



theJournal

Issue # 141

Single Issue \$4

Developing True Intimacy

Sober Dating Plans to Healthy Relationships

Characteristics of Sex and Love Addiction

1. Having few healthy boundaries, we become sexually involved with and/or emotionally attached to people without knowing them.
2. Fearing abandonment and loneliness, we stay in and return to painful, destructive relationships, concealing our dependency needs from ourselves and others, growing more isolated and alienated from friends and loved ones, ourselves, and God.
3. Fearing emotional and/or sexual deprivation, we compulsively pursue and involve ourselves in one relationship after another, sometimes having more than one sexual or emotional liaison at a time.
4. We confuse love with neediness, physical and sexual attraction, pity and/or the need to rescue or be rescued.
5. We feel empty and incomplete when we are alone. Even though we fear intimacy and commitment, we continually search for relationships and sexual contacts.
6. We sexualize stress, guilt, loneliness, anger, shame, fear and envy. We use sex or emotional dependence as substitutes for nurturing care, and support.
7. We use sex and emotional involvement to manipulate and control others.
8. We become immobilized or seriously distracted by romantic or sexual obsessions or fantasies.
9. We avoid responsibility for ourselves by attaching ourselves to people who are emotionally unavailable.
10. We stay enslaved to emotional dependency, romantic intrigue, or compulsive sexual activities.
11. To avoid feeling vulnerable, we may retreat from all intimate involvement, mistaking sexual and emotional anorexia for recovery.
12. We assign magical qualities to others. We idealize and pursue them, then blame them for not fulfilling our fantasies and expectations.

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Letter from the Editor

Dear Reader:

The theme for this issue is “Developing True Intimacy: Sober Dating Plans to Healthy Relationships.” For many S.L.A.A. members as well as “normal” people, intimacy can be a struggle. It takes work sometimes and it can bring up all our issues from the past.

We’re lucky in S.L.A.A. to be given a plan of action and a support system to help navigate the sometimes stormy seas of dating and relationships. As you will see in the stories that follow, having a program and Higher Power can help calm those seas and help us map out the best possible journey to take. Hopefully we can have a little innocent fun along the way!

The basic text of S.L.A.A. has a chapter dedicated to healthy relationships. We used to read that chapter every week in a meeting focused on partnership. The meeting ended up closing because the anorexia meeting in the area got all the attendance! Intimacy can be scary but definitely worth the work!

Having the guidelines of a sober dating plan and the guidance and support of a sponsor and fellows in the program, makes the path to intimacy less scary. If we can walk through the fear, like it says on page 103 of the S.L.A.A. basic text: “Now, in full possession of our own personal sense of dignity, and living our way into intimate partnership with another, we found that we no longer needed to rely solely on sexual expression to provide our sense of security and identity. Our growing ability to trust, to share and to live openly in a partnership was already helping to provide these things.”

— 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, “How has your idea of intimate relationships/

sober dating changed through working the S.L.A.A. program?” Here are some wonderful responses for your enjoyment. They are not presented in any particular order. The next two questions are: 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; and Issue #143 — How Do Newcomers Become Old-timers — ** ABM Issue — “Why do newcomers leave S.L.A.A.? How do old-timers stay?” The deadline for submissions is 5/16/13. Please send answers to www.slaafws.org.

“HOW HAS YOUR IDEA OF INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS/SOBER DATING CHANGED THROUGH WORKING THE S.L.A.A. PROGRAM?”

Now I look for an appropriate partner, not just someone to have sex with.

— ANON

Steps 4-5 especially changed my understanding of all other human beings; because of this, I no longer enmesh with family members, or girlfriends. I no longer have to lie.

— MALACHAI, MAR VISTA, CA

I no longer look at people as conquests or as the means to providing all of my fulfillment in life. I see people as imperfect, with just as many flaws as I have which has made my exchanges much more honest and sincere.

— JEVON, LOS ANGELES

After completing the steps, I am now on a dating website per my sponsors direction. One of the questions was, “How soon 1-3, 3-5 dates before you will consider having sex?” I put 3-5 dates which is a huge change for me.

—ANONYMOUS

QUESTION OF THE DAY

I had no concept of sober dating before S.L.A.A. The phrase never even occurred to me. I love my sober dating plan. It gives me time to let me know my date and my heart. Before S.L.A.A., intimacy meant enmeshment to me. I didn't understand the difference. Thanks to S.L.A.A., I am learning to tolerate intimacy that I did not experience growing up.

—TOM B., LOS ANGELES

Significantly, and happy about the changes too. It took me close to 40 years as an adult to learn in S.L.A.A. about good boundaries; not over-disclosing, having fun, and staying present to myself. Today, I can risk saying what I mean and not be mean; staying in the messiness and not trying to fix or control others or me.

— RITA H., MONTREAL

Working the steps closely with a sponsor — followed by continual work with sponsees, leading meetings and listening to others. I see how I used sex to avoid intimacy — where I thought sex was intimacy. Now I use a dating plan to maintain space and time so that I can get to know not just people I am dating but sponsees, friends, co-workers, people I support, etc.

— ELIZABETH, HOUSTON, TX

I married a member of the fellowship after “friending” and staying in contact with my sponsor through the entire length of our relationship. It has been great — 13 years plus.

