area) like watch out for sexually explicit material. I said yes to all

even though I had no idea what the outcome would be. I just knew that this was my solution.

My withdrawal set in almost immediately. I experienced a deep twist in my gut and a few times I almost went to the emergency room. I shared about it in the rooms and they laughed at me. I was offended at first but then realized the recovery.

Afterwards a few came up to me and said I was right where I needed to be and that I was okay and doing well. One even said, "Hey man, recovery from this disease is like turning around the titanic."

In the withdrawal chapter of the original S.L.A.A. text it talks about how we will be tested when we set out on our path. Running into my ex at the clothing store was more of an opportunity for me to grow and take my power back than it was some divine push to make us be lovers for life.

At the time, it didn't feel like I was making a better choice but retrospect has shown otherwise. I continued to become more aware of choices in the months that followed.

As I passed Step Five with my sponsor I was asked out on a date by a guy who was grade A West Hollywood prime meat. I had seen him around for years and believed that I wasn't good

enough for someone like him. So here he was asking me out. Not only was he one of the most boring people I have ever met but I saw the red flags immediately and stepped back.

I didn't sleep with him either which is all I wanted to do anyway. Instead, I kept my integrity intact and politely excused myself from any further dates. I didn't want to sacrifice myself in order to be validated by dating him. The guy I would've rather dated came three months into my withdrawal.

The best part about recovery from a process addiction is that there is no clean cut way to do it, like with alcohol — you just stop. But sex and love addiction has variations for everyone. I hid the pain of failure behind my perfectionism. And so when I didn't do my dating plan perfectly I felt so ashamed. I meant to do 5 dates, each about a week apart but by the third date we tried squishing the dates closer together. I also had to have an adult conversation about sex before we engaged which was to be only after the 5th date. This was why we got to date 5 so quickly.

I trekked the deserts of withdrawal and I found C to be a welcome oasis. And he had all the right qualities that were in

alignment with what I was looking for in a relationship. So coming together with him in a hasty manner felt justified. My sponsor and therapist welcomed it too, both more concerned with the shaming I was doing as a result of not following the rules. That was a relief.

This partnership was in many ways my first “real” relationship and it was actually his first. Being the recovering addict, I felt more responsible to work harder at being present in the relationship for us to be able to grow together. I, at first, thought the program didn’t work because all my old fears and old problems came right back in my face.

But because of the program the volume was turned down and my awareness around the issues turned up. In crucial moments when childhood feelings of abandonment made me feel like I was going to die, I found I was able to start to react differently, start to act as if. I was a spiritual warrior now and it was my duty to myself to be willing to take on these feelings.

When the heavy grief came up, it broke my heart to think my four-year-old self experienced the same thing; no wonder he shoved them away. Fortunately, I had a partner who was willing to be patient with me as I worked through many of these feelings.

And that’s the way it had to be for a while as I learned to function differently in a relationship.

The three most powerful and spiritual words I learned when dealing with sex, intimacy and love was “I don’t know.”

Because I had sex with so many people I thought I knew everything about sex. And I “loved” before I thought I knew love. But really my parents didn’t teach me anything, so I thought I had to know everything. Once I began to say “I don’t know,” the walls began to come down and I was able to ask for help.

When we engaged sexually, I was still overwhelmed with the shaming voices in my head. Like with previous partners, it was much easier to objectify C and check out.

Fortunately, C was very keen to when I would do that and he’d call me out. And since I wasn’t masturbating, he was the only way I could “get off.” So at times in the beginning of the relationship I would feign intimacy in order to have sex. And I, at the time, hated that I saw him as a gatekeeper to pleasure.

We would not engage sexually if I was emotional, and frequently I would call my sponsor in these hilarious fits of rage where I believed I wasn’t getting what I needed. Thankfully, I never chose to masturbate on my own and

eventually, with patience, we worked through many of the voices in my head, and sex became what sex is — a byproduct.

I learned not to hide anything from C and we developed stronger ways to communicate. Very often if he made a simple request or gave a tiny criticism I became hysterical. What changed was when we realized that in those moments I was projecting my mother or father onto him because when it's hysterical it's historical.

In heated conversations, we'd share brilliant moments of laughter when either of us called out my parents by name if we felt like they were "in the room." This very same process also helped with my intense fears of abandonment and being shut down.

If I could objectively look through each situation without getting involved in the emotion then I had a chance.

We eventually became closer friends than lovers. I came to the realization that I had actually never wanted to be in this relationship with him. When we met I told myself that I should be in a relationship with him because he was a great guy.