— JACK S., LARGO, FL

Before I came into the program, I used sex to get emotional intimacy and then ran from the emotional intimacy. By working the S.L.A.A. program, I learned to get to know someone spiritually and emotionally before having sex with them. What a shift.

— DAVE S., TAMPA, FL

“HOW HAS YOUR IDEA OF INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS/SOBER DATING CHANGED THROUGH WORKING THE S.L.A.A. PROGRAM?”

I have seen my tendency to settle. In relationships, I need to make sure I'm getting my needs met. My first priority is accepting my whole self. People, places and things fall into place after that.

— ALLEN, SEATTLE, WA

There has been fear of how I will be in future relationships, given what happened in the past! But I believe that through the fellowship and step work, I am immeasurably less selfish than I once was.

— JONATHAN, LONDON

By working the program I was and still am able to say no to relationships that I am uncomfortable in. Instead of twisting myself into a pretzel and enduring doomed relationships that could only be ended by the other person, I have found the self-respect to say no and set boundaries. I can still slip up but the difference is more awareness and the will to take action.

— PATRICK, MONTREAL, CANADA

I have a lot more awareness and consciousness about what an intimate relationship is and a lot more respect for it. This program is precious.

— GLENN

I show up as who I am in all areas of my life. Thanks to my Higher Power and the Steps, I have the courage to tell my truth, bear my heart and soul appropriately and carry the message. This impacts how I relate in intimate and romantic relationships. After much trial and error in and out of S.L.A.A., God and only God gave me a life partner.

I relied on Him, not me because my sponsor told me early on “no wild horses can keep us together or tear us apart if it's not God's will.” That took all the pressure off. Also, I followed direction with my dating plan which provided necessary guidelines to help me navigate the dating process.

— BETH

QUESTION OF THE DAY

Being intimate with only my wife, has been much more fulfilling since getting into recovery and not having side encounters.

— ELLIOTT, SACRAMENTO, CA

I know that I have to know, love, and respect myself before I can be available for a healthy relationship. I have to meet my own needs in diverse ways before I have anything to offer another in a relationship.

— LORI, BURBANK, CA

I no longer work toward an end result through dating. My goals now in a relationship is to be present enough to give and receive equally.

— JARED F., LOS ANGELES

Giving myself all the time I need to get to know the person well on an emotional, mental level before starting any sexual activity.

— ANKE, HIEDELBERG, GERMANY

I never thought I would say that dating is fun, but after working the steps and using program tools daily, I'm dating in a sober way... And, wow! It's kind of fun.

— WHITNEY N., NYC

It used to be about, "What can I get?" and "What does this person think of me?" Now it's, "Let's explore if we can be friends."

— KIERAN K., LOS ANGELES

Before S.L.A.A. "sober" dating was not in my vocabulary. Now my dating is no longer goal-oriented towards getting sex and then later getting to know the person. It has slowed me down in a good way.

— RICK K., SANTA CRUZ

“HOW HAS YOUR IDEA OF INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS/SOBER DATING CHANGED THROUGH WORKING THE S.L.A.A. PROGRAM?”

I used to believe that “sex” was intimacy. Now I believe that it’s an emotional connection with another human. I engage in intimate relations to a much greater level today with all my relationships (whether they are friends, sponsors, support people, or family). Every area of my life is enriched.

— ANONYMOUS

It moved in to commitment and away from indulgence.

— MARCELO, SAN DIEGO, CA

Well, I haven’t really started dating again, but I have approached dating very differently than I did before recovery. The first thing I did was write a plan for dating that specified what all my boundaries are. So, I feel much more confident about dating this time.

— SARA S., TAMPA, FL

I still don’t have a partner. But I am in the process of developing rewarding, open, honest relationships with women and colleagues. This is a gift of working the Steps.

— MARTINA, MUNICH, GERMANY

I used to rush into sex, then find out who I was in a relationship with, usually having regrets once I realized I couldn’t even be friends with the individual. In recovery, I got to know my partner spiritually first, then we became really good friends, finding out we had a lot in common and shared space well.

On our wedding night, after 2 years of dating, we became physically one.

— SUSAN G., HUNTINGTON BEACH, CA

Learning to set boundaries. Both challenging and educational. It is not about me.

— JACK S., SEMINOLE, FL

Intimacy With Self And Others

When I'm working the program, not mine, my whole life strategy of the pursuit of romantic intrigue fades, and is replaced by the pursuit of connection, instead. Intimacy was always another word for sex, the way I saw things before.

I remember my mom saying she had a problem with intimacy with my dad.

She was using the words sex and intimacy interchangeably, and so that's what I did when I was old enough to begin having sex. This gradually evolved into feeling that I was never close to my partner unless we were having sex in our relationship. Sex was part of the deal – intimacy was required.

Through working the program I have achieved deep levels of intimacy with people in the S.L.A.A. fellowship, as well as friends outside of it, who are not my prospective partners.

This new experience has been possible through working the program. I feel as if now I have intimate relationships with many, if not most of the people I see regularly.

I believe this came to be through establishing intimacy



with myself, first. Once I became aware of who I am, and what it was that I was bringing to the table, I was able to more fearlessly seek connection with others. Now I knew what it was I was looking for.

I've learned what I want in a relationship, rather than trying to be what my partner/date wants. I no longer pretend to be someone I'm not in order to be liked. I've learned to recognize when the date is not working for me, and that's okay. I have also learned how to recognize when someone is not interested in me, and quit trying!

— DAVID B., WORCESTER, MA

My Experience Of Dating



I remember my sponsor telling me that “A S.L.A.A. member learning to date is like learning to walk a tiger.” That has been my experience in my 4 1/2 years of recovery and close to three years of what started out as sober dating and has turned into a relationship that has lasted for two years so far.

The cornerstones for refining my dating experience were, first and foremost, a detailed dating plan that covered all aspects of the dating experience.

When designing my dating plan, my sponsor and I basically took everything that I was doing that was “unhealthy,” turned it upside down and redefined it into a sane and sound ideal for my dating experiences.

For instance: Prior to coming to S.L.A.A., I wouldn’t think twice about entering a man’s home and picking him up for our first date. What I realized was that this behavior set me up to act out on the very first date even before leaving the house for dinner!

So by looking at this behavior, one of my dating plan goals was “no going into another man’s house when dating for at least the first four dates.”

It may sound rigid, but it has worked and kept me protected from unexpected triggers and temptation.

Another habit I discovered was that I would reveal very private information to men I was attracted to very early on in the ex-

perience. I would not think twice about revealing my alcoholism, my drug addiction, my bi-polar diagnosis, and on and on. I thought I was being transparent and honest, but my sponsor pointed out that I was creating a false sense of intimacy by disclosing too much information to someone I barely knew. And with that false sense of intimacy comes the possibility of my believing the relationship is more serious than it really is.

So we turned this behavior upside down and created a dating plan goal that was “no revealing intimate information such as my 12-Step programs” for at least the first four dates and that such information was to be given in piecemeal – not all at once.

Another part of my sober dating included changing my definition of what a “date” is. I had always had self-serving ideals about a date being about my finding the guy that fits my needs or makes me feel complete (the “Spark.”)

My sponsor told me that initial dating is about my being of service to someone else and showing up and listening to them to gather information.

By doing this, I would find out enough to know if I felt like having a second date. I also learned that the idea that there should be some “spark” on the first date was

old thinking.

In fact, I was told literally by my sponsor and therapist “If you feel sparks on the first date, run the other way!” In fact, I can’t remember feeling a moment of a “spark” in my current relationship.

What developed was an intimacy that grew from many weeks worth of one date at a time. One day, I realized that a fondness had developed for this person.

Of course I have many other goals that I’ve included in my sober dating/relationship life. They include: 1) no sex until a commitment has been discussed and established (this had an underlying ideal as well that I was not to discuss commitment until at least 6 to 8 dates. Otherwise, I would commit myself to someone and be off and running within a month); 2) No sex until a frank discussion of STD status and both of us getting tested and sharing our results. 3) Allowing at least 3 days between the last date and calling for the next date (which meant not planning date number two while on date number one.)

At the end, my dating experiences and my relationships had to allow room to be “human,” allowing room for mistakes, uncomfortable conversations, and

having patience with myself and others. Again, it was like walking a tiger.

Also, I had to have regular contact with my sponsor and I had to work all the Steps prior to dating. Regular meeting attendance was required. And I needed to date myself (going to places by myself and learning to enjoy my own company). Most importantly, a relationship with

my Higher Power played a key role in the dating process.

It's been a bumpy and uncomfortable process at times; but I truly feel it would have been next to impossible to do it in a somewhat healthy manner had I not had the S.L.A.A. program and all its resources to guide me every step of the way.

— MANUEL, LOS ANGELES

Intimacy

A (not really) poem:

Are we dating yet?

I have the moving van
gassed up and ready to go.

I've already gone through

the first date,

courtship,

engagement,

wedding on the beach in Hawaii,

honeymoon in Paris,

2.5 kids,

long painful divorce,

— in my mind —

— just from a glance —

— across the room —

at a restaurant.

You don't know me.

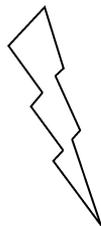
Never will.

Oh well.

On to the next lifelong romance

that lasts

...30 seconds...



Understanding Intimacy

What is intimacy? Is it closeness: physical, emotional, spiritual or intellectual closeness? Is it connectedness? Is it understanding?

I don't think it is knowledge. Does it require physical presence? Does it require awareness? Can you be in an intimate moment if you are not aware it is intimate? Is it mutual? Can it occur for one and not the other?

It occurred to me driving home from a very thought provoking meeting and then having a short tender conversation with my husband on the phone that I don't understand intimacy! It eludes me!

That is the root of my sex and love addiction. *OMG! This is a huge revelation!* It isn't sex. It isn't love; it is intimacy.

I can recognize it happening between two other people. I get confused about it when it is happening to me - this intimacy thing.

I have been sober for 5+ years. I have figured out who I am, what I like, what are healthy

boundaries, what are not. Are healthy boundaries intimacy with myself?

I had to become truly intimate with God when I went through withdrawal. I had to be intimate with God before I could be brave enough to look honestly inside myself.

A program friend is struggling with sobriety after as much time in program as I have. Why did God allow me this gift and she still struggles?

I do not understand. I ask God why? What is this grace I have received? Then I start realizing how completely open and transparent I allow myself to be with God. I can ask Him anything. Is that intimacy?

Does intimacy have anything to do with the content of a person's character? I don't think it does. I just don't know! Do you have to be honest with yourself to be intimate with yourself, yes! So does honesty have to exist between the two intimate parties involved? Yes? And how are you intimate with yourself when there is no other party involved?