But I never asked myself if I wanted to be in a relationship

with him. In fact, all my relationships seemed to be compulsions that I mindlessly followed. Do I not think I deserve to be with a person that I actually want to be with?

We grew so much together, I felt close with him and had no regrets about being together. But this was something I could not hide so I went home and separated from C. At first he was upset but quickly turned himself around to realize that he felt the same way. And now we're working on becoming better friends, which could have never happened before S.L.A.A..

It's been six months since that relationship ended and I just turned 30. I've been in S.L.A.A. for over 3 years now. And the way that I feel about myself is unlike anything I could've ever imagined. I wake up in the mornings in love with being me and being alone, cherishing my solidarity and being friends with loneliness.

There are many things that I have learned about relationships and about loving myself that I am including below. They're ideas and beliefs (new ones!) I've picked up along the way and they're not in any particular order:

- I now know that love is not a feeling but a state of being, a

willingness to be present at all times. Sometimes I wish the program was called sex and lust addicts because real love does not have a vice grip like addictions. Today I love myself further by meditation, personal dates and feeling my feelings (i.e. grieving my childhood).

- I see my purpose in recovery is to let go of the limitations I have put upon myself.

- I like being single. In fact, I want to be single — and this coming from a guy who couldn't ever be single.

When I feel lonely I embrace it and pull it closer to my heart. I recognize it as a fellow traveler on my narrow path. Few people are healing in the way we are and I feel a responsibility to the rest to continue this way.

- I masturbate again, which freaked me out at first but I never realized how healing it could actually be. The incredible part is I have a choice when I get to do it. I don't follow a compulsion anymore. I will not do it when I am emotional or anxious. And the real miracles are that my erectile dysfunction is healed and all the religious guilt I had with masturbation and sex is gone.

- Early on, my sponsor taught me about the "veil dropping." Being a bag of chemicals, such as we are, when I am triggered the

adrenaline washes over all my body. Suddenly, I forget all my recovery work as my qualifier walks in the room. Thankfully my awareness of what's occurring is what gets me through those situations.

Also, the three second rule helps with not locking in on objectification.

- I always thought if I just got into a relationship everything would be okay. A relationship is not a sign of recovery.

- This story you are reading was a story I told myself over and over. Today I tell a different story because it's all just a story anyway.

- No one can do this for me, but I don't have to do it alone.

- Being gay doesn't define me. Being an addict doesn't define me or even a person in recovery. These are all parts that make up the sum of who I am. I get to love each part in its own unique way.

I get to expand in success, abundance and love and I get to inspire others to do the same. I get to remember that the greatest service I can give is by being the most excellent human being I can be. That way, those still tripping in the dark can look up to see the light and know where to go. And finally, this is truly the path to an open heart, welcome home.

— ANONYMOUS

Addicted To Numbing Out

I'm no stranger to Twelve Step programs — I'm a member of quite a few. I will use anything to numb out and not have to deal with the pain of living. I used cigarettes as surrogate boyfriends and booze as a best friend.

If I didn't like what someone was doing to me, I smoked "at" them with bitter resentment. If I didn't like what someone was saying, I lit up a cigarette. If they weren't a smoker, they walked away with a disgusted look on their face. If they were a smoker, they lit up too and we bonded a bit (not really bonding.)

I built the wall of smoke between me and other people. What I didn't realize was that that wall also kept my Higher Power out.

At bars, it was always a surprise what mood I was in. Either I was the slightly drunk love addict looking for attention by any means necessary, or I was the extremely drunk anorexic hiding in the corner with her alcohol, keeping people away like a caged wild animal.



My favorite thing to do at parties was to get so drunk that I would just melt into my seat and be practically paralyzed and just watch everything that went on around me as if it was a movie and I wasn't an active participant.

I spent way too much money on boyfriends and trying to impress guys to make them love me. I got myself into debt with this behavior.

Two years after getting sober in S.L.A.A., I realized I had a food addiction. It was by following the sober dating plan and being afraid of losing my healthy relationship that I was forced to look at my unhealthy relationship with food.

I was always obsessed with candy as a kid. I loved the way it

made me feel. I used to buy mountains of it at the penny candy store and hide it under my bed. When I got sober from alcohol and quit smoking, I turned to sugar to help me through.

Other “smober” members told me to allow myself to eat whatever I wanted for the first year (the Big Book of A.A. suggests drunks keep chocolate by their bed for late night alcohol cravings.) They said if I still had a problem after a year I could look into other programs. Whenever I had a bad breakup, I escaped into movie theatres and popcorn and candy, resulting in an inevitable forty pound weight gain.