Does intimacy with God only happen when we are honest with

ourselves or only when we are honest with God? I am confused. This is such a mystery to me.

Is there any single thing that I did to deserve sobriety? I don't believe so. It is a tremendous gift! Was the only factor of me receiving it, the willingness in my soul to do *anything* to finally be free of the debilitating pain of the disease? Or would God have struck me with sobriety either way?

I have worked my butt off in this program, but I know that each day is new. And I am only sober one day at a time. If I stop working the program — if I stop showing up for myself — if I stop being honest with myself — if I stop turning it over to my Higher Power *for too long*..... I could lose my sobriety!

Is *that* intimacy with God? I just don't know.

I think someone (especially God) can be open, ready, and offering me intimacy and I could choose not to partake.

I believe intimacy is a life-giving force. I believe we are meant to connect to that tender vulnerable place within ourselves and with others.

But it takes so much energy we cannot sustain it for long periods of time. It would be too exhausting and overwhelming. We can't live at that level of

intensity all the time.

Or is intimacy a neutral zero — a place of complete peace? No, maybe that is serenity and spirituality.

So what is my intimacy diet? Do I get small doses all along my day with reprieves in everyday routine living circumstances? Do I get big shots of it and retreat to process?

Do I focus on staying emotionally clean and healthy and allow the intimacy to flow freely through my relationships as it may? Do I get insanely jealous of the intimacy I see in others because I can't figure out how to create it in my life? Am I in denial? Is it right here with me and I can't accept it?

If I accept it will it come? If I welcome it will it stay? Am I powerless over it? Or does it happen in spite of me and I only need courage to recognize it?

Do I have to do certain things to keep it? Or is there no possible way to manipulate or create it? Is my job simply to be open and willing and wait for God? Is it like air and we cannot survive without it? Is it like happiness and you cannot chase it?

I believe it has snuck up close and happened in moments when I least expected. I know after it is over, I relish it and wish to recreate it but can only remember it fondly and be ready

to receive again.

And back to the tender moment on the phone with my husband this morning. For a moment of time his world lined up just right with my world.

I hang up and it dawns on me like a flash of silent earth-shaking lightening – I have trouble understanding intimacy.

What are the ingredients? Is there a formula?

I realized that I have been emotionally struggling in my marriage because of my misunderstanding. The number of times we have sex is not intimacy. How good or bad the sex is, is not

intimacy. If he wants me passionately or not, is not intimacy. If I am pretty or attractive is not intimacy.

Moments where my authentic self connects –

connects with God

connects with myself

connects with another person....

Is intimacy, right?

I get scared of it because it is so beautiful and freeing. It is weird. It is free, but it costs a lot. Or maybe it doesn't cost anything and it is always available.

—PAM M, SUGAR LAND, TX

***the Journal* themes and deadlines for 2013**

Issue #	Theme	Question Of The Day (QOD)	Submission deadline (articles and QOD)
#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?”	March 14, 2013
#143	How Do Newcomers Become Old-Timers ** ABM Issue	“Why do newcomers leave S.L.A.A.? How do old-timers stay?”	May 16, 2013
#144	Sex and Love Addiction: What is Real?	“How did you become aware that sex and love addiction was real?”	July 15, 2013
#145	Addiction in the Age of Technology	“How has technology affected your addict behaviors?”	Sept. 15, 2013

Submit your writing at www.slaafws.org

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?





Outside Of The Intimacy



I found myself on the outside of the healthiest relationship I had ever known. This was the first relationship in my life where I didn't seek any outside relationships for emotional, sexual, physical, or intellectual intimacy. So what happened? We were fine until we weren't. She shut down and became avoidant

and I (not wanting to hear the truth) avoided asking questions that I didn't want to know the answers to.

Two plus years later, we found we were both going at a pace we could not maintain. We live in two different cities an hour and a half apart and for two years we were traveling back and forth every

weekend. She came here when she didn't have her kids and I went there when she did. We were a happy little family until things got stressful and life happened.

She said she needed a break and I interpreted that to mean she wanted to 'break-up'. I panicked. I heard the words she said, but they translated into "hurt," "rejection," "loss," "insecurity," and "*panic*." I lost my mind. I let crazy out and it was all downhill from there. I was in full blown withdrawal, and full blown panic mode. I was out of control.

The more I tried to be "understanding" the more I tried to "help" the more I tried to be there "for her" the more she shut down and pushed me away. I was out of control and couldn't stop my compulsive texting. I wasn't calling often, but it was the texting that was *out of control*. The physical pain, the emotional turmoil/roller coaster, and the sheer depths of sadness and darkness that took over me were physically and emotionally unbearable.

I wasn't bathing. I wasn't getting out of bed. I was screwing up, showing up late to my new job. I was isolating more than I ever had in my life; not returning phone calls or text messages, and I put myself on "lockdown" at home. I didn't trust myself. Life

happened and I fell apart. I couldn't handle it, and I didn't know what was happening.

I kept asking myself what was happening to me? Who was I? Did my whole life revolve around a woman? *This* woman? Did I lose myself so much that in losing her I lost a part of me; my identity?

How did this happen? When did this happen? Was I so insecure — was I so lost? When did I make her my Higher Power? I idolized her. She gave me everything. I couldn't want for more. She was my end all be all. She was it for me.

In going through withdrawal all alone and engaging in my past destructive patterns of the familiar comfort in acting-out, I knew something was wrong. I knew something wasn't right. I was out of control. I was lost and I had no idea what the hell was going on with me.

An acquaintance from a 12-Step program listened to my story and suggested I try an S.L.A.A. meeting. I had no idea what that acronym even stood for. That next Saturday was my very first group and that group changed my life forever. I went in there ashamed, overwhelmed, *full* of anxiety and most of all hurt and embarrassed. I was so ashamed.

But, that group was a place that I finally felt a part of. It was a

place where I felt I belonged and a place I didn't feel alone. I keep actively going back and today I am proud to say that though I'm still early on in my recovery, my "ex-girlfriend" and I are working things out. She too is attending S.L.A.A. in the city she lives in. We have set healthy boundaries that we wouldn't have been able to without working the program. We have been more honest over the past few months than we ever were in the past. Today I see that there is hope for she and I to continue to be in a healthy relationship that consists of honest communication, working the program, and commitment to ourselves and to one another.

I am grateful for all the support, for the members, and for the sponsors. My sponsor and I are in our early phases of getting to know each other, but so far so good. I hope that we will continue to be a good fit. If I don't do

anything else all day long, the only 2 things that I do remember to do are:

1. Speak to my Higher Power (when I wake, even before my feet hit the floor.) I ask that he remove all defects of character and remove my shortcomings in whatever way he sees fit. I ask him to help me to be the person he wants me to be. I ask that he help me to take one day at a time. "This day, this hour, this moment..." I ask for his grace and ask him to help me in whatever way he sees fit today.

2. I ask God to be with those that are seeking his help and to be with those who are resisting him. And I hope that he is able to make his way into their lives in whatever way they need him. I pray for our fellowship and hope that we all have a better day today than we did yesterday.

Thank you for listening,

— J, AUSTIN, TEXAS

**Do you have an idea for a theme
for the *Journal*?**
**Send them to the Journal production team at
www.slaafws.org**

Share Space

Open Invitation

I've come to a place in my life where puzzle pieces of my life are now coming together to part ways from frustration and put behind all things that I regret from the past. I've come to see that I had to brainstorm areas of my life and figure out where I should start to change.

I had to ask myself if I was ready for this challenge that God has given me. I know I'll be sure to take that challenge and no longer be stubborn. I will accept what life has to offer.

It's like a new chapter of my life has begun. But I know this process will also come with patience. Before my door opened it was closed and I faced things that I thought I never would. I

know it's something I had to go through to see what was on the other side of life for me.

I never thought it would come to pass but I had to ask myself, "Are you going to make this choice or just ignore it?" So I found out if you make that bed you have to lay in it. I've had my share of bad times and now I make time for the good. I keep it in that position and then things can only get better. I surround myself with important people and never backtrack on things that I should avoid.

The dirt has been kicked from under my shoes. I'm continuing new walks of life on a more balanced surface. Being more focused is the key to open my invitation to see where I want to be in life and to see what love is all about.

— CHAQUANTA, GEORGIA

Not Ready for Steps Two and Three

When I picked up the list of the 12 Steps for Sex and Love Addiction, I thought I had the first three pegged: I am powerless. *Check.* A horrible “acting out” took place about a week ago that left me devastated and disgusted with myself. Yes. I am powerless. Step One, I am there all the way.

So, what does Step Two say?

I believe that a Power greater than myself can restore me to sanity. I’ve believed in God and followed Him for my entire adult life. And believing that He can bring renewal to me, and healing, and wholeness should be a snap.

But as the events of the past week floated in my memory, I knew that in fact, I *don’t* believe that God can...I believe He can, but I don’t believe He will...restore me to sanity. As for Step Three, “decided to turn my will and my life over to God...” well, I did that about 30 years ago, and so far I have not seen any change at all in this aspect of myself.

In middle age, I am doing the same things I did as a young teenage girl. I should trust God with these things, but the devastation of Sunday left me feeling completely abandoned. I



can’t trust Him. But I went to an S.L.A.A. meeting on Thursday, and for a brief moment of time, I felt hopeful, as if there might actually be a way to deeply change. The “Power greater than me” that will restore my sanity...at this time, it can’t be God, whom I have loved and followed for so many years. I still love Him and I will still follow Him, but I don’t trust Him with this. There will have to be some other Power, greater than me, for me to turn to.

It is like my life is a little circle,

and God is a vast circle, encompassing all that is in my life. The Power greater than myself will be a middle-sized circle, encompassing all of my life, but itself encompassed by God.

I don't know what that Power will be; maybe a group. Maybe some strength that I will find within myself. Maybe an unexpected support from friends or family. I do not know what it is,

but I know it is *not* God. I suspect that involvement in S.L.A.A. will reveal to me the Power that is greater than myself, and I suspect it will be hard work, and I know I will encounter deep pain.

May God guide this and all my seeking, all my growing, all my discovering as I stretch out my spirit to find what Power it will be, that *will* bring sanity.

— HEIDI W., OGDEN, UT

What I Learned By Not Hugging

I have been asked by my S.L.A.A. sponsor (who has 25+ years of S.L.A.A. sobriety) to try a 2 week experiment (contract): I may not hug anyone or allow anyone to hug me for 2 weeks.