When I found the new guy to be obsessed with, I quickly lost the forty pounds and more, by starving and over-exercising, getting too thin. When I finally stopped the rollercoaster of romance with the help of S.L.A.A., I was able to see that I was also on a rollercoaster with my food.

I always tried every new fad diet to help me maintain my weight. So when I found the master cleanser pamphlet at the health food store, I thought I had found a cure for cancer.

The pamphlet said to fast and drink only a smelly, bad tasting drink that they gave the recipe for. The reader was only supposed to follow this plan for 10 days. I

drank the concoction and starved during the week and binged on the weekends. I ate whatever I wanted on the weekends. That included large amounts of fast food and passing out from the overindulgence. By Monday morning, I was already planning what foods to binge on when Friday finally came! I would sit in my cubicle at work and float away to dreamland Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory-style. It took me out of my dull life, but it also made it impossible to get any work done properly.

I did this for two years! Gradually my weight started creeping up. But I didn't notice it. I had body-dysmorphia most of my life (when I was skinny I thought I was fat and when I was at my top weight I thought I only needed to lose a couple of pounds). And every time I binged I felt my heart pounding out of my chest as if I was about to have a heart attack.

Whenever I allowed it into my consciousness, I thought I might die the way Karen Carpenter did (after years of anorexia her heart gave out after a binge.) I didn't want to think about that, and yet, I was obsessed with watching the movie about her life over and over again (probably because she seemed like such a food and love addict combined — either one could have killed her).

But it was the threat of losing my sober S.L.A.A. relationship that finally made me take action.

My boyfriend (now husband) and I started dating with my sponsor's approval and followed a dating plan. We were together about two years when I noticed my weight was creeping up despite my anorexia and exercise. I went to the grocery store, craving binge food. I was standing in the aisles of the grocery store trying to talk myself out of a binge but unwilling to opt for the bad smelling, bad tasting drink that would help me stay away from food.

The battle in my head raged. I felt my serenity slipping away. I thought maybe I should think about something else. I thought about my boyfriend. I focused on his friendships. My character defect of jealousy flared up. I called him on my cell phone and accused him of cheating on me.

"Where is this coming from?" he said. "I thought you were dealing with your jealousy. What happened?"

I realized what happened. I was making myself crazy over the food and projecting it onto my relationship. I needed help or I would lose him and my serenity over this. I was already losing my serenity!

I thought of a friend in Nicotine Anonymous who had joined CEA-HOW (Compulsive Eater's Anonymous) and lost 50

pounds and seemed happy and serene. I decided to try it for 30 days. If I hated it I could always leave.

I went to a meeting and cried through the whole thing and got a sponsor and a food plan. I had to sit on my hands sometimes and force myself to stay in a meeting for the first thirty days but I stayed. And I found it gave me a measure of serenity and discipline that I hadn't known before.

Sometimes I'm convinced that I'm not really a compulsive eater but I've stayed abstinent from flour and sugar, weighing and measuring my food for nine years now.

I weigh myself every week and my weight hasn't changed in over eight years. At our wedding, I ate strawberries (part of my abstinent meal) instead of cake. It made the most beautiful pictures to have me feeding him cake and him feeding me strawberries!

And I felt so connected and calm on a day when many brides are frazzled. And I didn't have to diet like a madwoman to fit into the dress and the two trips to the bridal store weren't a nightmare.

I don't collect 4 different sizes of clothing anymore. Some days, I wear some of the t-shirts I wore in middle school! And the most important part is that my head doesn't scream at me anymore. I'm grateful for my recovery from all of my addictions.

—LISA C.

Share space

How Doing The Dishes Helped In My Recovery



After 90 days free of an addictive relationship and 90 meetings in as many days, I felt a lot better.

But there was still much more to be done. One evening I was on an S.L.A.A. teleconference call with several trusted recovery partners.

We all had less than stellar days and were talking in fellowship after our meeting to try to bring each other out of the dumps.

Many of us had discussed the topic of doing the dishes. And even though my sink runneth over with dirty dishes for weeks now, I wouldn't budge.

I mentioned this on the call and suddenly a flood of memories bubbled up to the surface.

As a recovering sex and love addict, my relationship with doing the dishes has suffered an unfortunate and sordid history.

I gingerly recall an event in the recent past where I gathered my dirty dishes, put them in a big box and took them out to the dumpster. That's how far I would go to avoid this task!

If my undone dishes were a symbol for resentments in my life, my resentments were a dirty, repulsive health hazard in both my kitchen and life.

My cabinets were full of dishes which were gifts from past romantic partners or things I'd purchased to please them. I didn't see the dishes as gifts.

To me they were burdens and inappropriate attempts to control my behavior and make me fit into societal norms.