This is to be done so we can evaluate my response to a lack of all physical contact except shaking hands. It is also to determine if my natural hugging nature is actually a substitute for the physical touch I desire within the context of a healthy relationship or if it is an honest desire to validate those platonic relationships I have with my true friends.

In essence, what is the reason I hug other people? As a matter of habit, I only hug my women friends and both women and men

friends at my face-to-face A.A. meetings.

My addictive relationship background in a nutshell: I have always been a serial relationship (love) addict, occasionally having dated and been physically intimate with more than one man while in the process of finding a relationship that “works.”

Once I find a relationship that seems to work, I have always been faithful within that relationship, even though all but the first of those relationships became very serious so rapidly that it was impossible to really know my partner first.

I have had 4 serious relationships in my 48 years.

The first lasted about 2 years, and was a fairly healthy relationship with a college

boyfriend (we were platonic friends for over a year before the beginning of the relationship.) We are now friends again.

The next was a nearly 15-year relationship with a woman I thought I would spend the rest of my life with, but who preferred career development over togetherness. She was content with being in a long distance relationship and having no physical intimacy the last 9 of those years. We are now friends again too.

The 3rd was a nearly 2-year marriage to a schizophrenic man whose active disease was invisible until his doctor took him off one of his anti-psychotics and he began to believe I was sleeping with everyone in town.

Since it was reality to him, there was nothing I could do except regrettably let him go. Yes, you guessed it — we are also now friends again. The last one ended a little over 2 years ago when my 2nd husband died after 4 years of being together. He was already eaten up with cancer when we met and we just didn't know it. Shortly after we met, he became increasingly more impotent, due to the cancer that went undiscovered until 2.5 months before he died.

Since then I have had a one week long, unsatisfying attempt to have a physical relationship (what

I thought of as grief sex, about 2 months after my husband's passing) with a "friend" who wanted a committed relationship and couldn't understand that I was not emotionally available due to grief.

This was also the point when I finally admitted my alcoholism and began recovery in A.A. I am now 15 months sober from alcohol.

After beginning to recover from the worst of that grief, in the last year I have begun to seek out that next fantasy relationship. Since the realization of my addictive relationship patterns 2 weeks ago, I now understand that will never exist for me. And I am honestly happy about that!

That relationship is not realistic, and not healthy. So now I am learning how to approach dating in a healthy way, not having dated anyone for over 2 years now. My sponsor is guiding me through this process while realizing that I have not had to go through many of the physical withdrawal symptoms that so many of us do when beginning this journey.

I am grateful for that and feel blessed. I have already done most of my physical withdrawal and need to go through the mental and emotional withdrawal now, coupled with true spiritual healing that working my A.A.

program has initiated. This experiment is a part of understanding that emotional withdrawal and what it means to me.

So back to the no-hugging experiment: I had no concept of how this experiment was supposed to help me. But I was willing to trust and follow my sponsor's advice — even though it was the only thing she told me I needed to initially abstain from since working out my bottom line and accessory behaviors that actually triggered any anxiety in me. “What an order!”

I have only been hug-free for 4 days. However, I learned a lot when someone nearly insisted that he hug me at an A.A. meeting yesterday, despite my telling him that I was not hugging right now and I tried to shake his hand instead.

My wise sponsor asked me how it made me feel. After really thinking about it, I realized that it made me feel disrespected that he chose not to honor this seemingly trivial boundary of mine.

He remarked, “Oh, a hug is no big deal, I always thought they were a great thing.” Well, perhaps a hug isn't a big deal to him, and never has been for me either because I just never thought about it.

But I realized that his

willingness and near insistence to disregard my boundary was an invasive act to me, and an indication that I could never truly trust him within more than an acquaintance relationship.

He doesn't interest me in that way, even though he has previously stated that he would like to “get to know me better.” I can learn a lot from his experience, strength and hope within the A.A. fellowship, but I wouldn't be able to trust him beyond that.

Wow! What a revelation! I hadn't really understood how this experiment was supposed to help me know myself better until that happened. Then I realized that this is such a simple way to evaluate a potential partner's respect of my boundaries way before other red flags might appear.

If there was a friend that I was already familiar with and close to, who happened to want to explore a deeper relationship, I don't know that this technique would be helpful, since I tend to hug nearly all my friends, especially close ones. I would need another way to test his respect of my boundaries very early in the newly re-directed relationship.

I don't know what that might be yet because it hasn't happened, nor do I anticipate that situation.

But it has really made me realize that there IS a way to detect disrespect of my boundaries much earlier in a relationship than getting to the point where I feel like saying “no” to something more serious and only then finding out that my boundaries are not respected.

And that could potentially be well into my emotional investment in the relationship, a point where it will hurt more to necessarily put an end to a relationship that is unhealthy for me. This is something I sincerely hope I would have the strength to do in light of my very recent discovery of this long-standing

addictive pattern.

As always, take what you need and feel free to leave the rest. I am sure this isn't a novel concept to many people, but it was quite a discovery for me. I am truly grateful for my sponsor's wisdom and guidance to have put this tool in my growing arsenal of recovery tools.

And I look forward to learning even more as the remainder of this experiment unfolds. What else might I discover that is new to me and can help in my continued sobriety?

May we all be sober for just this moment,

— PAM, SHREVEPORT, LA

An Invitation For You

Enlarge your recovery by allowing others to get the same benefit that you get from reading *the Journal*.

It is a great way to carry S.L.A.A.'s message of hope and practice the Twelfth Step.

The fellowship needs volunteers of all skills and levels of availability.

Become a Journal Representative for your intergroup or home group, encouraging the use of *the Journal* as a source of topics, letting people know that there are Journals for sale, and ensuring that plenty of Journal subscription cards are always on the literature table.

Channeling My Energy Toward Growth and Recovery

I am writing my share because I have learned through recovery to be good to myself and to take care of myself and to always be my true self.

My intention today is to be of service and my prayer is to be able to deliver my being wholly, so that my story and process of recovery will help someone in these rooms.

I have learned so much and worked so hard to recover from the illness of love and sex addiction. I am a sex and love addict and there is a lot of energy in addiction, craving, obsession, neediness and the dependency to feel loved by another person.

This is my addiction and I can no longer deny the power and the strong hold that it has had on me. But, I can choose what to do with it. I can suppress it and deny the addiction, which is what I have done in the past. I can check out through disassociation, fantasy, inaction and distraction. I can try to down it or drown it in numbness. Or, I can feed it, indulge in it and get very high



through seduction, intrigue, sex and intensity.

However, I have chosen, consistently, in the last six months to channel that energy towards growth and recovery.

I have filled volumes and volumes of notebooks, conversing with myself in an effort to fortify my friendship with myself and not be dependent on other people. I have read so much. I have worked the Steps and allowed myself to feel, to grieve, to cry about my past.

I have allowed myself to thaw out and to let the terrifying memories of verbal abuse,

physical abuse, sexual abuse and self-abuse come back into my consciousness. I have tiptoed, courageously, towards facing that I am a woman who has been betrayed, who has *allowed* others to intimidate me, use me and silence me.

Just as importantly, I am a woman who has used others to reassure me that I am loveable and desirable. I have offered devotion, my body and my mind as a way to get love back, instead of learning how to love myself and *invest* that same healing and loving energy towards myself.

Today, I am no longer a needy person. I have struggled and learned to soothe myself over the last six months. I have reassured myself to be brave, and summoned the courage and the love of my ancestors to guide me and to protect me as I moved towards fear and hurt, instead of moving away from *them*.

In the past, I was punched, lied to, molested, robbed, slapped, spit on and put down and, each time it hurt me and I felt the pain. But, I allowed it to happen and learned how to numb it out and go into denial because I was emotionally dependent and afraid to be rejected, abandoned and alone again.

I am no longer afraid to be alone. I enjoy travelling by myself, seeing the world through my own

eyes and for myself. I feed my mind, so that I remain inspired, curious and growing. I am gentle with my soul. My spirit is brave, but it is still frightened. I am careful to be gentle and I ask God to guide me, so that I can live in harmony with his plan.

I am filled with love, *still*, as I have always been. But, now I pour it onto myself. I am grateful for all of the magnificence of this journey — the difficult and anxious and painful times and the perfect times, solutions and miracles. I have new people in my life, and the same people, but new relationships with them. I feel grace and connection to my family and towards all of humanity.

I am excited about life and have a lot of living to do, not through my relationships, but through my own personal being. This is who I am, and I treasure who I am and will not put myself in harm's way. I have made a commitment to protect and take care of myself in sickness and in health. Forever do us part. I feel as if I am married to myself.

— T., LOS ANGELES, 2012

I CAME UP WITH A SENTENCE THAT SPEAKS OF MY OVERTLY SEXUAL AND NEEDY PAST, AND HONORS THE PURITY THAT HAS ALWAYS EXISTED WITHIN ME AND THAT I AM NOW READY TO RECLAIM. THAT AFFIRMATION IS:

“YES, IT’S TRUE OF ME,
BUT IT’S NEVER BEEN TRUE TO ME.”

The Unhealthy Desire To Be Wanted Rather Than Loved

My name is Rob. I am 42 and have spent the past ten years trying to understand myself, my behavior, and my impact on others around me. In my early thirties, I began behaving sexually in ways that were harmful to myself, my family, and people I cared about.

While I was married, I began to compensate for an unhappy marriage by unconsciously seeking the approval of women, particularly young and attractive women. More importantly, without fully thinking about my behaviors, I started putting myself in positions where I would make poor choices on impulse, thereby allowing myself the excuse of spontaneity when I behaved in ways contrary to my supposed ideals.

At first, having an affair or a one-night stand was exhilarating and made me feel attractive, something I did not feel at home or in my young adulthood.

Happily, I was able to avoid negative consequences for a short time, which only reinforced my belief that it was somehow okay to flirt or sleep with women outside of my

marriage. Unfortunately, this self-delusional belief, which would certainly not have stood up to any rational examination, only led to problems which affect me to this day, most notably my own feelings about myself.

When I was 33, I enjoyed the attention of a pretty 20-year old woman (who had a boyfriend) at my workplace, named "Natalie." Through daily flirting, I manipulated the situation until this young woman asked me if I would like to see a movie.

I said "sure," at least temporarily sealing my fate. We went to the movies, then a walk. On the walk, near a pond, I asked if I could kiss her. She jumped in my arms and we had sex right there, where anyone may have seen us. At work the next day, everyone knew.

This caused me a lot of trouble with my boss and co-workers, who had previously seen me as an upstanding family man. After a brief time away from the woman, we tried another walk. Same result, sex in a grove about 20 feet from a business. Again, more trouble at work.