How could these things be gifts if I didn't even want them to begin with?

Once an unsolicited gift of pots and pans from a boyfriend was accompanied by the unrealistic expectation that I would magically transform into Betty Crocker.

I took secret delight in proving him wrong. Years later a different romantic partner went into my kitchen looking for something. I heard one kitchen drawer open, then another, and another. Exasperated, he asked, "Do you have any metal silverware?" When I said "no" he asked, "how can this be?" as though this was impossible.

I later bought an inexpensive set of tableware to appease him, but they piled up in the sink. My dishes were a symbol of how I would do things I didn't want to do to please my partners, and then stubbornly refuse to show up spiritually or emotionally in silent protest.

My dishes, like my unhealthy behaviors in relationships, were a constant reminder that a part of myself had checked out.

The last straw was within the last year when yet another romantic partner casually mentioned he had some old dishes he didn't need and asked if I would take them.

Out of a sense of politeness and obligation I accepted them but underneath my blood was boiling. What was it about me that made my intimate partners want to

rescue me or fix me with these gifts? Why didn't I have the strength to refuse these extra dishes I hadn't asked for?

As I pondered this, the dishes piled up in the sink for another year and I rarely did anything about it.

Glasses shattered under the pressure of the plates, and my stubbornness seemed limitless. I felt obligated to have these dishes, yet I resented having them. I resented what my lovers expected my kitchen to be like.

I didn't really need dishes. Paper plates and plastic forks were what I wanted, but I was afraid of being judged for not doing what other people thought I should be doing.

I was afraid of what people would think if I did what I wanted to do in my own kitchen.

As my recovery partners were on the conference call discussing how to get out of the dumps, I heard a fellow S.L.A.A. member say something that finally broke through and changed my outlook.

She said, "It's the last thing we want to do to take care of ourselves that makes us feel better."

Suddenly I was able to see that doing my dishes was the answer to feeling better. At that moment I rolled up my sleeves, turned on the hot water and

began the long humbling task of cleaning. After a few hours of rinsing and scouring, I still couldn't see the bottom of the sink.

When I got close to the bottom I found all of my silverware and confronted my resentments. I took a break and reflected on all the shame I felt at how my lack of boundaries and poor self esteem had created situations where others had the power to control who I was and how I lived my life.

I felt my feelings around the lack of acceptance of my needs, quirks and identity in the unhealthy relationships I'd experienced. When I felt these feelings and let them go, I realized I had choices because I had a program where I'd committed to live a different life.

I could say no and break free from obligations to others' needs and instead focus on my own.

I faced and conquered the dreaded silverware and released resentments I'd clung to for years. I wish I could tell you every spoon and fork made it, but several didn't survive. I'm not sure what I will do with all of these squeaky clean dishes.

Anytime I cook something in my kitchen and it doesn't burn it's a victory, but the smoke detector still goes off. Today, my intimate relationships as well as my relationship with my kitchen are about progress not perfection, and

I will not let others control how I live my life.

I look forward to my next 90 days of recovery and using the knowledge that the last thing I want to do for myself will most

likely be the thing I need to do to feel better. And with that, I'm off to tackle the laundry.

— ANONYMOUS — FROM W.A.N.A.
S.L.A.A. WOMEN'S GROUP

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EXPERIENCE

this meeting in print.

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To order online:

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

S.L.A.A. Valentine's Day 2013 Telemeeting Marathon **Our annual S.L.A.A. Valentine's Day Telephone Meeting Marathon will be starting at midnight (EST) on February 14, 2013.**

One hour S.L.A.A. Recovery meetings will be scheduled every 90 minutes to allow 30 minutes of fellowship time between each meeting.

Meeting topics will vary and will include speaker shares from those who have gone before us. The dial in number and access code is the same for all countries. (530-881-1212 Access Code: 967-200-359#)

For service opportunities or more information about the Telemeeting Marathon contact, by email, the organizers at the following email addresses: Inter-

net@slaafws.org or Outreach@slaawomensgroup.org . You may also visit the S.L.A.A. FWS Upcoming Events website page: <http://www.slaafws.org/events>

Recovery Event—Intergroup on the Road—Ongoing Intergroup on the Road is now a brief (15-20 minutes) share from current GDVI members, like a speaker meeting, on their personal benefits in recovery as a result of doing regional service. If your S.L.A.A. group would like to have members of GDVI (Intergroup) visit your meeting to share their experience, strength and hope about service in recovery, please leave a message on the Information Line: 215-731-9760 or send an email to: Contact Corresponding Secretary, Subject: Intergroup on the Road.

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

S.L.A.A. Signs of Recovery

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