My wife probably knew

something was up, and my boss certainly did. I got an ultimatum, “knock it off — or else.” I did so, temporarily. That summer, on vacation with my wife and two young children, I found that, mentally, I was not present.

I was thinking of “Natalie.” I missed her. I missed seeing someone who lit up when she saw me, and I missed someone who viewed me basically as a sex object, something I had never previously experienced.

When I returned, “Natalie” told me that her boyfriend had proposed to her. What should she do? Did we have a future? I told her to do whatever she felt was best, since she and I could not be together (I believed I had to stay married until my children reached adulthood). So, “Natalie” got married.

I saw her a couple of days after she returned from her honeymoon and we went for a walk. As I am sure you have guessed, we had sex in public again, spontaneously, again. After a torrid Autumn, “Natalie” told me at Christmas that she was going to try to be a good wife and that we had to break it off.

I understood, but was devastated, having come to realize that I loved “Natalie.” Saddened beyond any previous

experience, I was comforted by “Natalie’s” best friend, “Darlene.” “Darlene” not only worked with me, I was her supervisor and she was married.

In another self-destructive move, I began an affair with “Darlene,” one that resulted in a major scandal at work, the loss of “Natalie” as a friend, and the effective end of my career. Additionally, I left my wife, but was too upset all the time to spend any quality time with my two beautiful children, ages eleven and eight.

Years of stress and self-recrimination followed, including frequent drama with “Darlene” and her estranged husband. At work I was a pariah. At home I was a stressed-out, despondent wreck.

Between breakups with “Darlene,” I had short-lived relationships with a couple of 22-ish women, “Morgen” and “Anna,” as well as several guilty one-night stands. I hid my sexual behavior from peers and friends and felt guilty when I started something with a woman, only to leave her hanging as I pulled back from real emotions and the possibility of lasting love.

I feared hearing the words “I love you” by any woman, particularly a young one, since I was convinced it would only end in my being hurt. Eventually, realizing that my life was spiraling

downward, I sought therapy. It was, and is, difficult to talk about my experiences.

To this day, I fear being judged by others and feel the stigma of my sexual behaviors. Not only did I have affairs, but I had risky sexual encounters, often in public, often with people in relationships of their own.

Although I have learned a great deal through therapy and self-reflection, changing my behavior has been difficult. Most difficult is changing my self-talk, in which I beat myself up over regrets, lost time and damage to my relationship with my now-teenage children, and the feeling that sexual addiction has made me a “bad person.”

It is painful to reflect on actions which have made me feel like someone who has hurt others. The fact that I have not always intended to hurt others does not lessen that hurt.

I have hurt my kids, several women (who wonder why I stop talking to them), spouses and

families, and, perhaps most of all, my own sense of self. Now in my forties, I struggle with the feeling that I am unlovable.

I struggle with the loss of time with my kids during their formative years. I miss those with whom I could have found love and happiness. I sense the distance I keep from others and wish I could open up more.

However, with the help of an empathetic counselor and others in similar situations, I can focus on changing my destructive behaviors and make the deliberate choice to keep myself out of situations in which I may make poor decisions.

Most of all, I choose to stop hurting myself and others. I hope other people will too. Good people can make bad choices, but those choices needn't define us, nor do they need to continue.

Love and happiness can exist within the confines of a healthy relationship. And happiness and self-respect can even exist on one's own.

Take care,

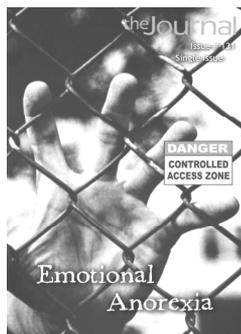
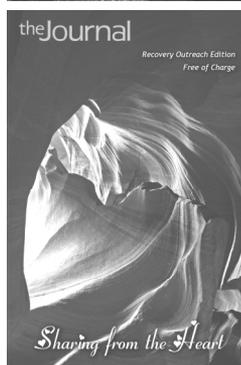
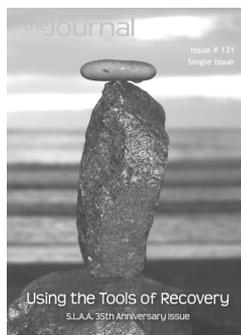
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Calendar of Events

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)

Friday, March 15, 2013 to Sunday, March 17, 2013

9th Annual GDVI Spirituality Weekend Retreat

Presented by: Greater Delaware Valley Intergroup

Where: Daylesford Abbey, Paoli, PA. Check the F.W.S. website for more information.

Friday, March 22, 2013 to Sunday, March 24, 2013

12-Step S.L.A.A. Weekend in

Chester, Vermont

Presented by:

New England Intergroup

For Inquiries:

vtweekend@slaanei.org

More Info:

During the weekend we will review the steps from the S.L.A.A. Basic Text.

There is also ample opportunity for “down” time. The weekend also provides an opportunity to get to know ourselves, as well as other S&L addicts in a safe place. The retreats are not only about sharing experience, strength, and hope, but also a chance to have lots of fun and laughs as well!

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2013



***S.L.A.A. Annual
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Tuesday August 6 to Friday August 9, 2013

Conference *Tradition 11*

Theme *“Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, TV, film, and other public media. We need guard with special care the anonymity of all fellow S.L.A.A. members. “*

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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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